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James Joyce's Dubliners and Celtic Twilight Spirituality

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James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Celtic Twilight Spirituality

Ph.D Abstract

My research is, as far as I am aware, the first reading of *Dubliners* as a specific and profound engagement with the ideas of the Celtic Twilight school. The recurrence of dreamlike states, such as ghostly visions and reverie, symbolizes aspects of an urban petit-bourgeois Catholic Irishness excluded by Revivalist propaganda. Joyce earths popular notions of spirituality so that in their dreamlike states characters are tantalized by glimpses of an evanescent world. He shapes such experiences in relation to similar moments in Celtic Twilight writing, delineating *Dubliners*' states of mind as an implicit rebuke to mythic ideal and romantic versions of Irishness, and suggesting a Dublin Otherworld to rival the one popularized by Yeats, A.E., Lady Gregory and Synge. Joyce reacts, too, against George Moore's brand of faux Naturalism which claims to present the 'real' Ireland in *The Untilled Field*.

Joyce's project involves parody of privileged Celtic Twilight genres such as the fairy story, heroic legend, and folk song. The precise reactions in *Dubliners* expose the distortions of the apparently authentic Celtic Revival, which, for all its patriotism, is, ironically, *unIrish* since it is influenced by a genteel English sensibility. Such parody is complex in terms of mood since the wit co-exists with delicate psychological investigation and exploration of Dublin tribal consciousness.

Against fashionable opinion, Joyce, in *Dubliners*, reclaims the city of Dublin as fit territory for literature and its citizens as capable of spiritual experience, however complex and potentially compromised this spiritual state might be.

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Introduction

My research is, as far as I am aware, the first reading of *Dubliners* as a specific and profound engagement with the ideas of the Celtic Twilight school.¹ In particular, a central feature of the collection is the recurrence of dreamlike states. The ghosts of Father Flynn ('The Sisters'), Eveline's mother ('Eveline'), Mrs Sinico ('A Painful Case'), and Michael Furey ('The Dead') symbolize aspects of an urban petit-bourgeois Catholic Irishness excluded by Revivalist propaganda. The common thread of the reveries in the other *Dubliners* stories is a flickering revelation of intense feeling at the quick of the character's needs and desires, such as Maria's mesmerised engagement with the vision of steadfast love in Balfe's lyric, 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' from *The Bohemian Girl* ('Clay'). Joyce earths popular notions of spirituality so that, at such moments, the character, in a bedroom or café or parlour, is tantalized by glimpses of an evanescent world. He shapes such experiences in relation to similar moments in Celtic Twilight writing, delineating *Dubliners*' states of mind as an implicit rebuke to mythic ideal and romantic versions of Irishness, and suggesting a Dublin Otherworld to rival the one popularized by Yeats, A.E., Lady Gregory and Synge. Such parody is complex in terms of mood since the wit co-exists with delicate psychological investigation and exploration of Dublin tribal consciousness.

In *Dubliners* Joyce also parodies folk genres and tropes, which held such appeal for the

¹ It is debatable whether 'The Celtic Twilight' and 'The Irish Revival' was a movement as such. Yeats raised a dispute over such labels in 1900, saying that he "avoided 'Celtic note' and 'Celtic Renaissance' partly because both are vague and one is grandiloquent, and partly because the journalist has laid his ugly hands upon them." A.J. Solomon, "The Celtic Note" in 'A Little Cloud', *Studies in Short Fiction*, 9.3 (Summer, 1972), p. 269 (p.269-70). George Moore dropped out of the movement after a quarrel with Yeats over future collaboration in 1902, and wrote to Dujardin in 1903, "I have absolutely renounced all my Celtic hopes." *The Man of Wax: Critical Essays on George Moore*, ed. by D.A. Hughes (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p.18. Synge was wary of idealization of the peasant by Yeats, A.E., and Lady Gregory, and his unflattering descriptions of peasants in 1903 caused A.E., Maud Gonne and Douglas Hyde to resign their offices in the Irish National Theatre Society. Yeats criticized A.E.'s 1904 poetry collection, *New Songs*, as sentimental. (Tracey Teets Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians* [Florida: University Press of Florida], 2002), p.35. Joyce, as 'The Holy Office' and 'A Mother' suggest, might have seen 'The Celtic Twilight' as a commercial package.

Clare Hutton points out the difficulty of pinning down when the Revival began and warns: "all too often, critical studies of revivalism see that movement as exclusively literary, exclusively concerned with the recovery of Ireland's ancient past, and exclusively led by a group of Anglo-Irish writers who were motivated by a desire to attain positions of cultural supremacy. The experience of the Southwark group shows that this was not the case." She notes that Padraic Colum and Austin Clarke were Catholics. 'Joyce and the Institutions of Revivalism', *Irish University Review* 33.1 (Spring / Summer, 2003), p. 128 (p.117-32).

Celtic Twilight school. Joyce's precise reaction exposes the distortions of the apparently authentic Celtic Revival, which, for all its patriotism, is, ironically, *unIrish* since it is influenced by a genteel English sensibility. Against fashionable opinion, Joyce is reclaiming Dublin as fit territory for literature and its citizens as capable of spiritual experience, however complex and potentially compromised this spiritual state might be.

My approach is close reading and historicist. I have found most helpful those critics who have placed the stories in socio-economic contexts and who have helped me link prejudice against Dublin to the cultural and political aspects of the Celtic Twilight project.

In my first two chapters, I set the general framework of Joyce's engagement with the Celtic Twilight school. The first chapter describes universal hostility towards the city of Dublin at the turn-of-the century, which is important for how Joyce looks to redeem the city against popular prejudice. I outline the nature of Celtic Twilight thought and the reasons for Joyce's antagonism towards it and, connecting the ideas of critics and historians, offer an overview of the political and cultural anxieties lying behind the Revival. Joyce's poem 'The Holy Office' is discussed in detail as a crude blueprint for *Dubliners* as a counterblast to Celtic Twilight philosophy, and 'Araby' is read as a story concerned with Revivalist failings.

The second chapter explains the importance of reverie in the Celtic Twilight definition of true Irishness and gives examples of characters drifting into private otherworlds in Celtic Twilight writing. Similar-looking moments in *Dubliners* are listed and I focus on Hynes' recitation of his Parnell poem in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' as an example of the complex manner in which Joyce parodies fashionable literary reverie. I conclude by suggesting Walter Pater, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire as sources for Joyce's approach in this respect.

The third chapter describes Joyce's reaction to the mystical aspects of Celtic Twilight thought, focusing in particular on George William Russell (A.E.). I read 'The Boarding House' as a parody of A.E.'s *Deirdre*, a play which celebrates the spiritual intensity and purity of a canonical Irish heroine. Joyce uses the parody to highlight the unhealthy fetishization of female chastity by Revivalist writers and Irish culture more generally, and to satirize the manner in

which the Revival censored original Celtic myths as part of their development of a new kind of spiritual Irishness.

In my fourth chapter, I show Joyce's parodic skills with other famous Celtic myths which have been appropriated by Revivalists and which, repackaged, form a central aspect of Celtic Twilight idealization of the Irish countryside and Irish childhood. I explore 'The Sisters' and 'An Encounter' as responses to the popular image of the wise old story-teller and argue that Joyce presents the "queer old josser" (18) of the story in a more subtle and complex way than most critics have hitherto recognised. 'Counterparts', I suggest, is a parody of the Cuchulain legend and is another example of Celtic Twilight softening of original Celtic myths: by tapping back into the story's original violence, Joyce raises the issue of brutality towards children in modern Ireland.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss Joyce's reaction against George Moore as a writer who, in Joyce's view, likes to appear to be writing about the 'real' Ireland, but who is in fact peddling a brand of faux Naturalism and merely recycling Celtic Twilight stereotypes. Joyce's rewriting of Moore also constitutes an aesthetic rebuke to a writer who regarded himself as the great prose stylist of contemporary Irish letters.² I suggest a Moore context for 'A Little Cloud', argue that 'Araby' is a parody of 'The Clerk's Quest' in *The Untilled Field*, and explore 'A Painful Case' as an ironic rewriting of Moore's *The Lake*. This is important in order to demonstrate Celtic Twilight whimsy and sentimentality in a type of writing which purports to be detached and scientific in the Naturalist manner. I compare Moore's and Joyce's presentation of female reverie, suggesting Moore's essential lack of sympathy for his characters in contrast to Joyce.

In the sixth chapter, I focus on music, which ancient Celtic culture associated with the Otherworld and which, in turn, Revivalists privileged as particularly spiritual. I discuss Lenihan's day-dream in 'Two Gallants' in terms of the political dimensions of Thomas Moore's 'Silent, O Moyle', which Lenihan has in mind. I analyse Maria's drift into a private dreamworld as she

² Moore claimed, for example, that his novel *Esther Waters* was "pure Flaubert". Graham Hough, 'George Moore and the Nineties', in *The Man of Wax: Critical Essays on George Moore*, ed. by Douglas A. Hughes, p. 136 (p.113-41).

sings William Balfe's 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' in 'Clay' and suggest that this is a parody of magical transportation into a Celtic Otherworld. Aware of contemporary valuation of peasant folk song, Joyce suggests how such lyrics represent a form of modern, urban folk song for the working-class and petit-bourgeoisie who inhabit Ireland's capital city. Finally, I outline how 'A Mother' is a satire of the Revival as a commercial package and suggest how the story is an antidote to Celtic Twilight preoccupation with youth.

Chapter seven is devoted to 'Grace', which is balanced between sharp observation of the destructive and self-congratulatory nature of Dublin drinking culture and a desire to capture the spirit and fun of that culture in opposition to temperance and Celtic Twilight po-facedness. I outline the tribal nature of the Dublin friendship code which binds the would-be penitents and which keeps women and outsiders in their place, and show the different types of *mauvaise foi* which prop up alcoholism as an Irish cultural norm. I argue that parody is a central feature of the story, incorporating the life of the founder of the Jesuits, Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, mystic Catholic vision, and traditional Irish drama such as Celtic Twilight peasant plays and nineteenth century versions of the stage Irishman

The last chapter explores the ghostly visitations of Eveline's mother ('Eveline') and Michael Furey ('The Dead'). I suggest new contexts for the haunting of Eveline (a Mallarmé poem and folk story linked to Marsh's library) and contrast her nightmarish engagement with the 'otherworld' with those experienced by spiritually sensitive young women in Celtic Twilight writing. I argue that 'The Dead' presents a ghostly battle between Gabriel's mother and Michael Furey for possession of Gabriel's soul, and outline ways in which Michael Furey's spectral presence is a *real* 'Celtic Twilight' moment of illumination for Gabriel as he is forced to think through his relationship with his wife and his relationship with Ireland. I suggest the Famine as a significant context for both visitations.

Dubliners criticism has tended to follow the lead of a memorable contemporary judgment: "Mr Joyce seems to regard this objective and dirty and crawling world with the cold

detachment of an unamiable god.”³ Joyce here is the detached literary-scientist coolly diagnosing the causes of the city’s terminal decline. Marilyn French, for example, argues that the Dublin of Joyce’s imagination is a wasteland of “spiritual barrenness”,⁴ and Seamus Deane says “these people are shades who have never lived, vicarious inhabitants of a universe ruled by others.”⁵ Such readings vindicate fashionable prejudice against the capital city at the time of Joyce’s writing *Dubliners*, as exemplified by Yeats’s remark about “our life in cities, which deafens or kills the passive meditative life” (‘Magic’, 1903).⁶

To a degree, the stories are satirical and forensic in this manner. In describing the world of *Dubliners* to Grant Richards in attempt to persuade him of the veracity of his writing, Joyce wrote of “the special odour of corruption which, I hope, floats over my stories”, and remarks, “it is not my fault that the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories.”⁷ Joyce may have been drawn to the imagery of smell because its elusive quality suggests a suffusing but invisible presence. The “corruption” of Joyce’s Dublin constitutes interlaced forms of decay which hover in and around the characters’ mental states: sexual repression, concern for respectability, preoccupation with money, materialism and commerce, hostility towards women and outsiders, Thomas Moore and porter-induced romantic nationalism, vogueish sentimentality about how Irishness and spirituality appear synonymous. The power of decayed ideas suggested by “ashpits” and the feeble strangulation implied in “old weeds” evokes the *mauvaise foi* of characters such as Kernan, his friends, and Father Purdon in ‘Grace’, who are unable to recognize alcoholism and its corrosive effects, or the members of the *Eire Abu* music committee in ‘A Mother’ who cannot understand Mrs Kearney’s reasonable point of view purely because she is a

³ Gerald Gould’s 1914 review in the ‘New Statesman’, iii (27 June 1914), p.374-5. *James Joyce: ‘Dubliners’ and ‘The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’, A Casebook*, ed. by Maurice Beja (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 61 (p.61-3).

⁴ Marilyn French, ‘Women in Joyce’s Dublin’, in *James Joyce, The Augmented Ninth* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), ed. by Bernard Benstock, p. 269 (p.267-73)

⁵ Seamus Deane, ‘Dead ends: Joyce’s finest moments’ in *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), ed. Derck Attridge and Marjorie Howes, p. 21 (p.21-36).

⁶ *Ideas of Good and Evil* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1905), p. 51

⁷ Joyce’s letters to Grant Richards, 15th October 1905, and 23rd June 1906. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. by Richard Ellmann (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 79, 89. All subsequent quotations from Joyce’s letters are taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.

woman. Joyce's anger about Celtic Twilight mythologizing derives partly from the manner in which it gestured towards escape from such tired old attitudes, but in fact merely legitimized them through, for example, spurious notions of Irish chivalry as regards drinking, and clichéd versions of female chastity and passive ethereality. Joyce did famously say of Dublin that it seemed to him "the centre of paralysis", ⁸ but his exploration of the nature of such a condition seems to me so nuanced and careful that the term 'satire' is only of limited value in describing his attitude towards his characters.

The Joyce of *Dubliners* is not for me like the judgmental Mr Duffy of 'A Painful Case' who "wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen"⁹ (103). The stories are, I feel, more comic, tender, and sympathetic than has generally been recognized and are close in spirit to *Ulysses* in their desire to document, like an amused curator, the city's vulnerability and vitality. Witty capturing of semi-farcical situations lies at the heart of Joyce's exploration of most of his characters' spiritual moments and, as a sharpened version of Moore's 'tear and a smile' Irishness, Joyce's bitter-sweet presentation of urban petit-bourgeois yearning stakes a claim for understanding cultural identity more profoundly than the idealism of the Celtic Twilight school.¹⁰ There is a strain of levity in *Dubliners* which bypasses Celtic Twilight faux spiritual Irishness and aligns itself, however conscious of its greater complexity and seriousness, with Irish comic tales of the nineteenth century.¹¹ The stories flicker with absurdity (the boy's aunt's "rheumatic wheels" in 'The Sisters' (9), the friends' doctrinal absurdities in 'Grace', Freddy Malins in 'The Dead'). Consider, for example, the spirit of this sentence from 'A Mother' in which the intense and meticulous Mrs Kearney demands an explanation for the cancellation of a concert from the organizer, 'Hoppy Holohan', who has more pressing matters to attend to: "She

⁸ Joyce's letter to Grant Richards, 5th May 1906. Ibid, p. 83.

⁹ James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. Terence Brown (London: Penguin, 1992), p.103. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

¹⁰ Joyce describes the Citizen in 'Cyclops' thus: "The eyes in which a tear and a smile strove ever for the mastery were of the dimensions of a good-sized cauliflower." *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 382. The source of Moore's famous phrase is his poem 'Erin, the Tear and the Smile in Thine Eyes'. All subsequent quotations from *Ulysses* will be taken from this edition.

¹¹ The only reference to such writers in the letters is Joyce's brief relation to Stanislaus (6th November, 1906) that he has asked his Aunt Josephine to send him "any old editions of Kickham, Griffin, Carleton, H. J. Smyth &c, Banim...". *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Ellmann, p.124

buttonholed him as he was limping out quickly with a glass of lemonade for a young lady and asked him was it true. Yes, it was true.” (138)

Such flickerings of levity and mischief seems apparent in the number of stories involving trickery, for example, albeit in a more insidious and malign way than pre-Famine tales. In ‘An Encounter’, the old man tricks the young boy into trusting his civility by beginning the conversation about well-known literature. Frank, in ‘Eveline’, might be deceiving Eveline about what she will find in Argentina. Corley misleads his girl in ‘Two Gallants’ in order to secure money for his friend. Mrs Mooney and her daughter collude to manipulate Doran into marriage in ‘Two Gallants’. The “colonel-looking gentleman” (98) in ‘Clay’ charms Maria on the tram and then makes off with her plum-cake. Farrington, in ‘Counterparts’, tricks his employers by sneaking out to the pub through a ruse involving leaving his hat in the office. Holohan seems to swindle Mrs Kearney, to some degree, in ‘A Mother’. ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ features ‘Tricky Dicky Tierney’. The plot of ‘Grace’ is a cunning scheme.

The comparison between *Dubliners* and William Carleton’s *Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1846) seems valid since both works give voice to a previously ignored Catholic Ireland. Carleton remarked of the peasantry, “I found them a class unknown to literature, unknown by their landlords, and unknown by those in whose hands much of their destiny was placed.”¹² This connects to Benedict Kiely’s observation that “Joyce was the first Irish writer to feel about the streets as Carleton and others had felt about the fields.”¹³

Declan Kiberd suggests that some of Carleton’s stories “presage books like *Dubliners*” not only because of the desire to reclaim a social class for literature, but also because both writers saw themselves as documenters of how the social class worked as a tribe.¹⁴ *Tales and Stories of*

¹² Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics* (London: Granta, 2000), p. 266

¹³ Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction* (Dublin: Standard House), p. 45. Robert Welch traces this tradition back to John and Michael Banim’s *Tales by the O’Hara Family* (1825) which “revealed the previously hidden world of the Irish peasantry, with all the primitive beliefs, folklore traditions, and grim humour of that underprivileged class.” *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 29

¹⁴ Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p. 273. Seamus Deane also suggests a comparison: “Yet Carleton himself transformed the Irish peasantry too, although in doing so he had forsaken their religion and committed their culture to print. If he was a betrayer, he nevertheless saw himself as the betrayed. The beginnings of the Joycean complex are discernible here – the renegade from his people who nevertheless is their true interpreter, the writer sick of the politics he cannot

the Irish Peasantry explains the role of fiddlers, dancing-masters, match-makers and midwives as well as telling a story illustrative of each figure's connection with the other villagers. One of these jobs was a 'senachie', a genealogist / local historian whose precise role in Gaelic tradition Kiberd outlines:

A distinction is made between the two types of story-teller. The 'sgealai' enjoys higher status as narrator of the 'sean-sgeal' or international tale, while the 'seanchai' narrates local tales and lore concerning familiar places, family genealogies, fairies and ghosts. The 'sgealai' was always a man but the 'seanchai' could be male or female. The tales told by the 'sgealai' were long and difficult to remember, filled with amazing adventures and remote wonders narrated neutrally in the third person. The 'seanchai' told his story as if he had witnessed it.¹⁵

Together with seeing himself as a modern Naturalist writer who was a social historian meets scientific analyzer, I think Joyce might have placed himself in this ancient Gaelic tradition as the 'senachie' of turn of the century Dublin. This would fit his strategy in *Dubliners* of outflanking Celtic Twilight writers who were usurping control of Irish literary history. For all the talk of the avant-garde European 'Modernism' of *Dubliners*, perhaps it is more helpful to trace the roots of Joyce's literary radicalism in an Irish context.

In the same article Kiberd states:

The short story is the natural result of a fusion between the ancient form of the folk-tale and the preoccupations of modern literature [...] the greatest

escape, the genius made miserable by Ireland." *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1986), p. 112

¹⁵ Declan Kiberd, 'Story-Telling: The Gaelic Tradition', in *The Irish Short Story*, ed. by Patrick Rafroidi and Terence Brown (Lille: Publications de l'Universite de Lille III, 1979), p. 15-16 (p.13-27)

collection of short stories to come out of Ireland, Joyce's *Dubliners*, bears positively no trace of the oral tradition. Where the oral tradition took the spectacular as its subject, Joyce finds poetry in the commonplace. Where the oral tales climaxed in blood-baths and supernatural reversals, Joyce's epiphanies describe nothing more momentous than the passing of a coin.¹⁶

Whilst I am grateful to Kiberd for pointing out the link between the folk-tale and the modern short story, I think he is wrong here. The first stories are all in "the oral tradition" since they are told in the first person. Further, as he noted earlier, the 'senachie' tells stories of "fairies and ghosts", and Joyce does precisely this in *Dubliners*, mixing a version of the supernatural with "the commonplace". The climaxes of 'A Painful Case' and 'The Dead' for Mr Duffy and Gabriel Conroy, with the ghostly appearances of Mrs Sinico and Michael Furey *are*, emotionally, "blood-baths and supernatural reversals".

My research sheds some new light on 'The Holy Office' and the influence of Walter Pater. I have assigned an importance to 'The Holy Office', which has been previously treated as a mere occasional poem. The poem is not a blueprint for Joyce's complex attitudes towards Irish myth and what the west of Ireland might represent, and there is a sly boasting and knockabout occasional mood which might make us wary of taking it too seriously. Although there is this mood in the poem, I think that Joyce did mean it to be viewed as a declaration of intent with *Dubliners* an implicit response to perceived Celtic Twilight distortion. Beyond the posturing, Joyce is setting himself up as the Nietzschean artist who, despising fashionable literary positions and public acclaim, will bravely blow the gaff on the sham which he perceives to be contemporary Irish literature. The poem's reductive and simplified viewpoint seems caused by Joyce's need to narrow his sights in order to see what precisely he was aiming his fire at. As a measure of how seriously Joyce saw 'The Holy Office', in June 1905, a year on from its composition, living in Trieste and experiencing financial difficulties, he paid for the printing of

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 14, 20

50 copies of the poem and sent them to Stanislaus to be distributed to members of the Celtic school, excluding Yeats and Lady Gregory.¹⁷ (This might be explained by Joyce's surviving respect for someone he recognized to be the greatest poet of his generation.)

In its evocation of brief, intense soulful moments, *Dubliners* shows a more sustained Paterian influence than seems to have been hitherto recognised. Frank Moliterno, focusing on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, states that "above all, Joyce was drawn to Pater principally because Pater explores in *Marius the Epicurean* the analogies and antinomies within art and religion."¹⁸ I argue that *Dubliners* reveals an *earlier* sustained concentration on a different aspect of Pater's thought, the experience of intense emotional states when the soul burns with a "gem-like flame". There appears to be a continuum from *Dubliners*, through *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to *Ulysses* in terms of Joyce's interest in exploring visions and dreamlike states in tangible, everyday surroundings. The link between Pater and vision / reverie is evident in 'Oxen of the Sun' where Bloom falls into a "vision" whilst contemplating the "scarlet label" on a bottle of Bass as the medical students carouse in the bar of the National Maternity Hospital: "his soul is far away" according to Buck Mulligan (545). The subject of his reverie, a memory of Stephen as a child at the Roundtown bowling lawn (and symbolically a fantasy vision of the young Rudy), is conveyed in the appropriately elevated style of Pater. Stephen's tendency to drift into visionary states in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*¹⁹ continues in *Ulysses*: his dream of his ghostly mother, his vivid sense of the gathering forces of a militant Church being ready to attack him, his fantasy of time-travel to 1331 when Dubliners ran to the city's shores to carve up a stranded whale and he walked among them, his "vision" of the 'Parable of the Plums' ("I have a vision, too, Stephen said." [183]).

Further, Pater influences *Dubliners* in terms of the confidence of Joyce's whole project.

¹⁷ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: OUP, 1959), p. 200

¹⁸ Frank Moliterno, *The Dialectics of Sense and Spirit in Pater and Joyce* (Greenboro, North Carolina: Elt Press, 1988), p. 6

¹⁹ His visions of Mercedes ("there appeared an image of himself, grown older and sadder, standing in a moonlit garden with Mercedes" [65]; his desire to "meet in the real world the insubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" [66]; his sudden evocation of a classroom of students which is set off by the word 'foetus' ("the word and vision capered before his eyes" [93]); his fantasy about Emma ("The image of Emma appeared before him" [119]). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Paladin, 1988)

Since the city of Dublin did not *exist* in a literary sense nor have any power as an Irish cultural force, Joyce creates Dublin, as it were, through the power of art. This sense of Joyce as a Paterian literary high-priest (Moliterno's observation) informs, I think, Seamus Deane's understanding of Joyce:

For the Dublin, the Ireland, he wrote of was, in an important sense, a nowhere, a territory not yet represented, a place caught between geography and history. The sacralizing agency in Joyce [...] is displaced from the territory, or the nation, to the action of representing it. Representation becomes the auratic process by which a place that had been misrepresented or not represented at all finally achieves presence. This is not simply a means by which politics becomes aestheticized. It involves, first, a replacement of the political by the aesthetic, a manoeuvre through which sacrality is 'restored' to the aesthetic realm from which the political had filched it. Second, the aesthetic, now complete-in-itself, re-absorbs the political. The onus of distribution has been altered. Not only is the aesthetic hierarchically superior; it also confers on the political the sacrality it would illegitimately crave for itself, as its own possession.²⁰

My research also shows that Joyce's taste for very precise parody does not begin with *Ulysses* but in fact with *Dubliners*. As his interaction with Celtic Twilight legends suggests, Joyce seems to have been drawn to reaction as the *modus operandi* of his writing, and the delight in the detail of parody evident in *Ulysses* is there too in *Dubliners*. I hope these chapters reveal a previously unremarked *literariness* in *Dubliners*. We can detect a burgeoning sense of the mythic dimensions of human existence, which cut across historical divides, in parodies of Celtic myth in 'The Boarding House' and 'Counterparts' and in allusion to *The Golden Bough* in 'Grace'. In

²⁰ Seamus Deane, 'The Production of Cultural Space in Irish Writing'. *boundary 2*, 21.3. (Autumn, 1994), p. 133 (p.117-44)

such stories, Joyce, I suggest, is thinking in terms of a fusion between ancient myth and modern city life before the experimentation of *Ulysses*.

An inevitable danger of arguing one's corner is unnecessarily aggressive opposition to critical approaches with which one might disagree. It makes sense, however, to clarify my starting position in regard to significant recent studies of *Dubliners*. The three most recent full-length studies are *Reading 'Dubliners' Again: A Lacanian Perspective* by Garry M. Leonard (Syracuse, 1993), *Joyce, Race, and Empire* by Vincent Cheng (Cambridge, 1995), and *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's 'Dubliners'* by Margot Norris (Pennsylvania, 2003).

I am not in sympathy with Lacan's ideas and therefore with Leonard's readings of the stories, which I feel straight-jacket Joyce in psychoanalytical theory. Here are two examples of how I think too narrow a theoretical outlook creates distortions. The first is Leonard's discussion of the passage in 'The Boarding House' when Polly Mooney is composing herself after her awkward closing conversation with her husband-to-be Doran:

'She looked at herself in profile and readjusted a hairpin above her ear' [...] A bobby pin set awry is a convincing detail for a girl contemplating suicide but not for one contemplating an offer of marriage [...] Polly's success in posing as the phallus for Bob Doran requires that she ignore the question of her own sexual identity to answer the question of his. This leads, as Polly's unconscious adjustment of her bobby pin suggests, to [quoting Lacan] 'a quasi-total extinction of sexual life, except possibly in the domain of verbal parade.'²¹

Why should we agree with Leonard that a slightly unkempt hairstyle indicates emotional turbulence suggestive of self-destruction, and not romantic anxiety or passion? Even if we were to agree with this idea, is such an appearance *always* suggestive of suicidal thoughts, as his rather

²¹ Garry M. Leonard, *Reading 'Dubliners' Again: A Lacanian Perspective* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p.142

strident “is...but not” formulation implies? What grounds do we have for assuming that Polly adjusts her hairpin in an “unconscious” way? Surely this might be the action of somebody behaving in a *deliberate* way since she is, in the immediate context, looking in the mirror with the presumed intention of adjusting her hair in a precise, careful manner (we are not told how long this process takes), and is, in the wider context, preparing herself for the pleasurable formal moment when Doran, in the presence of her mother, offers her his hand in marriage. ‘The Boarding House’ is a story, after all, of careful manipulation of female sexuality in order to catch a husband. Finally, doesn’t *Polly’s* instinctive sense of how “verbal parade” in the form of flirtation (“*I’m a...naughty girl*” [p.57]) slides into “sexual life” question the black and white distinction we are invited to accept in the Lacan quotation (as the “except possibly” awkwardly implies)?

The second example is a discussion of Mr Kernan’s appeal for his wife in ‘A Mother’:

Mrs Kearney has a profound regard for masculinity; it is men that she finds infuriating and ridiculous. ‘Large, secure and fixed’ are the adjectives she applies to her husband and to the General Post Office, which sounds phallic enough, but notice that Mrs Kearney discovers this only in a building or in the *abstract* (that is to say, *imagined*) value of masculinity.²²

Why must “large” carry phallic connotations, and since when did “secure and fixed” ever suggest an erect penis? The idea that the Dublin Post Office resembled a phallus seems extraordinary, the phrase “which sounds phallic enough” suggesting more wishful thinking than accurate comparison.

I also disagree with Vincent J. Cheng’s analysis of *Dubliners*. I am wary of his psychoanalytical approach, think he overstates colonial rule as a dominating factor in Dublin’s

²² Leonard, *Reading ‘Dubliners’ Again*, p. 260

“paralysis” (for Joyce this was the Catholic Church),²³ and feel that he travesties non-theoretical readings of Joyce as non-historical, politically naïve, and overly aesthetic. He claims that earlier criticism has tended to “defang the bite of Joyce’s politics” and has presented Joyce as “a canonical figure in the traditional lineage of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson”.²⁴ Attacking Leavisite straw men seems odd here: who has ever suggested any kind of alignment between Joyce and *Tennyson* or *Milton*? More interesting than Joyce’s exploration of Dublin as an English colony, is, as J.W. Foster argues, Joyce’s reaction against the colonization of national Celtic legends such as that of Cuchulain by Anglo-Irish Revivalists (this is partly the subject of my fourth chapter, which is on fairies and heroic legends).

This is the conclusion of Cheng’s discussion of ‘An Encounter’:

In discovering that this search for adventure and escape from Father Butler instead is an encounter with a perverted vision of authority even worse than Father Butler, a queer old jossler carrying a whipping stick – like an unauthorized version of *A Portrait*’s Father Dolan who whips Stephen Dedalus with his pandybat and is young Stephen’s personal bugaboo for institutional, conventional, and religious patriarchal authority – our young narrator here interprets this disillusioning discovery as the inevitable result of the spirit of unruliness, according to the one-dimensional track of options available within the binary logic of the Orientalized other. Thus, the story’s pathos lies in the *self*-stifling of one’s drive to break boundaries, for – frightened by the ‘tableau of queerness’ by which the Other has been exoticized and Orientalized – the young boy is driven at the end of the story (in its last paragraph), in fear and disillusion, to suppress his own spirit of unruliness and to seek instead the safe normalcy of his less sensitive, more conventional, more ‘normal’, masculinist buddies: this is the first step towards becoming the adult Irishman who we will see repeatedly

²³ “The Roman, not the Sassenach, was for him the tyrant of the islander.” *Stephen Hero* (Frogmore: Triad / Panther Books, 1977), p. 52

²⁴ Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, race, empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 2-3

in Joyce's works, boxed in his corner and drowning out his sorrows and evading his problems in the male conviviality of drunkenness and braggadocio in the public house.²⁵

I see no grounds for assuming the old man is more frightening than his schoolmaster since Joyce emphasises his physical and emotional vulnerability and makes Father Butler sound like a very real menacing figure, who, as the comparison with Father Dolan suggests, can punish his charges on the slightest of pretexts. Yes, he is "frightened" and feels "fear", but this sensation can also include the excitement of a rites-of-passage encounter with taboo subjects. In connection with this idea, Cheng's use of the phrase "disillusioning discovery" seems limited to me. A central irony of the story is that the boy is on a superficial level disappointed not to experience the exciting adventure of his Wild West stories, but, on a more complex level, mesmerised by the emotional and cultural frontiers opening up to him in the strange figurement of the old man. It seems odd to understand the boy's behaviour at the close of the story as "self-stifling" and a form of repression since the boy offers an honest, critical assessment of his own false manner, which suggests to me that he knows that, actually, he has more in common with this strange old man than he does with his friend (for example, the boy's love of fictional "unkempt fierce and beautiful girls" [12] echoes to some degree the old man's fantasies). The story's *existence* suggests to me the opposite of repression in this manner since the adult figure has clearly brooded on the story for a number of years and is curious in his silent thinking through of its meanings. The narrative voice seems to me to belong to the opposite kind of figure Cheng describes as a likely extrapolation from the story: in listening so attentively to the "queer old josses" and wondering about his existence and the nature of his own fascination with the old man, the narrator is exploring himself and not "evading his problems".

Margot Norris's chapters on 'Clay', 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' and 'A Mother' in *Suspicious Readings of Dubliners* offer brilliant new readings of these stories. I do not agree with

²⁵ Ibid, p. 88

her, though, that all the stories dramatize an ‘unreliable’ narrator as an aspect of the stories’ meanings, and am sceptical about her claims that the stories show a preoccupation with rhetoric as a discourse in itself. I also think her methodology of reading backwards from *Ulysses* to shed light on *Dubliners* is unsound. For example, it seems convoluted and bizarre to assert that in ‘Grace’ the obscure Harford is important because it was in fact he who pushed Tom Kernan down the stairs for an unpaid debt.

Above all, I want to highlight the artistry of *Dubliners*. As Ezra Pound wrote of Joyce, “His true Penelope / Was Flaubert”.²⁶ Joyce delights in the challenge of making something beautiful out of what is inert, clumsy, nondescript, in a similar way to the French novelist, who wrote in a letter to Louise Colet about the difficulty of depicting the love of both the heroine’s husband and lover in *Madame Bovary* (1857), since they are similarly sober and inactive:

Ce sont deux médiocrités, dans le même milieu, et qu’il faut différencier
pourtant. Si c’est réussi, ce sera, je crois, très fort, car c’est peindre couleur
sur couleur et sans tons tranchés (ce qui est plus aise).²⁷

Joyce follows Flaubert’s sense of the magical nature of writing as he miraculously transforms the banality and mundaneness of petit-bourgeois Dublin domestic existence into enigmatic, delicately poised stories:

Ce qui me semble, à moi, le plus haut dans l’Art (et le plus difficile), ce n’est
ni de faire rire, ni de faire pleurer, ni de vous mettre en rut ou en fureur, mais
d’agir à la façon de la nature, c’est-à-dire de *faire rêver*. Aussi les très belles
oeuvres ont ce caractère. Elles sont sereines d’aspect et incompréhensibles.

²⁶ ‘Maunderley’ (1920), *Ezra Pound, Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 106

²⁷ Gustave Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet 15th January 1853, *Correspondance*, ed. by J. Bruneau (Paris: Gallimard 1980), p. 238. “Here are two mediocrities in the same milieu, and I must differentiate between them. If I bring it off, it will be a great achievement, I think, for it will be like painting in monotone without contrasts – not easy.” *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert*, Selected, edited and translated by Francis Steegmuller (London: Picador, 2001), p.246

Quant au procédé, elles sont immobiles comme des falaises, houleuses comme l'Océan, pleines de frondaisons, de verdure et de murmures comme des bois, tristes comme le désert, bleues comme le ciel.²⁸

²⁸ Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet 26 August 1853, *ibid*, p. 417. "What seems to me the highest and most difficult achievement of Art is not to make us laugh or cry, nor to arouse our lust or rage, but to do what nature does – that is, to set us dreaming. The most beautiful works have this quality. They are serene in aspect, inscrutable. The means by which they act on us are various: they are as motionless as cliffs, stormy as the ocean, leafy, green and murmurous as forests, forlorn as the desert, blue as the sky." Trans. Steegmuller, p. 271

(1) Laying siege to Tara

‘Araby’

Dublin, at the turn of the century, seemed for most Irish writers the least spiritual place on earth. The streets of dear, dirty Dublin, “paved with dust, horsedung and consumptives’ spits” (16), generated twice as many tons of street sweepings per mile per year as even larger cities such as Edinburgh or Leeds.¹ Infant mortality was as high as that of Calcutta: nearly 25% of children born in Dublin would not live to the age of one.² Death from tuberculosis was at a 50% higher rate than Scotland or England. Of the 9,000 people who died in Dublin in 1901, 1,160 died in the workhouses: in the absence of social welfare, the city’s poor were still dependent on the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838.³ According to the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded of 1908, the high rate of insanity in Dublin (63.5 per 10,000) was partly caused by the drinking of methylated spirits and sometimes turpentine. 30% of the 300,000 city population lived in the ‘slum jungle’ with one in three people living in a single room apartment with his (or her) family: a government inspector remarked of such living conditions that “even homelessness is preferable to some of these wretched abodes.”⁴ Such crowding extended to the city more generally since Dublin’s population density was double that of every major British city.⁵ The general crime rate of Dublin was five times higher than the rest of Ireland.⁶

For Michael McCarthy in *Priests and People in Ireland* (1902), the scale and toleration of the city’s prostitution (100 brothels and 500 known prostitutes according to a 1901 report), symbolized Dublin’s degradation:

¹ Hugh Kenner, *A Colder Eye* (London: Penguin, 1983), p. 199

² Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), p. 30

³ *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 52

⁴ Terry Golway, *For the Cause of Liberty* (New York; London: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 188

⁵ *Ibid*, p.188

⁶ Emmet Larkin, *James Larkin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1965), p. 41

[the Mecklenburgh Street area] constitutes, perhaps, the greatest blot up on the social life of Dublin and of Ireland. There is no such area in London, or in any other town of Great Britain, that I ever saw or heard of. Within this area the trade of prostitution and immorality is carried on as openly as any branch of legitimate business is carried on in the other portions of Dublin.⁷

One side of O'Connell Street was reserved for 'respectable people' and the other for prostitutes.⁸ Moral dereliction combined with political humiliation since much of the trade involved English soldiers. Dublin's shame was, in part, an aspect of its shamelessness. McCarthy notes, for example, that the red-light area he describes flourished in the very parish of the archbishop of Dublin.

Mary E. Daly, in *Dublin, The Deposed Capital*, records how Dublin, one of the ten greatest cities of Europe in 1800, had, by 1900, been overtaken by Belfast as Ireland's biggest city. The male manufacturing population had declined from 33% in 1841 to 20% in 1911 and one in seven of the potential workforce was unemployed. The major growth industries in Dublin in the nineteenth century were Guinness and biscuits and, the city lacking a proper industrial base, textile firms were Dublin's major employers. Until the advent of James Larkin in pre-War Dublin, strikes had always failed in the city because of "the city's abnormal proportion of casual workers and the consequent high level of chronic underemployment."⁹ Every year one in ten families was evicted for non-payment of rent. According to David Fitzpatrick, "investors remained reluctant to risk capital in what was still pictured as a lawless and indisciplined society."¹⁰

A mood of idleness, drift, inertia characterizes Joyce's city. The boy of 'An Encounter' sees "docile horses pulling a tramload of business people up the hill" (13) and has a friend called

⁷ Michael McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis Co. Ltd, 1902), p. 283

⁸ Larkin, *James Larkin*, p. 37- 42

⁹ Mary E. Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1984), p. 77

¹⁰ David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* ed. by Roy Foster (Oxford: OUP, 1989), p. 216 (p.213-75)

“Leo the idler” (11); the boy of ‘Araby’ plays with his friends under “feeble lanterns” (21), and passes “ruinous houses” before paying his entrance fee at the bazaar to “a weary-looking man” (26); the cars in ‘After the Race’ speed through “this channel of poverty and inaction” (35); the harpist of ‘Two Gallants’ glances “wearily” at the sky and the harp itself appears “weary alike of the eyes of strangers” (48); Little Chandler, in ‘A Little Cloud’, watches the sun’s rays fall upon “decrepit old men who drowsed on the benches” (65) and passes “poor stunted houses [...] stupefied by the panorama of sunset” (68) before meeting up with Gallaher, who refers to “old jog-along Dublin” (73); Mr Duffy, in ‘A Painful Case’, has “an inefficient oil-lamp” (106); in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’, Henchy exclaims “look at all the factories down by the quays there, idle!” (129). A historian writes that “the ‘inartistic and commercial spirit of the age’ had created a chaos of placard hoardings that spread like an unsightly rash across the face of the city and had occasioned mention in the Archbishop of Dublin’s Lenten pastoral in 1901 for their ‘demoralising tendency’.”¹¹ Joseph Kelly vividly pictures the city’s dilapidation: “Dublin, literally, was falling down. Factories were disused. Shops fell into disrepair. And the large mansions that once housed the city’s moneyed class had become slums.”¹²

By the beginning of the twentieth century Dublin had become a ghost-town. Traces of the city’s eighteenth century grandeur contrasted with modern squalor. Dublin at this time has been described as “architecturally one of the most beautiful in Europe [...] Apart from St.Petersburg, Dublin was the only European capital that retained the classical idiom throughout.”¹³ In ‘A Little Cloud’, Little Chandler walks “under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in which the old nobility of Dublin had roistered” (66). By 1907 only about a dozen peers resided in Dublin, and the middle classes, after the 1870s, had left the heart of the city for brighter and more airy surroundings on the outskirts of the city (Mr Duffy in ‘A Painful Case’ is an example of this exodus).¹⁴ Declan Kiberd points out how throughout the 1890s the ghosts of famine victims

¹¹ Joseph O’Brien, *Dear, Dirty Dublin, A City in Distress, 1899-1916* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), p. 68

¹² Joseph Kelly, *Our Joyce* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 18

¹³ Ulick O’Connor, *Celtic Dawn* (Dublin: Town House, 1999), p. 86

¹⁴ D.A. Chart, *The Story of Dublin* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1907), p. 118, 123

featured increasingly in folktales and prohibitions.¹⁵

This decline was partly an aspect of the huge decline in the Irish population after the 1840s famine: in the 1840s it stood at 8, 200, 000, in 1911 it was 4, 400,000. Economic failure was to some degree the fault of generations of self-serving municipal councillors (often with brewing interests) who saw nothing to gain from stopping the city degenerate into slum areas. Satire on municipal corruption, such as George Moore's *The Bending of the Bough* (1900) and Frederick Ryan's *The Laying of the Foundations* (1902), demonstrates, for example, the easy ensnarement of political vision in Dublin by cynical commercial interests and appeals to class loyalty. Diarmaid Ferriter observes how class self-protection helped cause the city's stagnation: "Those intent on reform through slum clearance and new construction often found their plans were overshadowed by the desire to contain contagious disease within the slums and the continued ghettoisation of the poor, who were often depicted as being morally as well as materially in dire straits, by both state and charity organizations."¹⁶

Joyce appears to have thought that decline was also an aspect of an attitude which, on the one hand, fatalistically accepted economic inertia as a consequence of imperial rule, and, on the other, lazily staved off the will to change until Home Rule finally dawned. Further blame must be directed at the British government whose sabotage of Irish industrial life after the Act of Union in 1801 had inevitably affected Dublin: for example, Dublin's shipping importance had narrowed to such an extent that by 1907, not only Belfast, but Cork had superseded it as a port. This is the rub of the Citizen's not wholly myopic lament for "our ruined trade" and "harbours that are empty" in 'Cyclops' (423, 425). Increasing sectarian division meant that within Dublin the 17% Protestant minority exerted a stranglehold over Catholic social and economic aspiration so that, according to Terence Brown, "energies were restrained by the limits placed upon ambition by a caste system which operated with almost comprehensive efficiency".¹⁷ There was, according to one historian, "no prosperous Catholic middle class based upon business enterprise. The only

¹⁵ Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p. 379

¹⁶ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 53

¹⁷ *Dubliners*, p. xxi

exceptions to this were the vintners or publicans,” and even these were stigmatized.¹⁸ Joseph Kelly reveals that according to the 1901 census, only 0.1 % of Catholics living in the capital held jobs which required a university education.¹⁹

A further reason for the popular cultural perception of Dublin as devoid of any spiritual life was its status as the capital of English colonial rule, whose pageantry of empire was daily enacted:

From parts of the city could be seen rearing up between the buildings monuments more than a hundred feet high to commemorate the victories of British admirals and generals. The streets were alive with military panoply, jaunty Royal Dublin Fusiliers with their crimson tunics and silk-edged Scots caps with streaming black ribbons, blue tunicked Hussars, Lancers with their black plumes nodding backward and forward over their steel helmets.²⁰

‘The season’ symbolised English domination in Dublin. It lasted from January to March, when the Viceregal court sat in Dublin Castle and the young women from country houses took residence in the city in the hope of acquiring husbands at the great balls and entertainment. George Moore’s *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) fulminated against the economic injustice which the Dublin season extravagantly represented: “In Ireland every chicken eaten, every glass of champagne drunk, every silk dress trailed in the street, every rose worn at a ball comes straight out of the peasant’s cabin.”²¹ Joyce’s impression of a combination of Catholic Dubliners’ economic fatigue of spirit and a permeating sense of political malaise, post Parnell, is captured in the image of the city’s people as “the gratefully oppressed” (‘After the Race’[35]) The image suggests a collective sense of inertia and cowardice, a preference for order and peace, however

¹⁸ A. Humphreys, *New Dubliners* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 49

¹⁹ Kelly, *Our Joyce*, p. 20

²⁰ O’Connor, *Celtic Dawn*, p. 87

²¹ *Ibid*, p.67

stultifying, over political freedom.

Lady Wilde, in *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887), explains the history of Irish suspicion about Dublin and its inhabitants:

Dublin [...] differs from all other capitals, past or present, in this wise - that by its history we trace, not the progress of the native race, but the triumphs of its enemies; and that the concentrated will of Dublin has always been in antagonism to the feelings of a large portion of the nation [...] From first to last, from a thousand years ago till now, Dublin has held the position of a foreign fortress within the kingdom; and its history has no other emblazonment beyond that of unceasing hostility or indifference to the native race [...] Dublin is connected with Irish patriotism only by the scaffold and the gallows [...] no effort for national independence could gain nourishment in Dublin [...] In truth, Dublin is a right royal city, and never fails in reverential respect towards her English mother.²²

The hyperbole here (“always”, “first to last”, “a thousand years”) might make us question the accuracy of Lady Wilde’s account. Not content with labelling Dubliners as sychophantic traitors and seemingly forgetful of her own dubious Anglo-Irish descent, Lady Wilde goes on to claim that Dubliners are not, in fact, Irish at all:

The inhabitants are a blended race, descended of Danes, Normans, Saxon settlers, and mongrel Irish. The country of their affections is England. They have known no other mother. With the proud old princes and chiefs of the ancient Irish race they have no more affinity than (to use Mr Macaulay’s

²² Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (London: Ward & Downey, 1887), p. 283-4, 323

illustration) the English of Calcutta with the nation of Hindustan, and from this colonial position a certain Dublin idiosyncrasy of character has resulted, which makes the capital distinct in feeling from the rest of Ireland.²³

For romantic nationalists such as Lady Wilde, Tara was the real, ancient capital of Ireland and the original Irish people had no connection with northern Saxon invaders, but instead were a mixture of oriental seafarers (from Tyre and Greece) and Spanish settlers. In 1862, John Pigot, a Fenian publicist, had written a constitution for an independent Irish Republic which ruled out Dublin as the potential capital, instead preferring Athlone for the legislature and Limerick for the executive.²⁴ Paul Delaney refers to Dublin's "ambiguous status" at this time: "a city living off agriculture yet alienated from rural ways, and relying on English goodwill to sustain its modest commercial and administrative activities."²⁵ A Dublin resident's consideration of himself as a 'Dubliner' at this time was also equivocal since there had been a flood of migrants to the city in the 1890s and 1900s (including Nora Barnacle), so that by 1901 33% of the capital's citizens had been born elsewhere.²⁶ Such sensitivity is evident in 'Grace' where established Dubliners enjoy asserting a sense of their urban sophistication by mocking the rural policeman who features at the start of the story and his colleagues: "these thundering big country fellows, omadhauns" (160). The late nineteenth century political emphasis on land issues under Parnell and Davitt combined with these cultural forces to shape perceptions of Dublin as a kind of politically bastardised, pseudo-industrial wasteland.

An important aspect in the perception of Dublin as essentially unIrish was the Catholic Church's hostility towards city life, which seemed to embody materialism, consumerism and individualism. This was a powerful factor given the dramatic rise in the Church's influence in the nineteenth century. Diarmaid Ferriter states that priests "placed a strong emphasis on the values

²³ Ibid, p. 334

²⁴ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), p. 119

²⁵ Paul Delaney, 'Joyce's Political Development and the Aesthetics of *Dubliners*', *College English* 34.2 (November, 1972), p.259 (p.256-66).

²⁶ James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge; New York: CUP, 1993), p. 75

of the farm society [which] gave rise to a distrust and revulsion at the prospect of city life.”

Canon Sheehan’s popular novels illustrate this attitude as they “decried a decay in culture and manners, depicting city materialism as a retreat towards paganism, which priests, but also women, were central in combating. Fictional clerical characters were often depicted championing the development of cottage industry in their districts, as if to immunise the Church from any charge that their anti-urban bias was hindering economic development.”²⁷ K.Theodore Hoppen refers to the Church’s “deep-seated fear of the modern and of urbanism”.²⁸

Tom Garvin explains how Dublin’s cultural shallowness symbolized the capital’s more general dismal and despised status:

The Dublin stage and popular musical hall, mainly showing imported plays and shows from London, horrified both priests and patriots. In the case of the clergy, their horror appears to have been magnified by the fact that they were forbidden to see the offending shows and had to rely on their own imaginations or second-hand information; empiricism was not their forte. [...] Dublin was the symbol not only of the arrogant and unforgivably brilliant achievements of eighteenth century Anglo-Ireland but also of the readiness of the native Irish, in their debased urban and proletarian condition, to accept Anglo-American vulgarity and corruption while ignoring the cultural riches of the Irish past and of rural society.²⁹

Joseph O’Brien describes the capital at this time as “a city lacking a cultivated musical taste, having artistic pretensions, and being in great peril of sinking into provincialism.” Its most

²⁷ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 83. Ferriter quotes Garvin’s description of O’Leary’s book in *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928*.

²⁸ K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), p. 148. In *Stephen Hero* (1904-6), Joyce discerns a similarly reactionary tendency in the Church’s support of the language movement: “Do you not see, said Stephen, that they encourage the study of Irish that their flocks may be more safely protected from the wolves of disbelief; they consider it is an opportunity to withdraw the people into a past of literal, implicit faith.” (p.52)

²⁹ Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland*, p. 69, 103

popular entertainment was the music hall at the Empire Palace, which boasted pedestal clay dancers, boomerang throwers, acrobats, boxing kangaroos, performing pigs, “nine real negroes” and “two Hebrews”.³⁰

Moore’s *Parnell and his Ireland* (1887) presented Dublin as inimical to anything artistic, something of an indictment given that Moore saw himself as a naturalistic writer who might be supposed to find surprising, interesting qualities in urban places. The city was either bland or colourless:

The character of Dublin is the absence of any characteristic touch. Dublin is neither ugly, nor pretty, nor modern, nor ancient, but all these qualifications might be applied to an “old-clo’ shop.”

Or Dublin was seen as wild: “Dublin is in a barbarous state, and what is worse, in a retrograde state”, or a form of hellish urban Gothic:

On either side there are sombre and sinister streets, aged and decrepit buildings filled with old books rotting in dark and foetid confusion; dark holes where, in Rembrandt *chiaroscuro*, you see the form of a hag groping amidst heaps of something – something that may be clothes; shops where suspicious-looking women pretend to sell cheap cigars; others where placards announce the excellence of obscene goods manufactured on the premises; then the perspective floats in a slight curve, and is lost in the smoke of breweries and distilleries, an appropriate horizon for this town’s miserable vice and hideous decrepitude.³¹

³⁰ O’Brien, *Dear, Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899-1916*, p. 45-7

³¹ George Moore, *Parnell and his Ireland* (London: Sonnenschein & Co., 1887), p. 13, 19

This is a direct imitation of Zola's description of the slum area in Paris, Passage du Pont-Neuf, at the start of *Thérèse Raquin*. Cheap shops, distasteful modern commerce (what are these "obscene goods"?), physical dereliction, vice, beer: this is the Dublin of popular imagination at the time of Joyce's writing *Dubliners*, a decaying heap which allows fashionable writers the opportunity to practise ironic picturesque. Such horror is glimpsed occasionally in *Dubliners* as the rough, sub-working-class existence over which the working-class and petit-bourgeois characters hover nervously: the "squalid streets where the families of fishermen live" in 'An Encounter' (16); the "horde of grimy children [...] minute vermin-like life" in 'A Little Cloud'; the "ragged urchins [...] yelling out the names of evening editions" of 'Counterparts' (89); the "hobbling wretches whom [Mr Duffy] had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman" (111). In *The Untilled Field* (1903) a young sculptor "had always looked upon Dublin as a place to escape from", and "no more believed in finding a good model in Dublin than he believed in Christianity."³²

If a writer deigned to turn his eye towards Dublin it seemed inevitable that the result would be a simplistic version of Zola's naturalism. James Stephens' poem, 'The Street Behind Yours' (*Insurrections*, 1909), for example, evokes the image of a mother surrounded by houses that are "black and sour" and "spectre files", staring ahead through the "hell-dark pits" of a slum as she suckles a baby at her "battered breast" and sits "squatting" at the entrance to her "black cave".³³ The genre of popular ghost stories was the only form in which Dublin, literature, and an other-worldly mood came together, legends whose points of interest were sensationalist gruesome detail and the frisson of proximity. Legends about the ghost of Pat Doyle haunting the Marshalsea Barracks, the Hanging Judge (of Robert Emmet) wailing tormentedly in a house in Cabra, the Widow Gammon spectrally bemoaning her betrayal of monks to Cromwell's soldiers in Monkstown, formed part of a gothic oral tradition whose counterpart in literary melodrama was Sheridan Le Fanu. Dublin's dark midnight streets might spook you, but they would not lead

³² George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), p. 11, 12

³³ James Stephens, *Insurrections* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1909), p. 9, 10

you towards any form of spiritual experience. Vivian Mercier says that “apart from histories, street directories, and guidebooks such as *The Neighbourhood of Dublin* by Weston St. John Joyce, and novels about duelling playboys by Charles Lever and Sheridan Le Fanu, the literature of Dublin consists almost entirely of the works of Joyce.”³⁴

Dublin must have appeared to Douglas Hyde as the grim writing on the wall for the rest of Ireland’s future: “if something were not done quickly, the Ireland of monuments and cottages will be inundated by a flood of black spuming factories, traveling salesmen and cockney corner-boys”.³⁵ Yeats shaped this “something”. He directed patriotic attention to the tales and heroic myths of Ireland’s golden age, which were accorded semi-religious status, and so by-passed English influences on Irish national identity and established a crusading revivalist rhetoric for modern nationalists. This also side-stepped possible contemporary controversy about Irish cultural identity, though I think G.J.Watson is being naïve here when he states that Yeats’s preoccupations were not political:

Yeats saw in the Old Irish myths and legends [...] a subject that was undoubtedly national, but untinged by modern politics and modern hatreds. [...] The unity of the culture desiderated in the future would be sought for first in the remote past.³⁶

Yeats’s elevation of the spiritual status of Gaelic and peasant folk tales mythologized an unspoilt repository of Irish consciousness stretching back to the time of Cuchulain. England represented commerce and materialism, Ireland imagination and spirituality, a traditional nineteenth century formulation which Yeats found in Duffy’s *Young Ireland* (1880), as Herbert Howarth explains: “Duffy quoted lengthy passages from Davis, the burthen of which was that Ireland, physically and politically oppressed by Britain, would be finally and irrevocably

³⁴ Vivian Mercier, ‘Dublin Under the Joyces’, *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed. by Seon Givens (New York: Vanguard Press, 1948), p. 286 (p.285-301).

³⁵ *Irish Classics*, p. 8

³⁶ G.J.Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival* (Washington: Catholic University of America: 1994), p. 94

conquered if she gave up her imaginative intensity by imitating British commercialism.”³⁷

Another influence was William Morris’s utopian vision which celebrated the countryside and peasant industries as against ugly industrial towns,³⁸ idealised the medieval age in contrast to soulless modernity, and drew inspiration from the mythology of unspoilt primitive cultures.

Yeats’s project was framed in opposition to all that the modern city (such as Dublin) represented: “in every art, when we consider that it has need of a renewing of life, we go backward till we light upon a time when it was nearer to human life and instinct, before it had gathered about it so many mechanical specialisations and traditions.”³⁹ The peasants’ conversations were, he claimed, “full of vivid images shaped hardly more by life itself than by innumerable forgotten pasts.” Oral story-tellers were mystics in touch with timeless Platonic wisdom: the “old stories of the folk [...] were made by men who believed so much in the soul, and so little in anything else, that they were never entirely certain that the earth was solid under their foot-sole.”⁴⁰ The revivalist project aimed to give the peasant a share in national culture (for instance through the collecting of folk stories), an implicit alternative to the slavish position of the urban worker who passively absorbed whatever commercialised ‘culture’ was directed at him, such as the English farces and music-hall shows which dominated Dublin’s theatres and the “garbage of vulgar English weeklies” (Hyde) which schoolboys consumed.⁴¹ Yeats maintained that “the decisive element in the attempt to revive and preserve the Irish language” was the desire “to restore what is called a more picturesque way of life [...] a way of life in which the common man has some share in imaginative life.”⁴² Edward Hirsch, in ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, sees such aestheticization of the peasant as a reaction against English stereotyping of the Irish: “Largely as a result of heavy post famine emigration into the worst English slums, the rise of the Fenian movement in the 1860s, and the dramatic succession of violent agrarian revolts in the

³⁷ Herbert Howarth, *The Irish Writers* (London: Rockliff, 1958), p. 21

³⁸ “I owe my soul”, Yeats declared, “to Shakespeare, to Spenser and to Blake, perhaps to William Morris.”

P. Conrad, *The Everyman History of English Literature* (London: Dent, 1985), p. 546

³⁹ W.B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962), p. 210

⁴⁰ W.B. Yeats, *Plays and Controversies* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 123

⁴¹ Douglas Hyde, ‘The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland’, in *The Revival of Irish Literature* by Gavan Duffy (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), p. 159 (p.115-61).

⁴² Yeats, *Explorations*, p. 205

west of Ireland, the stage Irishman was reduced in British characterizations to a subhuman figure, a 'white Negro' portrayed in Punch as a primitive Frankenstein or peasant Caliban."⁴³

Celtic Twilight nostalgia surrounding the peasant had a double aspect. Firstly, the writers themselves all had a common root in the west of Ireland: Hyde was from Sligo and Roscommon, Yeats from Sligo, Moore was an absentee Mayo landlord, Martyn's Galway estate was close to Lady Gregory's Coole Park, Synge, although from the outskirts of Dublin, was by inclination a countryman. Secondly, in the changes to agrarian practices after the Famine, the traditional peasant who worked the soil was becoming an increasingly endangered species as, according to David Fitzpatrick, farmers responded to "the growing commercial attractiveness of pasturage as against tillage".⁴⁴ F.S. Lyons observes that "the general effect of the economic changes [in Ireland] of the second half of the nineteenth century was to substitute a rural bourgeoisie for a rural proletariat."⁴⁵ Hirsch argues of the Revival that the "supposed empiricism was the brilliant ruse of an elaborate cultural discourse [...] peasants no longer existed as such by the time they were being fiercely 'discovered'".⁴⁶ Even outside Celtic Twilight philosophy, the peasant was hailed as hero. Michael Davitt, for example, dedicated *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (1904) to "the Celtic Peasantry of Ireland and their Kinsfolk Beyond the Seas", and concluded that "the poorest of workers – the tillers of the soil in Ireland – succeeded by combination in overthrowing an all-powerful territorial aristocracy" and "induced" successive English governments to loan vast sums of money to the Irish people in order to cure "some of the evils of class misrule."⁴⁷

The most western islands off the west coast, as J.W. Foster, in *Fictions of the Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, explains, possessed mythic status because of a combination of factors. These included their geographical distance from England; the difficulty of actually gaining access to the Aran and the Blasket Islands, which created a sense of religious pilgrimage; the survival of ruins and remains which memorialized an unconquered Celtic Ireland; the belief

⁴³ Edward Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', *PMLA* 106.5 (October, 1991), p. 1119 (p.1116-34).

⁴⁴ Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870', *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. Foster, p. 216

⁴⁵ F.S. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1971), p. 41-2

⁴⁶ Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1117-8

⁴⁷ Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York: Harper and Brothers, 1904), p. 725

that the islanders were genealogically linked to the earliest Irish Celts; and the superstition that just beyond these islands existed the supernatural 'Land of the Young'. He says that the west of Ireland "came to represent Ireland's mythic unity before the chaos of conquest: there at once were the vestige and the symbolic entirety of an undivided nation. Those who composed such a nation existed before selfhood, they inhabited mythic time before the advent of chronology and a mythic community before the coming of individuality".⁴⁸ According to Renan in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races* (1854), Ireland's geographical isolation had ensured that "the race has remained pure from all admixture of alien blood [...] the only country in Europe where the native can produce the titles of his descent, and designate with certainty, even in the darkness of prehistoric ages, the race from which he has sprung".⁴⁹

Seamus Deane, however, explains the historical inaccuracy behind such mythologizing of the west of Ireland:

The apotheosis of the west of Ireland as the last bastion of of the ancient culture of Europe had very little to sanction it historically. The so-called clachan villages of the West had appeared in the late eighteenth century as the population exploded and the previously untilled lands of the West were taken over to accommodate the expansion. With the series of economic disasters that followed upon the end of the Napoleonic Wars and culminated in the potato blight, the West became depopulated again. But in its desolation, it was reconstrued as the remnant of an ancient civilization that had survived in this vestigial form from ancient times. Thus, it remained picturesque, but its history was rewritten and its geography reconstructed.

Tourism was, so to say, internalized as a spiritual quest for the country's

⁴⁸ J.W. Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 96-7

⁴⁹ Ernest Renan, *The Poetry of the Celtic Races*, trans W.G. Hutchinson (London: Walter Scott Ltd., 1892), p. 2,5

essential spirit.⁵⁰

Yeats and A.E. intensified the spiritual dimensions of rural Ireland by mixing theosophical ideas about meditation and unity (in terms of the mystical One Spirit) with a view of Nature as a place of sacred, peaceful communion. Warwick Gould links such ideas to Yeats's reading of *The Golden Bough*:

At the heart of the planned Celtic Mystical Order, with its headquarters at Lough Key, was a belief that every hollow and hill of Ireland had immemorial associations with the country's mythology, and that such associations could be awakened, magically or mystically, so that through a discovery of folklore and its narratives the country would become 'a Holy Land, as it was before men gave their hearts to Greece and Rome, and Judea'.⁵¹

The mystics' envisaged 'Golden Dawn' was a political awakening for Ireland as well as the mystical manifestation of an old spirituality in modern consciousness.

Joyce regarded 'The Golden Dawn' as not hope for a new Ireland, but rather the pulling of bedclothes over the national consciousness in order to dream of a lost and irrecoverable Ireland. *Dubliners* makes good Joyce's promise in 'The Holy Office' (August 1904) to take to task this mythologizing of Irish spirituality. 'The Holy Office' mocks what J.C.C. Mays calls "Dublin Platonism"⁵² and advertises Joyce's plan to bring "to tavern and to brothel" the hard empirical reasoning of "witty Aristotle". It is a parody of Yeats's 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' (1892) in which Yeats places himself in a tradition of Irish poets who sing "to sweeten

⁵⁰ Deane, 'The Production of Cultural Space in Irish Writing', p. 125-6

⁵¹ Warwick Gould, 'Frazer, Yeats and the Reconsecration of Folklore', in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination*, ed. by Robert Fraser (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 133 (p.121-53). He quotes from Yeats's *Explorations* (1902).

⁵² J.C.C. Mays, *James Joyce, Poems and Exiles* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 332

Ireland's wrong".⁵³ Joyce refers in coded form to his enemies (Yeats, Synge, Gogarty, Colum, Eglinton, Roberts, Starkey, A.E.) and explains the dynamic of his antipathetical relationship to them:

But all these men of whom I speak
Make me the sewer of their clique.
That they may dream their dreamy dreams
I carry off their filthy streams
For I can do those things for them
Through which I lost my diadem,
Those things for which Grandmother Church
Left me severely in the lurch.
Thus I relieve their timid arses,
Perform my office of Katharsis.
My scarlet leaves them white as wool:
Through me they purge a bellyfull.
To sister mummers one and all

⁵³ *W.B. Yeats, The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 70. The poem is also inspired by the concluding lines of Ben Jonson's *The Poetaster* (1601), which also appear in the poem 'An Ode To Himself.', where Jonson expresses his determination to counter the foolishness of contemporary writing and bravely stand alone, disdainful of popular applause: "And since our dainty age / Cannot endure reproof, / Make not thyself a page, / To that strumpet the stage, / But sing high and aloof, / Safe from the wolf's black jaw, and the dull ass's hoof", G. Parfitt, *Ben Jonson, The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 70. (cf. Joyce's "I stand the self-doomed, unafraid / Unfellowed, friendless and alone, / Indifferent as the herring-bone"). Another model here may have been George Crabbe, about whom Joyce wrote: "At a time when false sentiment and the 'genteel style' were fashionable [...] Crabbe appeared as a champion for realism." (Joseph Kelly, *Our Joyce*, p. 59)

I act as vicar-general
And for each maiden, shy and nervous,
I do a similar kind service.

The extended metaphor is that of Joyce's writing as a form of sewerage: he will write about what is ugly and what people naturally want to hide. The connection between "sewer" and "dreamy dreams" is that Celtic Twilight ideas, for all their romance and idealism, *cause* spiritual mess and unpleasantness. The irony of Joyce as martyred amoral priest has a double turn. The joke of the anti-clerical acting as a conduit of subliminal confession co-exists with very real inherited Catholic antipathy towards Protestant parvenus who aspired to substitute paganism for Catholicism as the true core of Irish racial identity. Edward Larrisy observes that for Yeats "Christian Ireland is, in part, a displaced image of the modern world, of which England is the most awful example."⁵⁴ In 'The Wanderings of Oisín' (1889), Yeats contrasts the sensual, free and imaginative vision of the druid who rules 'The Land of the Young' ("For joy is God and God is joy") with the sterile, aggressively ascetic punishments of St. Patrick ("But kneel and wear out the flags and pray for your soul that is lost / Through the demon love of its youth and its godless and passionate age").⁵⁵ G.J. Watson observes how Synge in *The Aran Islands* (1905) "plays down, almost to the point of suppression, the Catholic aspects of the spiritual life of the islanders", and in *Riders to the Sea* (1902), Catholicism appears as "a thin veneer for a deeply pagan sensibility".⁵⁶ Similarly, D.G. Boyce remarks of the seminal speech to the Irish Literary Society of 1892, 'The Necessity for de-anglicizing Ireland':

Hyde failed to mention a central fact in Irish history: religion. [...] Hyde was calling not only for the de-anglicization of Ireland but, by de-anglicization, for the de-sectarianisation of Ireland; for the denial of the sectarian nature

⁵⁴ Edward Larrisy, *W.B. Yeats* (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1998), p. 8

⁵⁵ *W.B. Yeats, The Poems*, ed. by Albright, p. 8, 31

⁵⁶ Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival*, p. 45

of Irish history, and for a place in the new Ireland – a leading place, moreover, for himself and his people.⁵⁷

Joyce was angry with the Revivalists because of their dismissive attitude towards the early Irish Church and their setting up of a simple contrast between spiritual Celtic heroism and the deadening influence of the Church. As Len Platt explains in ‘Joyce and the Anglo-Irish Revival: The Triestine Lectures’,

according to Revivalist historiography, Catholicism was a foreign import which had tamed the wild, native Celtic spirit; the dialogues of Oisín and St. Patrick imaged the eternal conflict between the heroic and the Christian ideal, and, in the opinion of Ernest Boyd, one of the earliest historians of the Revival, ‘the most distinguished of the Irish poets have all been on the side of Oisín, they have all made the same protest, and their work is tinged by regret for the joylessness of an age which is unfit to be compared with the great age of which the bards sang’.⁵⁸

Platt draws attention to Yeats’s lack of interest in the early Church, despite writing over two hundred articles about ancient Ireland, and contrasts Yeats’s indifference to Mangan, a Catholic, with Joyce’s view that he was “the most distinguished poet of the modern Celtic world”.⁵⁹

Joyce’s 1907 lecture in Trieste, ‘Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages’ redresses the apparent injustice of the Celtic Revivalists’ dismissal of the early Church and argues that Catholicism is the historical father of the Irish soul, as opposed to the fabricated Celtic mythology presented by the Revivalists. He points out how Ireland used to be “a true centre of intellectualism and sanctity”, underlines the Church’s reputation as a “teacher of spiritual

⁵⁷ D.G. Boyce ‘One last burial: Culture, Counter-Revolution and Revolution in Ireland, 1886-1916’, in *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-23*, ed. by D.G. Boyce (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), p. 127 (p.115-137).

⁵⁸ Len Platt, ‘Joyce and the Anglo-Irish Revival: The Triestine Lectures’, *James Joyce Quarterly* 29.2 (Winter, 1992), p.260 (p.259-67).

⁵⁹ *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. by Kevin Barry (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p.130

matters”, and contrasts the muddle of Protestant thinking with “the coherent absurdity that is Catholicism.”⁶⁰

References in ‘The Holy Office’ to “scholarship”, “heterodoxy”, “indulgences”, “Dante”, “Aquinas” maintain the importance of Joyce’s Catholic background as the determining characteristic of his opposition to those who would claim to speak for Ireland. Stanislaus Joyce attests to his brother’s attitude in in this respect:

Jim professed a great contempt for the morality of the Irish mystics. He said their leaving the church was useless and nominal, for when they left it they tried to become latter-day saints. Even as such they do not compare either for consistency, holiness, or especially charity with a fifth-rate saint of the Catholic Church.⁶¹

Such hostility is evident in a letter to Stanislaus:

If it is not too far-fetched to say that my action, and that of men like Ibsen &c, is a virtual intellectual strike. I would call such people as Gogarty and Yeats and Colm the blacklegs of literature. Because they have tried to substitute us, to serve the old idols at a lower rate when we refused to do so for a higher.⁶²

Joyce’s imagery of strikes and blacklegs, perhaps coloured by escalating pre-War labour unrest, sounds obscure. I think there is a sense of Joyce stating that he is going to play by his own rules and not those of a higher authority (i.e. cultural expectation about Irish writing). He seems to be contrasting his own principled resistance to Catholicism and his pained refusal to accommodate the charm of Irish patriotism with the seemingly easy and untroubled acceptance of ‘Irishness’ by

⁶⁰ *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p.108-26

⁶¹ Stanislaus Joyce, *Dublin Diary* (London: Faber and Faber: 1962), p.108

⁶² Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus, 6th November, 1906. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Ellmann, p.125

the Celtic school. Such compromise is doubly provocative since it assumes that someone such as Joyce, who has carefully thought through his position, can somehow be hoodwinked into relaxing the rigour of his opposition. The idea of falsity and substitution lies behind Seamus Deane's description of patriots in the late nineteenth century turning to "the fast-food, instant Irishry of Young Ireland's doggerel and dogma and to the variants of of heroic Celticism, recycled through translations from, or redactions of, Irish-language originals."⁶³

The "clique" of Yeats, A.E., and Lady Gregory and their followers was Anglo-Irish (with the exception of Edward Martyn and the fluctuating George Moore) and this, as F.S. Lyons explains, fuelled Joyce's irritation with their claim to speak for 'Ireland':

They could work with the Church or condemn its obscurantism as need arose without having first to undergo a spiritual crisis. They could treat the language question on its merits without having to agonize about its symbolic significance. Even nationalism was not a tradition they were born into, it was something alien which required an effort of the will, a conscious decision, to embrace - and which, for precisely that reason, could be held at arm's length and critically inspected whenever necessary.⁶⁴

J.W. Foster points out the irony in Protestant Ascendancy writers' transformation of Celtic legends:

In colonizing and exploiting Gaelic literature the *littérateurs* imposed an urban discourse upon a rural (in the case of folklore), a modern upon an ancient (in the case of bardic literature), an English upon an Irish (in the case of both) [...] Superficially a reversion to Irishness, in reality it was a diversion *from* Irishness.⁶⁵

⁶³ Deane, 'The Production of Cultural Space in Irish Writing', p.124

⁶⁴ F.S. Lyons, 'James Joyce's Dublin', *Twentieth Century Studies* 4 (November, 1970), p. 22 (p.6-25)

⁶⁵ Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 44

Critics have suggested complex undercurrents in the Celtic Twilight project. Declan Kiberd sees the literary revival partly as a reaction against strict evangelical anti-popery in the Church of Ireland towards the end of the nineteenth century which saw a clampdown on the use of candles and wafers and the placement of a crucifix on the communion table. “Yet these revisions seemed to unleash only waves of further irrationalism: it would not be fanciful to list them as major causes of the literary Revival, which saw so many men and women of Protestant background embrace peasant spirituality”.⁶⁶ Despite the anti Catholic nature of the Revival, it still, ironically, contained elements which suggested a nostalgia for Catholic ritual.

Similarly, Roy Foster traces subtle political and cultural anxieties in the fascination with Theosophy and folk magic:

WBY (and, indeed, Russell and Johnston) might be located in a particular tradition of Irish Protestant interest in the occult, which stretched back through Sheridan Le Fanu and Charles Maturin, took in WBY’s contemporary Bram Stoker, and carried forward to Elizabeth Bowen: all figures from the increasingly marginalised Irish Protestant middle class, from families with strong clerical connections, declining fortunes and a tenuous hold on landed authority. An interest in the occult might be seen on one level as a strategy for coping with contemporary threats (Catholicism plays a strong part in all their fantasies), and on another as a search for psychic control.⁶⁷

J.W. Foster supports this idea by suggesting twin aspects of Yeats’s enthusiasm for collecting folk tales. On the one hand, the nostalgic yearning for the past displays conservatism connected to Anglo-Irish late nineteenth century vulnerability about status and survival (“the

⁶⁶ Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p.382

⁶⁷ Roy Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p.50

interest has about it something of a rearguard action”). On the other,

“the indisputable paganism of the Irish peasant, lying as an elder faith beneath his adopted Catholicism, had another useful contribution to make to the revival. The revivalist who identified with it felt his Irishness had now a spiritual dimension, something which the Catholicism of his countrymen, in especial the candles of the Irish poor, had hitherto prevented him from feeling. Here was an ironic reversal of the soup-kitchen conversion of the Famine, in which Catholics became Protestants in exchange for food!”⁶⁸

Joyce might also have resented the Celtic Twilight project as a Protestant Ascendancy means of diverting national attention away from immediate issues at a time, post Parnell and the failure of Gladstone’s Second Home Rule Bill in 1893, when Ireland acutely needed to refocus its political energies. Lady Gregory specifically contrasted dull, limited politics with the appeal of the literary revival: “Young men were no longer tied up in leagues and politics, their imagination called out for something more.”⁶⁹ The thesis of Yeats’ ‘The Intellectual Revival in Ireland’ (1903) was that Parnell’s political unification of Ireland was injurious to intellectual individualism, which burst out afterwards. The Celtic Twilight vision was for Joyce a dangerous masquerade in that it appeared nationalistic and concerned with the needs of modern Ireland but, in fact, attempted to substitute questionable notions of spirituality for a political and social consciousness which might improve Irish national life.

Joyce allegorizes this suspicion in the figure of Little Chandler in ‘A Little Cloud’ who wanders through poor, squalid Dublin streets, composing “Celtic note” (69) poetry whilst oblivious to the desperate conditions which surround him:

⁶⁸ Foster, *Fictions of the Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 210

⁶⁹ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 34

A horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the thresholds. Little Chandler gave them no thought. He picked his way deftly through all that minute vermin-like life [...] As he crossed Grattan Bridge he looked down the river towards the lower quays and pitied the poor stunted houses. They seemed to him a band of tramps, huddled together along the river-banks, their old coats covered with dust and soot, stupefied by the panorama of sunset and waiting for the first chill of night to bid them arise, shake themselves and begone. He wondered whether he could write a poem to express his idea. (66-8)

The observer moves to a perspective of a city without a suffering Catholic population since he is more moved to pity by buildings than people. He wants to escape mentally from Dublin as quickly as possible. Spirituality becomes a *poetic idea*. Even within the Celtic Twilight circle, John Eglinton saw the danger of playing into colonial hands, arguing, against Yeats, that with the Celt of the popular imagination “his visionary disposition is partial to that conservatism which has so helped his enemies. So long as the other world lies within call and prospect, there will never be any active instinct to redress the wrongs of this.”⁷⁰

Revivalist cultivation of Irish rural identity also created damaging consequences for Irish urban centres. Mary E. Daly explains how such cultural attitudes served to condemn the city of Dublin to second-rate status and a state of economic and civic atrophy:

The lack of political commitment on the Dublin housing question is in marked contrast to the attention given to the social and economic problems of rural Ireland. This reflects the relative political weakness of Irish cities; their

⁷⁰ John Eglinton, ‘The Irish Mythological Cycle’ (1903) in *Anglo-Irish Essays* (Dublin: Talbot Press / London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1917), p. 40 (p.34-40)

stagnation during the nineteenth century, and an undefined feeling that urban Ireland was somehow alien to the true Irish identity.

She points out how rural Ireland benefited from the system of land purchase after 1870, a special programme of state investment to improve housing, and a system of low-cost housing for rural labourers with subsidised government loans, whereas “in contrast Irish cities received nothing until 1908 when the Clancy act provided a paltry £6,000 per annum subsidy towards the cost of urban housing schemes.”⁷¹

Another effect of mythologizing Irish racial characteristics as spiritually pure was the encouragement, however unintentionally, of hostility to variant forms of Irishness, as evident in the Citizen’s aggression towards Bloom in ‘Cyclops’. That chapter’s alternation of chivalric epic style and demotic Dublinese suggests the easy slide between high-sounding romantic celebration of national identity and brutal antipathy to anything which appears to sully Irish purity. Celtic Twilight theorizing in this respect created a cultural context in which xenophobia can seem more natural. In ‘Grace’ we see such tribal xenophobia in the attitudes of Kernan and his friends’ towards Harford:

Though he had never embraced more than the Jewish ethical code his fellow-Catholics, whenever they had smarted in person or by proxy under his exactions, spoke of him bitterly as an Irish-Jew and an illiterate and saw divine disapproval of usury made manifest through the person of his idiot son. (159)

That Jews in Limerick in 1904 had used the term ‘pogrom’ to describe local hostility towards their presence was a vivid reminder of the potentially unpleasant consequences of popular literary stereotyping.⁷² Tom Garvin describes general anxiety at this time about ‘race-death’: “there was

⁷¹ Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital*, p. 319, 321

⁷² A local Catholic priest had suggested Jews were “sucking the blood of other nations and must not be allowed to do the same in Ireland”, and had called for a commercial boycott of Jewish firms. Ferriter, *The Transformation of*

an essentially historicist notion around that the Catholic population of Ireland was going to continue to decline as it had done since the Famine.” ‘The Leader’, in September 1903, warned that the island would be uninhabited by 2002.⁷³

Joyce’s attitude shares something of D.P. Moran’s contempt towards the Celtic school as expressed in six articles written in the *New Ireland Review* between 1898 and 1900 (which would turn into *The Philosophy of Ireland* in 1905).⁷⁴ Although he would have been wary of Moran’s provincial narrow-mindedness which was distinctly anti-urban, Joyce seems to agree with Moran on a range of issues.⁷⁵ Also from a Catholic background, Moran is scathing about the Celtic school’s Anglo-Irish nationalism:

A certain number of Irish literary men have “made a market” - just as stock -jobbers do in another commodity - in a certain vague thing, which is indistinctly known as the “Celtic note” in English literature, and they earn their fame and livelihood by supplying the demand which they have honourably and with much advertising created [...] an intelligent people are asked to believe that the manufacture of the before mentioned “Celtic note” is a grand symbol of an Irish national intellectual awakening. This, it appears to me, is one of the most glaring frauds that the credulous Irish people ever swallowed [...]

Ireland, 1900-2000, p. 91. ‘The Leader’ published an article which worried that farmers might come under Jewish financial control.

⁷³ Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928*, p. 72

⁷⁴ His familiarity with Moran’s views seems evident in ‘The Dead’ where Gabriel worries that he might be a “West Briton” (188) and plays out a drama of national identity which actualises Moran’s fourth article, ‘Politics, Nationality and Snobs’. In *Ulysses*, the references to the Guinness brothers as “the noble twin brothers Bungiveah and Bungardilaun”, and the Citizen’s use of “*raimeis*” to mean ‘nonsense’, derive from Moran’s writings, “Mr Bung” being an epithet for corruptive liquor interests, and “*rameis*” having become a household word for ‘cant’ due to its frequency in the pages of *The Leader*.

⁷⁵ There seems agreement about the following: Irish “self-deception” (with regard to nationalist bluster and speechifying against England); how rural idealisation is detrimental to industrial growth and real political strength; Irish paralysis: in the nineteenth century “Ireland [...] has attempted and achieved nothing”; the danger and futility of racial hatred: “a bad passion at the best [...] absolutely unjustifiable on moral grounds”; the need for proper debate and freedom of speech: “To ask a question or make an independent remark is an outrage upon the sacred cause of Irish nationality [...] suppression is twice cursed.” *Dubliners* answers Moran’s call for precise self-analysis of the state of the Irish soul: “We practically have no literature of national self-criticism. No brilliant Irish minds have ever turned themselves with sincerity on to their own countrymen”. D.P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Ireland* (London: James Duffy and Co., 1992), p. 10, 110, 67, 69, 91, 79

Yeats, whose poem provides the source of the parody in ‘The Holy Office’, and who is first alluded to in the list of writers attacked, seems to embody for Joyce the failings of the Celtic school. His anger at this time seems fuelled by disappointment with a figure who for him had promised so much for Irish art, but was now reneging on his principles and responsibilities. Joyce, supporting artistic independence, had refused to sign Skeffington’s letter of protest against *The Countess Cathleen* in 1892. *Chamber Music*, written between 1901 and 1904, is permeated by Yeats’s influence, a debt Joyce acknowledged in ‘The Day of the Rabblement’ when he praised *The Wind among the Reeds* as “poetry of the highest order”.⁷⁶ *The Celtic Twilight* is similarly admired in ‘The Soul of Ireland’, as Yeats’s “happiest book”, for its “delicate scepticism”.⁷⁷

Yeats’s decision, however, to stage exclusively Irish plays at the Abbey, (partly as a consequence of his discovering Synge), as opposed to his earlier intention to stage Ibsen and Hauptmann, seems to have been a turning-point for Joyce, and is the cause of the schoolmasterish admonishment of ‘The Day of the Rabblement’ (1901): “an aesthete has a floating will, and Mr Yeats’s treacherous instinct of adaptability must be blamed for his recent association with a platform from which even self-respect should have urged him to refrain”.⁷⁸ Yeats’s rejection, in 1904, of Joyce’s translations of two Hauptmann plays for performance at the Abbey, explaining “we must get the ear of our public with Irish work”, confirmed his sense of Yeats’s myopic insularity and created a personal reason for hostility.

In ‘The Holy Office’, Yeats appears as:

him who hies him to appease
 His giddy dames’ frivolities
 While they console him when he whinges

⁷⁶ *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 51

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 75

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 51

With gold-embroidered Celtic fringes -

He stands accused of humiliating himself through being in thrall to women who are not worth such abasement. The image of “gold-embroidered Celtic fringes” could refer to the extravagantly decorative costumes worn by actors on the Abbey stage or to the gilt decorations on the books Yeats published in the 1890s: either way, there is the suggestion of an artistically unhealthy concern for glamour, recognition, and even commercial success. (Little Chandler, in ‘a Little Cloud’, who envisions himself as a Celtic Twilight writer, fantasizes about recognition from “English critics” [68]). Such weak compromise is implicit in the word “appease” in regard to his supporters. He has sold his birthright as the finest poet of his generation for a mess of “dwarf-drama”.⁷⁹ Further, Joyce objects to Yeats posing as an independent artist, free of the shackles of conventional Christianity, when in reality this is not quite the case. As I will discuss later, Yeats and Lady Gregory censored and softened the sexual aspects of ancient Irish myths in order to promote an etherealized vision of Irish identity. That is to say, Yeats, in Joyce’s view, was not as free in his free-thinking as he thought he was and was still constrained by the prudish Christian sexual morality which he had claimed to have escaped through celebration of magic, art, and paganism.

Joyce dramatizes his ambivalent attitude towards Yeats’s version of Irishness in ‘Araby’. The story appears to be a homage to the dominant impulse of Yeats’s poetry up to this time, courtly love laced with a melancholic sense of the transience and futility of all things in a world “more full of weeping than you can understand”. The boy’s quest is his version of Yeats’s searching for “the heavens’ embroidered cloths” to lay at his beloved’s feet, though at the story’s close “the light was out” and he gazes up at only “darkness” (27-8). The narrator’s memory of protecting his pure love from ugly and vulgar influences, carrying his love like “a chalice” (23) through Dublin streets, echoes ‘The Lover tells of the Rose in his Heart’ in which “All things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and old [...] Are wronging your image that blossoms a

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 75

rose in the deeps of my heart". His experience of soulful infatuation as initiation into sacred mystical rapture ("all my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves" [23]) mirrors Yeats's line in 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', "things discovered in the deep, / Where only body's laid asleep". Reference to the girl's hair ("the soft rope of her hair [...] lit up her hair that rested there" [22, 24]) perhaps echoes the repeated evocation of the beloved's hair in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899).⁸⁰ His sense of his earlier "innumerable follies" and recollection of his tears at the story's close recalls the last line of 'Down by the Salley Gardens': "But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears".⁸¹

If we read the story, however, as a loose allegory for the dangers of being wrapped up in "dreamy dreams", we can feel both the poignancy of a boy's rites-of-passage romantic disappointment and glimpse Joyce's sense of the limitations of Celtic Twilight visionary pursuit.⁸² Aspects of 'Araby' encourage us to think of the story as an allegory, such as the family name of the girl, Mangan, the nineteenth century "romantic poet of doomed love and agonized despair",⁸³ and the parabolic figure of the boy as Vanitas at the story's close.⁸⁴

Identifying the boy with Ireland's national symbol allows Joyce to conflate the boy's sensual / aesthetic awakening with a culture's yearning for consciousness of its own mythic identity: "my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires" (23). Similarly, it was fashionable to understand Irish identity in terms of the East: according to the antiquarian Eugene O'Curry, Druidism was "that form of the Eastern philosophy which prevailed in early ages in our own as well as other western nations."⁸⁵ The imagery of

⁸⁰ 29 times according to John Unterecker in *A Reader's Guide to W.B. Yeats* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), p. 92

⁸¹ *W.B. Yeats, The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 44, 90, 73, 71, 46

⁸² Margot Norris has noticed Celtic Twilight echoes in the story: "The narrative voice of 'Araby', with its gift for personification, could easily be that of Little Chandler, or rather 'T. Malone Chandler', as he Celticizes himself [...] The 'Celtic note' of wistful sadness to which Chandler calculates to aspire can also be heard in the poetic language of 'Araby' when it lapses into pathetic fallacy ('the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns')." *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's 'Dubliners'* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003), p. 47

⁸³ Brown, *Dubliners*, p. 252

⁸⁴ Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's 'Dubliners'*, p. 46

⁸⁵ Larrisy, *W.B. Yeats*, p. 11. At the 1894 Araby bazaar which he visited, Joyce may have seen a stall called 'Algeciras' from Galway, decorated with Eastern hangings, in honour of the historical connection between the city and Moorish Spain. J.W. Jackson and B. McGinley, *James Joyce's 'Dubliners'*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993), p. 26

quest and revelation lies at the heart of Irish Renaissance writing: travelling to rural heartlands to collect folk tales, searching for mythic racial purity in the Aran Islands, the journey towards 'The Land of Heart's Desire', A.E. waiting for the avatar to emerge from the west of Ireland, The Golden Dawn, the Shan Van Vocht. Such voyages are doomed to end in a cul-de-sac, Joyce suggests, as intimated by the word "blind" in the opening sentence (meaning a dead-end) and the boy's arriving at a bazaar which is closing, "gazing up into the darkness" at the story's conclusion. The spell of *Araby*'s "Eastern enchantment" (24) creates disillusion, whether this means the boy's encounter with sexualized, Anglicized commercial reality or, prophetically, the Celtic school's eventual realization that once The Golden Dawn has emerged they will be no more free spiritually or politically. Like the young lady at the stall, Joyce protests in regard to Celtic Twilight idealization: "– O, there's a...fib!" (27).

Such crisis is precipitated by wilful opposition to the immediate reality of Dublin life: "we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages" (22); "her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance [...] I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes" (23); "I chafed against the work of school" (24). Both the boy and the Celtic school want to escape a world of Christian Brothers, petit-bourgeois "decent lives" (21), rusty bicycle pumps, dreary, repetitious work (school is "ugly, monotonous child's play" [24]), hall-stands, hat brushes, "old useless papers" (21), "used stamps" (25), pawnbrokers, "gossip of the tea-table", streets "glaring with gas" (26), "ruinous houses" (26). The boy is surprised by the commercial aspect of the exotically named bazaar, but he is surrounded by trade all around him, from sensational best-selling novels such as *The Abbot* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*, to his aunt's "marketing" (22), to the streets "thronged with buyers" (26) and "bargaining women", "street-singers", and "shop-boys" selling "pigs' cheeks" (22). Politics is a vulgar and irritating threat to romantic idealism: songs about O'Donovan Rossa, a Fenian revolutionary, and ballads about "the troubles in our native land" are "foes" (23), whereas the siren voice of *Café Chantant* at the bazaar sings more sweetly for him. Sexual desire seems unacknowledged as the boy's obsessional fantasy about the girl is sublimated in different forms. She is a religious symbol, a

type of Dublin Virgin Mary: in both descriptions she is surrounded by light; he offers “strange prayers” to or about her; she goes on a retreat. She offers a point of entry into ecstatic rapture: “I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: *O love! O love!* many times” (23). She becomes a semi-fictionalized abstraction (“her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance” [22]). The coy, flirtatious “young lady” at the story’s close is a counterpoint, in this respect, to the chaste, ethereal figure of the girl who occupies the boy’s dreams.

Like the boy, Mangan, according to Joyce in an essay of 1902, was a loner, one who as a child was “sensitive” and forced to live “amid coarseness”. Mangan was an outsider and an idealist: “the world [...] has become somewhat unreal for him” and his “nature is so sensitive he cannot forget his dreams in a secure, strenuous life”. As the boy feels scorn and pain in his disappointment and anger, so Mangan’s poetry expresses “wrong and suffering”, “noble misery”, and “despair”. Mangan’s “one chivalrous idea” combines courtly love and the exotic:

Music and odours and lights are spread about her, and he would search the
dews and the sands that he might set mother glory near her face [...] How the
East is laid under tribute for her and must bring all its treasures to her feet!⁸⁶

In ‘To Ireland in the Coming Times’, Yeats had made explicit his association with Mangan and advertised his own development of the Irish poetic tradition as a mystic dreamer:

Nor may I less be counted one
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,
Because, to him who ponders well,
My rhymes more than their rhyming tell

⁸⁶ James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 54-7. Both Mangan and the boy appreciate old, esoteric books: Mangan is moved by “curiously printed medieval books which have rapt him out of his time”, and the boy says “I liked the last best [*The Memoirs of Vidocq*] because its leaves were yellow” (21).

Of things discovered in the deep,
Where only body's laid asleep.⁸⁷

Ambivalent towards Mangan as he is towards Yeats, Joyce nevertheless saw the poet as exercising a malign influence on the Irish literary psyche:

Mangan is the type of his race. History encloses him so straitly that even his fiery moments do not set him free from it. He, too, cries out, in his life and in his mournful verses, against the injustice of the despoilers, but never laments a deeper loss than the loss of plaids and ornaments. He inherits the latest and worst part of a legend upon which the line has never been drawn out and which divides against itself as it moves down the cycles. And because this tradition is so much with him he has accepted it with all its griefs and failures, and has not known how to change it, as the strong spirit knows, and so would bequeath it; the poet who hurls his anger against tyrants would establish on the future an intimate and far more cruel tyranny.⁸⁸

The imagery of “cries out” and “the loss of plaids and ornaments” recalls the evocation of Yeats in ‘The Holy Office’: “when he whinges / With gold-embroidered Celtic fringes”. The “legend” which constricts both Mangan and Yeats is a simplistic narrative of Irish victimhood which can only find expression in histrionic self-pity and totemistic self-absorption. The story is a “tyranny” because it blinds the victim to any sense of complexity of viewpoint, the possibility, for example, that working-class and petit-bourgeois urban Catholic existence has a claim to Irish identity as much as the peasant life of the west of Ireland. This “tradition” is “intimate” because it is so

⁸⁷ *W.B. Yeats, The Poems* ed. Albright, p. 71

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 59

familiar and so initially appealing as a romantic idea; it is “cruel” because it works insidiously in terms of ironically colluding with the repression which it purports to be fighting against: as G.J. Watson remarked earlier, for many Irishmen the celebration of the peasant merely served to justify English colonial prejudice. Although the boy seems to be condemning himself harshly when he judges that he is “a creature driven and derided by vanity” (28), such a view makes sense metaphorically in terms of Mangan myopic hysteria and Celtic school racial self-regard.

Noticing the many references to Catholicism and the medieval age in the story, Jackson and McGinley conclude: “The boy is not simply a questing knight: he is on a holy quest. His search is as serious as that of the knights of Arthur’s Round Table for the Holy Grail [...]. When he reaches the bazaar, it reminds him of an empty church [...]. If this is the Holy Grail, it has been debased by the commerce of Dublin.”⁸⁹ The contrast between the reality of *Araby* and the boy’s expectations mirrors the difference between two female representations of Ireland in the story in the tradition of the Shan Van Vocht: one is a Maeve Otherworld princess, the other is a game-playing shop-assistant. Joyce points to a similar incongruence between Mangan’s idealized Dark Rosaleen and the actuality of political Mother Ireland:

In the final view the figure which he worships is seen to be an abject queen upon whom because of the bloody crimes that she has done and of those as bloody that were done to her, madness is come and death is coming, but who will not believe that she is near to die and remembers only the rumour of voices challenging her sacred gardens and her fair, tall flowers that have become the food of boars.⁹⁰

Joyce paints a picture here of Mother Ireland in a state of denial about her dignity in that she thinks she possesses power and beauty whereas she is in fact crazily nursing ancient grudges and

⁸⁹ Jackson and McGinley, *James Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’*, p. 27

⁹⁰ *James Joyce, Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 59

living in a lost, broken world of suspicion and semi glimpsed fear. Joyce's version of Mangan's Dark Rosaleen and his bazaar shopgirl in 'Araby' look very different, but they dramatize a similar kind of shock in terms of a recognition about how Ireland differs from her imagined ideal, romantic state.

So preoccupied is the boy in 'Araby' with his version of "Eastern enchantment" that he implicitly dismisses as sentimental his uncle's oriental escape (a poem also concerned with commerce since the speaker is selling his horse): "He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt." (26) In *Dubliners*, amidst and sometimes through the drink, nostalgia, Moore-style emotionalism and clichéd romance, Joyce discovers similarly unexpected magical otherworlds. Whereas Little Chandler, a symbol of Celtic Twilight indifference, gives the people of Ireland's capital city "no thought", Joyce both carefully observes what he sees around him in Dublin and reclaims as fit for view its complex and troubled inhabitants.

(2) Can there anything good come out of Dublin?

‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’

The capacity to have “dreamy dreams” (‘The Holy Office’) constituted part of the mythical status of Irish racial identity at the time of Joyce’s writing *Dubliners*. The origins of this perception seem to be a combination of early Celtic belief in the co-existence of the Otherworld alongside the real, tangible world and traditional post-Romantic glamorization of imaginative states. Yeats, in *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), said that the Celt lingered constantly “on the edges of vision” and learned to live with the spirits that haunted his solitary moods.¹ In his introduction to *Lyra Celtica* (1896), William Sharp went so far as to claim that Keats was “pre-eminently a Celtic poet, by virtue of nationality of the brain if for no other authentic reason.”² Other factors included mid to late nineteenth century theorizing about racial characteristics by Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan, the former describing “Celtic genius” as “airy and insubstantial.”³ Also acting as a contributory factor was late nineteenth century Theosophical mysticism: Yeats said that he learnt from Mohini Chatterjee that “action and all words that lead to action were a little vulgar, a little trivial.”⁴ Decadent celebration of that which is artificial and insubstantial was also influential: Yeats wrote of Villiers de L’Isle Adam’s *Axel* that “the lovers [...] drink poison and so complete the four-fold renunciation – of the cloister, of the active life of the world, of the labouring life of the intellect, of the passionate life of love. The infinite alone is worth attaining, and the infinite is in the possession of the dead”.⁵ Finally, Paterian celebration of intense moments filtered through

¹ W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893), p. 24-5

² William Sharp, *Lyra Celtica* (Edinburgh: Patrick Geddes & Colleagues, 1896), p. 12. In ‘The Imaginary Irish Peasant’, Edward Hirsch argues, “the idea that the peasant represented some pure state of the national culture was itself a romantic fiction, or an idea that ultimately derived from the philosophy of Herder and other German Romantics.” (1121) Such thinking came to Yeats via John O’Leary and Thomas Davis with the folk songs and traditions recorded in ‘The Nation’ in the 1840s.

³ Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, (London: Smith & Elder, 1867), p. 81; Renan: “the Celtic race [...] has worn itself out in taking dreams for realities, and in pursuing its splendid visions. The essential element in the Celt’s poetic life is the *adventure* – that is to say, the pursuit of the unknown, an endless quest after an object ever flying from desire”, *The Poetry of the Celtic Races*, trans. W.G.Hutchison, p. 9

⁴ W.B. Yeats, *Yeats’s Ireland: an illustrated anthology*, ed. by Benedict Kiely (London: Aurum, 1989), p. 19

⁵ Birgit Bjersby, *Interpretation of the Cuchulain Legend* (Upsala, 1950), p. 19

Wildean emotional melodrama was a significant factor: reading the most famous “poisonous book” of French Decadence creates in Dorian Gray’s mind “a form of reverie, a malady of dreaming that made him unconscious of the falling day and creeping shadows.”⁶ Whatever the diverse nature of its influences (Romanticism, French symbolism, English aesthetics, Eastern transcendentalism), *Irishness*, however, was defined as ethereal, poetic, ideal as opposed to Anglo-Saxon commerciality and materialism.

Lady Wilde’s *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887) concludes with an essay which spells out how the foregoing stories prove how Irish rural workers’ lives are richer in comparison with those of the English industrial working-class:

The framework, also, is different in which their souls are set. The factory smoke is so thick in England the people cannot see heaven. In their hard industrial life their eyes are never lifted from toil; in their ears is only the rush of the wheels and the stroke of the hammer; and the air they breathe is the poison-dust of a world-wide commerce. But the Irish, without manufacturers or commerce, or anything to do save tend the cattle for English food, can at least live, as it were, in the visible presence of God, in the free enjoyment of lake and river, and the mountain unsullied by the smoke of labour. The world above is a reality to the Irish peasant. No people have more intense faith in the unseen.⁷

Wordsworth’s *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* is restyled in terms of emerging Irish aristocratic nationalism. Blithely unaware of the rural distress which gave strength to Davitt’s Land League, Lady Wilde suggests a languid existence in which pastoral leisure provides the time and space to wonder over supernatural activity, musings which are then shaped into vivid, communal

⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 146

⁷ Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1890), p. 236

narratives. (The phrase “tend the cattle for English food” hints, however, at a state of subjection).

This is a form of compensation for political dispossession, whose origins G.J. Watson explains: “The myth was that the native Catholic peasantry had once owned their land in Celtic Ireland, and had been dispossessed by the (English) settlers”.⁸ Reverie for the Irish reorientates the apparent reality of colonial servitude, as the child fairy explains when describing how ‘The Land of the Young’ is a spiritual state in *The Land of Heart’s Desire*: “For we are but obedient to the thoughts / That drift into the mind at a wink of the eye.”⁹ Freedom, for those who can enter such a mythic mental paradise, exists independently of political and material reality and constitutes a spontaneous state of consciousness which is always open to spiritual experience. There is also the sense, though, that such dreaming of an idealized Otherworld constitutes a proleptic vision of a politically free Ireland.

Reverie for Yeats has a political dimension, too, in that it connects, to the exclusion of the grubbily scurrying mercantile class, the poet-philosopher wrapped up in a world of ideas, the aristocrat gazing into the fire at his stately home, and the peasant staring at the horizon as he leans over his spade. This, for Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory was, as he would later call it in ‘The Municipal Gallery Revisited’ (1937), the “Dream of the noble and the beggarman,”¹⁰ a Tory patrician fantasy which he inherited from Standish O’Grady.¹¹ The dream involves turning back the clock to a mythical time when the urban petit-bourgeoisie, the world of *Dubliners*, did not exist:

Indeed, it is certain that before the counting-house had created a new class and a new art without breeding and without ancestry, and set their art and this class between the hut and the castle, and between the hut and the cloister, the art of the people was as closely mingled with the art of the coteries as was the speech

⁸ Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival*, p. 22. I am not sure, however, that this is entirely a “myth”.

⁹ *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1960), p. 70

¹⁰ *W.B. Yeats: The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 368

¹¹ Stephen Coote, *W.B. Yeats* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), p. 51

of the people that delighted in rhythmical animation, in idiom, in images, in words full of far off suggestion, with the unchanging speech of poets.¹²

(*Ideas of Good and Evil*, 1903)

A measure of how unspiritual is this “new class” is the suspicion of the merchants in *The Countess Cathleen* about the very idea of the existence of a still, reflective aspect of human consciousness:

there's a vaporous thing – that may be nothing,
But that's the buyer's risk – a second self,
They call immortal for a story's sake.¹³

Yeats's contempt for the values of the Dublin middle-class at this time in his life was fuelled by his increasing sympathy with Nietzsche's ideas after 1903,¹⁴ his observing The Abbey Theatre audience hissing Maud Gonne in 1905 after she had left her husband, and by the Dublin Corporation's rejection of Hugh Lane's collection of modern French paintings because they would not agree to house them in the kind of gallery Lane thought they deserved. G.J. Watson suggests that Yeats's attitude here is complex: “Snobbery is present, and adds its tang, but is subservient to the deployment of a characteristic value system – a belief in heroic failure, in commitment to arduous and apparently hopeless struggle, in the philosophy of risk; hatred of servility and utilitarianism and prudential morality, which all breed timidity”.¹⁵ So suspicious was Yeats of the dangers of petit-bourgeois existence that he disliked The Land Act of 1903, which offered a bonus to landlords who would sell, and enabled tenants to purchase on easy terms and so become yeomen farmers like their English counterparts.

¹² Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil*, p. 13-14

¹³ *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 14

¹⁴ Coote, *W.B. Yeats*, p. 228

¹⁵ Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival*, p. 106

The “dreamy dreams” of Celtic Twilight writing are most evident when characters drift off into vision, reverie, dream, abstraction, a mood of silent otherness, the feeling of being physically present but mentally on a higher, mystical plane. Jasper Dean begins Moore’s *The Bending of the Bough* (1900) as the young political idealist whose vision can begin the transformation of his country. He tells his mentor: “Our gods have not perished; they have but retired to the lonely hills; and since I’ve known you, Kirwan, I’ve seen them there, at evening; they sit there brooding over our misfortunes, waiting for us to become united with them and with each other once more”. The gods are “our ancient ideals which have never died.”¹⁶ In Martyn’s *The Heather Field* (1900), Carden Tyrell is a tragic visionary whose sanity gives way under the pressure of visions linked to his heather field, a symbol of Irish pastoral freedom and spiritual beauty: “See, the rain across a saffron sun trembles like gold harp strings, through the purple Irish spring!”¹⁷ *Maeve* (1900), written by the same author, presents a seeress who lives in the realm of spirits and Ireland’s romantic past. We first see her standing in “a ruined abbey in a green valley among mountains covered with layers of grey rock” gazing into the distance “as if in a dream” as her friend reads of ancient heroes, and declares that her mind has become filled with “Visions – visions.”¹⁸ Yeats’ and Moore’s *Diarmuid and Grania* (1901) shows the heroine standing on the top of a hill gazing into an obscure vision: “something seemed to be moving over the world and to come out of the mist. It was beautiful...” Her yearning for romance chimes mystically with her mother’s description of Diarmuid: “It was for such a man that I looked in the mist.”¹⁹ In Synge’s *Riders to the Sea* (1904), the mother, Maurya, praying by a well, has a visionary insight into the death of her two sons, Michael, who she presumes has already drowned, and Bartley, who is about to drown:

I’m after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first

¹⁶ George Moore, *The Bending of the Bough* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), p. 59, 64

¹⁷ Edward Martyn, *The Heather Field and Maeve* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1900), p. 82

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87

¹⁹ W.B. Yeats and George Moore, *Diarmuid and Grania* (Chicago: De Paul University, 1974), p. 24

on the red mare, and I tried to say 'God speed you', but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and 'The blessing of God on you', says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the grey pony, and there was Michael upon it – with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.²⁰

Away from the stage, Yeats and Synge both discovered visionary powers in west country peasants and claimed near visionary experiences themselves. In Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), Paddy Flynn's eyes express "the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals [...] He did not live in a shrunken world, but knew of no less ample circumstance than did Homer himself." An unnamed poet, in the chapter 'A Visionary', sees spirits and recites verse which "seemed [...] the very inmost voice of Celtic sadness, and of Celtic longing for infinite things the world has never seen". A Mayo woman *sees* a sermon, having once heard it; another woman sees Queen Maeve so that she "came face to face with heroic beauty which Blake says changes least from age to age".²¹ In *The Aran Islands* (1907), Synge writes of the inhabitants as at times possessing mythic, visionary status, for example, a young teenage girl: "At one moment she is a simple peasant, at another she seems to be looking out at the world with a sense of prehistoric disillusion, and to sum up in the expression of her grey-blue eyes the whole external despondency of the clouds and sea."²² Lady Gregory, in *Poets and Dreamers* (1903), which Joyce critically reviewed for 'The Daily Express', claimed of the old people of the workhouse at Gort:

²⁰ Synge, *The Complete Plays* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1981), p.103

²¹ Yeats *The Celtic Twilight*, p. 6, 16, 17, 97.

Joyce's praise of Blake in a 1912 essay, 'Realism and Idealism in English Literature' might constitute an implicit rebuke to vague Celtic Twilight mysticism and be an attempt to reclaim the writer from Yeats's imprimatur: "In Blake, the visionary faculty is immediately connected to the artistic faculty [...] he unites intellectual sharpness with mystic sentiment." *James Joyce, Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. by Barry, p.180. Between 1889 and 1893 Yeats, together with Edwin Ellis, had produced a three volume edition of Blake's works, and he claimed Blake as a fellow Theosophist and persuaded himself that Blake's father was an Irishman. Richard Ellmann, *Yeats, The Man and the Masks* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1948), p. 119

²² J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co. Ltd, 1907), p. 105

I think it has always been to such poor people, with little of wealth or comfort to keep their thoughts bound to things about them, that dreams and visions have been given. It is from a deep narrow well that the stars can be seen at noonday; it was one left on a bare rocky island who saw the pearl gates and the golden streets that led to the Tree of Life.²³

Such visions feature in contemporary prose fiction too. George Egerton, in her short story ‘A Cross Line’ (*Keynotes*, 1893), presents a young married woman, lying on heather next to a bog-stream, envisaging herself dancing erotically before strangers:

And she can feel now, lying in the shade of Irish hills with her head resting on her scarlet shawl and her eyes closed, the grand intoxicating power of swaying all these human souls to wonder and applause. She can see herself with parted lips and panting, rounded breasts, and a dancing devil in each glowing eye, sway voluptuously to the wild music.²⁴

The opening scene of Fiona MacLeod’s *Pharais* (1894) involves the young heroine, Lora MacLean, already having seen “the soul of the ocean gloriously arisen”, looking at a mysterious reflection of herself in the sea-water:

What was this phantasm, she wondered, that lay there in the green-gloom as though awaiting her? Was it, in truth, the real Lora, and she but the wraith?²⁵

Emily Lawless in *Grania* (1892), a novel purporting to show the unromantic nature of Aran islanders, uses her heroine to symbolize female Celtic visionary possibility and contrasts the

²³ Lady Gregory, *Poets and Dreamers* (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1974), p. 99

²⁴ George Egerton, *Keynotes* (London: Elkin Matthews; Boston: Roberts Bros., 1893), p. 20

²⁵ Fiona MacLeod, *Pharais* (Derby: Harpur & Murray, 1894), p. 3

power of the primitive imagination with modern rationality:

Though not overflowing in words [...] her imagination was perhaps more alive than his [i.e. her lover] to those dim formless visions which people the dusk, and keep alive in the Celt a sense of vague presences, unseen but realizable – survivals of a whole world of forgotten beliefs, unfettered by logic, untouched by education, hardly altered even by later and more conscious beliefs, which have rather modified these earlier ones than superseded them.²⁶

Moore's *The Untilled Field* (1903), perhaps the immediate whetstone for *Dubliners*, for all its vaunted Zola-esque naturalism, unquestioningly recycles the stereotype of Irish visionary capacity. A grandmother takes visionary delight in imagining her grand-daughter dancing in her own old dress which she has given her for the night ("she sat looking into the fire, seeming to see the girl dancing at a ball quite clearly", 'The Wedding Gown'). A "vague, tender reverie" of unfulfilled romance fills the heart of John Bryden, an Irish exile in America as, in middle age, he reminisces about Ireland and his youth ('Home Sickness').²⁷

In *Dubliners*, Joyce explores comparable moments of emotional intensity and mental ethereality. As "a socialistic artist",²⁸ he was keen to show that Dublin's clerks, laundry supervisors and shop-assistants were capable of profound and complex states of feeling, too, and, in the process, expose the nostalgic feudalism underpinning the Celtic school's preoccupation with reverie. As a Dubliner, he wanted to show that his city could rival Tara as Ireland's mythic spiritual centre.²⁹ Joyce felt irritated by what he saw as the clumsy vagueness of Celtic school

²⁶ Emily Lawless, *Grania* (London: Smith & Elder, 1892), p. 189

²⁷ Moore, *The Untilled Field*, p. 189, 254, 173

²⁸ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 2nd or 3rd May, 1905. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Ellmann, p. 61. Joyce admitted, however, that his socialism was "thin [...] steady and ill-informed" (letter to Stanislaus, November 6th, 1906, p.125), and by 1907 declared "The interest I took in socialism and the rest has left me." (Letter to Stanislaus March 1st, 1907, p.151-2)

²⁹ Letter to Grant Richards, 15th October, 1905. "I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world. It has been a capital of Europe for thousands of years, it is supposed to be the second city of the British Empire and it is nearly three times as big as Venice". Ibid, p. 78

evocations of spiritual states, referring to their “dreamy dreams” and “the shamblings of that motley crew” in ‘The Holy Office’, and telling Stanislaus in a letter a letter of 1905, “do not think that I consider contemporary Irish writing anything but ill-written, morally obtuse formless caricature”.³⁰

The visions of Joyce’s *Dubliners* are more precise though no less mysterious than those of the Celtic Twilight school. The young boy of ‘The Sisters’ has a semi-conscious “dream” of the paralytic priest (6), and his aunt drifts off into “a deep revery” (9) about the course the priest’s life has taken. The “queer old josser” of ‘An Encounter’, “magnetised by some words of his own speech” (18), envelopes himself and the listening boy narrator in a fantasy about whipping schoolchildren. The boy of ‘Araby’ stares for an hour at the house of the girl he has become obsessed by, “seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by [his] imagination” (25).

Eveline sees a “pitiful vision” (33) of her mother’s ghost. In ‘After the Race’, Jimmy Doyle, “whose imagination was kindling”, looks at his companions, Séguin, Rivière, and Routh, and “conceived the lively youth of the Frenchmen twined elegantly upon the firm framework of the Englishman’s manner” (39). Lenehan has a “vision” (51) of Corley romancing his girl in ‘Two Gallants’. Polly Mooney, in ‘The Boarding House’, becomes so rapt in her “hopes and visions” (64) that she loses sense of the immediate reality surrounding her; her mother has earlier, in a “revery” (59), planned the marital arrangement which allows her to speculate in this way.

The intensity of Little Chandler’s “revery” (69) about poetic fame in ‘A Little Cloud’ makes him take a wrong turning as he walks through Dublin, and, at the close of the story, he is so involved in reading a poem by Byron that “he felt the rhythm of the verse about him in the room.” (79) In ‘Counterparts’, Farrington, “enraged” and wanting to “revel in violence” because of his frustrations at work, is so “abstracted” by his “imagination” (86), which sees the escape of an evening’s drinking unfolding before him, that he has to be called twice before he realizes he is being addressed by a colleague. In ‘Clay’, Maria, singing Balfe’s ‘I Dreamt that I Dwelt’, is so

³⁰ Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus, 19th July, 1905. Ibid, p. 70

mesmerized by the romance of the song that she repeats the first verse of the song without realizing that she has failed to move into the second verse. Mr Duffy, of 'A Painful Case', feels Mrs Sinico's ghost "near him in the darkness" in Phoenix Park (113).

Hynes seems lost in a dreamworld after the recitation of his Parnell poem in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'. Tom Kernan and friends, in 'Grace', become so involved in their discussion of the national church that, "thrilled", they see in their minds "the vast image of the Church" (169). In 'The Dead', Gretta is transported by Bartell D'Arcy's singing so that she "seemed unaware of the talk about her" (213), and Gabriel imagines he can see Michael Furey's ghost: "he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree" (224).

Joyce imitates Ibsen who "presents his men and women passing through different soul crises."³¹ In such moments he questions the Celtic school's sense of visionary states as he explores what 'spiritual' might mean. He makes a claim for spiritual experience in modern, urban, decaying Dublin, but is on his guard as to exactly what constitutes 'spiritual'. His cautiousness and desire for a precise sense of a mood's complexity appears similar to that of William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890): "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*".³² 'Spirituality' for Joyce appears held questioningly between amused and sceptical inverted commas, but this does not preclude the evocation of profound yearning. As Stanislaus remarked of his brother, "all his work is permeated by a kind of litotes which is the antithesis of romanticism".³³ Ezra Pound rightly saw *Dubliners* as a reaction against Celtic Twilight dreamy vagueness in this respect:

It is surprising that Mr Joyce is Irish. One is so tired of the Irish or 'Celtic'

³¹ 'Ibsen's New Drama' (1900) in, *James Joyce, Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 31

³² William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1918), p. 246. cf. also "A permanently existing 'idea' or 'Vorstellung' which makes its appearance before the footlights of consciousness at periodical intervals, is as mythological an entity as the Jack of Spades" (p.236); "I therefore feel entirely free to discard the word Soul from the rest of this book. If I ever use it, it will be in the vaguest and most popular way." (p.350)

³³ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, (London: Faber & Faber 1958), p. 54

imagination (or ‘phantasy’ as I think they now call it) flopping about. Mr Joyce does not flop about. He defines. He is not an institution for the promotion of Irish peasant industries.³⁴

An example of Joyce reacting against “flopping about” is his exploration of local causes of his Dubliners’ dreams and visions. Fatigue, the mind losing its usual concentration, partly explains how the boy in ‘The Sisters’ and Gabriel Conroy in ‘The Dead’ slip into a visionary state. In ‘Clay’, Maria, who is normally abstemious, has had at least two alcoholic drinks before she allows herself to be carried away by the romance of the first verse of Balfe’s song. The ghosts of Eveline’s mother, Michael Furey, and Mrs Sinico appear when Eveline’s, Gabriel Conroy’s and Mr Duffy’s nervous system are in turmoil at a point of emotional crisis. The “queer old josses” is possibly suffering from a form of senility as he repeats over and over again his fantasy of whipping young boys.³⁵ Sexual frustration seems to be part of the cause of the visions of the boy in ‘Araby’ (an aspect of his rites-of-passage experience in the story) and of Lenehan in ‘Two Gallants’ (his picturing of Corley with the young woman appears almost pornographic and masturbatory).

Lenehan’s case (“in his imagination he beheld the pair of lovers”, “deep energetic gallantries”, “saw again the leer of the young woman’s mouth” [51]), in which refined diction and raw physical detail sit awkwardly together, links to Joyce’s sense of repressed sexual longing behind a veneer of purity and political piety in Celtic school evocation of spiritually intense moments.

And for each maiden, shy and nervous,

I do a similar kind service.

³⁴ Ezra Pound, ‘Dubliners and Mr James Joyce’, *Egoist*, i, No.14 (15 July 1914), *James Joyce, The Critical Heritage*, ed. by R.H. Deming (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 67 (p.66-8).

³⁵ “There was a disproportionate degree of insanity in Ireland at the beginning of the century, an increase of 10,383 between 1880 and 1905 according to the Inspectors of Lunacy.” (Tony Gray, *Ireland This Century*, London: Little, Brown, 1994, p. 28)

For I detect without surprise
That shadowy beauty in her eyes,
The 'dare not' of sweet maidenhood
That answers my corruptive 'would'.

'The Holy Office'

Joyce hints here at the sexual pressure lying behind, for example, the presentation on stage of beautiful young women such as Yeats's Countess Cathleen and Mary Bruin, of *The Land of Heart's Desire*, 1894, yearning intensely for some form emotional fulfillment.³⁶ (This connects to the idea of confession of repressed desire implied in 'The Holy Office'). Lenehan's coy, pseudo-chivalric imagining of Corley with the young woman seems to be influenced by the kind of heroic romance popularized by Celtic Twilight writing.³⁷ The Celtic school's sentimental notions of spirituality form, Joyce implies, part of the moral paralysis which envelops Dublin, particularly as regards self-censoring attitudes towards sex. If the Celtic school condemns Dublin as spiritually confused, they themselves stand accused of creating such malaise, the phrase 'The Holy Office' referring in this respect to the department of the Church which launched the Inquisition to exorcise heresy. In exploring the violence behind Farrington's abstraction in 'Counterparts', the perversion of the fantasy of "the queer old jossler" in 'An Encounter', the sexual frustration underpinning Lenehan's vision, Joyce fulfils his promise to examine the latent repression in Celtic school dreaminess. He is the "sewer of their clique" which normally runs

³⁶ Cathleen is responsive to Aeleen's love but feels duty-bound to reject it in order to save Ireland. Gazing at the departing Aeleen, she exclaims, "Would my imagination and my heart / Were as little shaken as this holy flame!" Her last words suggest mystical and sensual frustration: "The storm is in my hair and I must go. [She dies.]" *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 28, 48. The epigraph to *The Land of Heart's Desire* is Blake's line "O Rose, thou art sick", a poem with strong connotations of the loss of sexual innocence; Mary's heart is "wild"; the first image of the Otherworld which she responds to is of a princess "busied with a dance / Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood", and in the Otherworld she hopes to "dance upon the mountains like a flame" (*Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 51, 54, 55, 61). C.L. Innes, pointing to Maud Gonne playing the title role, remarks that *Cathleen ni Houlihan* is a "nationalist allegory and idealized sexual romance". (*Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* [Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993], p. 48).

³⁷ Romances such as A.E.'s *Deidre* (1902), Moore and Yeats's *Diarmuid and Grania* (1901), Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* (1892). Celtic Twilight presentation of sex is discussed in the next chapter, and Lenehan's sexualized vision is discussed in the chapter 'Irish Maladies'.

underground, hidden and ugly.

Joyce's complex of different moods in his presentation of Hynes's abstracted state after the recital of his poem, 'The Death of Parnell', at the close of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' typifies the spiritual moments in *Dubliners* which I have listed. Joyce predicted that "a Dubliner would denounce 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'",³⁸ so I take it that Hynes is one such 'Dubliner', the type of shiftless urban figure Revival writers would have had in mind when condemning Dublin as soulless. He is close to Joyce's depiction of the city's type in a lecture at the Scuola Berlitz:

The Dubliner passes his time gabbing and making the rounds in bars or taverns or cathouses, without ever getting 'fed up' with the double doses of whiskey and Home Rule [...] He goes 'arsing along' as we say in English. There's the Dubliner for you.³⁹

Hynes is praised by Henchy for his principled, courageous support of Parnell but this is a compliment he might acknowledge awkwardly, since, despite his impressive patriotic credentials (his earlier declaration of Parnell's heroism, the fact that only he and O'Connor seem to be wearing an ivy leaf, his defence of "the working-man" [118]), we sense that time might have eaten away at his sensitivity to justice and noble desire for political liberty. As O'Connor, Henchy, and Old Jack ask each other, what is he doing now? What does he stand for? Is he straight and decent, or a spy from Colgan's camp? Is he concerned about his friends not being paid, or does he merely want to sponge a drink?

As Hynes recites the elegy, Parnell's ghost breathes through his words:

They had their way: they laid him low.

³⁸ *Dubliners*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 10

³⁹ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 217

But Erin, list, his spirit may
Rise, like the Phoenix from the flames,
When breaks the dawning of the day.

The prophetic warning of these lines manifests itself in Hynes' consciousness as he seems to feel Parnell's "spirit" rising within himself as part of a momentary spiritual awakening, the revitalising of himself out of a living-death. This is a consequence of both his remembering Parnell's greatness (as an embodiment of "Erin" he 'lists' to the poem as he recites it), and of his rediscovering the passion he felt as a younger man ("O, that thing is it [the poem]...Sure, that's old now" [131]). Earlier in the story, Henchy asked doubtingly of the absent, loitering, possibly sponging Hynes, "couldn't he have some spark of manhood about him?" (121). When told to recite his poem by O'Connor ("fire away, Joe" [130]), the embers smouldering beneath the ashes flicker into life. The remarkable fact that he can remember such a long poem suggests its personal significance, and its effusive celebration, which so pleases his audience, constitutes Hynes' own private version of the wish to commemorate the memory of Parnell's greatness.

Such a moment suggests the influence of Ibsen. For example, in *When We Dead Awaken* (1900), Irena articulates how she has felt dead since she offered her youth and idealism on the altar of Professor Rubek's art (the difference with Joyce being Ibsen's greater emphasis on socially restricting attitudes):

For many years I was dead. They came and bound me – they laced my arms together behind my back, and lowered me into a tomb, with iron bars over the opening, and padded walls [...] so that no one on the earth overhead should hear the shrieks from the tomb.⁴⁰

'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' has been full of reported speech, imitations and

⁴⁰ Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts and Other Plays*, trans. by Peter Watts, (London: Penguin, 1964), p. 244

unexpected voices: the fire speaks, hissing “in protest” (121) when spat upon; the cork makes an “apologetic Pok!” (128), Old Jack and Henchy reproduce their own voices to dramatise their conversations with old Keegan, Tierney and the “old toff” Conservative. But for Hynes there is something uncanny (this is a ghost story after all) about listening to his own voice as he recites the poem, since paradoxically it sounds like a ghostly voice simultaneously echoing from the past. The use of the present tense in the poem captures this temporal blur as Hynes feels himself carried through time back to October 6th, 1891. The pathos is heightened by the unintentional prophetic nature of the present tense since eleven years later it is still the case that: “Erin’s hopes and Erin’s dreams / Perish upon her monarch’s pyre”.

There is “silence” after the listeners’ applause as a mark of respect to Parnell (and to Hynes), which is all the more dramatic as the story has consisted of quick, gossipy exchanges and a rapid series of entrances and exits (the narrative seems to happen in real time). In these hushed moments Hynes seems to be in a form of trance, mesmerised by the emotions and memories his reading of the poem has stirred up in his mind:

Mr Hynes sat down again on the table. When he had finished his recitation there was a silence and then a burst of clapping: even Mr Lyons clapped. The applause continued for a little time. When it had ceased all the auditors drank from their bottles in silence.

Pok ! The cork flew out of Mr Hynes’ bottle, but Mr Hynes remained sitting, flushed and barcheaded on the table. He did not seem to have heard the invitation. (132)

That he does not seem to hear such a loud dramatic sound in the midst of silence indicates how rapt he is. That this is a free drink makes his abstraction appear all the more intense since he unconsciously refuses the “invitation” to take the beer. Hynes is not referred to again (the story ends three sentences later) so that the potentially undercutting bathos of the bottle’s sudden

comic opening is balanced by Joyce's respectful leaving of Hynes in his own transported world. The lack of explanation as to what Hynes *is* thinking about similarly preserves an air of mystery around these few moments, a sense of mystery lying at the heart of any definition of 'spiritual'. "Flushed" links Hynes to the auroral imagery in the poem evoking Parnell's return ("When breaks the dawning of the day") and combines with "bareheaded" to create a fleeting pastoral world in Hynes' consciousness, since both words connote spontaneity and emotional release and suggest the innocence and freshness of childhood excitement. The word "bareheaded" also reminds us of how Hynes would have respectfully removed his hat as Parnell's coffin passed him on the way to his burial at Glasnevin Cemetery.

There is pathos in the suggestion that Hynes has, in the implied desultory and convictionless course his life has taken, joined, to some degree, the cowards and hypocrites who have betrayed Parnell's heroic attempts to free his country. Together with nostalgia for his political passion, Hynes might also be wondering why he has not made more of his life on a general level since the talent which could produce such "a very fine piece of writing" seems to have been wasted. The example of Parnell, "undaunted to the last", provides perhaps an uncomfortable parallel with the shapeless slide in direction of his own life. Hynes's, as well as "Erin's hopes and [...] dreams", appear to have perished slowly over the past eleven years.

This is a moment of amused, tender reminiscence for Joyce, too, since one of his childhood triumphs was a poem, now lost, on Parnell's fall (the description of Hynes recalls Joyce: "a tall slender young man with a light brown moustache" [117]). The adult Joyce sympathises with Hynes' feelings of wonder with regard to the passion Parnell can still miraculously inspire.⁴¹ In his essay on Mangan, in the purple style of Pater and the witty, paradoxical manner of Wilde, Joyce wrote of "death as the highest form of life": he liked a reviewer's mocking reformulation: "absence, the highest form of presence."⁴²

There is an understanding in the presentation of Hynes here which critics have often

⁴¹ The great, fallen Irish leader exists, in the story, in contrast to the worldly and unimpressive Edward VII and to the dishonest Tierney.

⁴² Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 95

tended to miss in their certainty about Joyce's satiric vision of a city suffering from 'paralysis'. Seamus Deane, for example, writes:

By the time the poem is over, every class position, every political conviction, every version of 'decency' has been abandoned. Easy sentiment, greed and amnesia, the features of the cultural world of capitalism, have taken over and the heroic world of Parnell has been incorporated into it, as a form of entertainment, a thing.⁴³

Whilst Deane has a point here, the ringing repetition of "every" and the finality of "abandoned" and "have taken over" imply a distortion of Joyce's viewpoint from the exploratory into the denunciatory, from the amused and sympathetic into the angry and unforgiving. Hynes' seemingly complicated emotions at the close of his recitation suggest that this is not necessarily a world of "easy sentiment". More generally, I think Joyce's fiction does not counterpoint "heroic" and "entertainment".

That Joyce ironises Hynes' epiphany (the bathos of "*Pok!*", the sense that this is a momentary interruption of a day spent working for the kind of people who caused Parnell's fall), does not mean that Joyce does not take it seriously. The rough edges of the experience and its teetering on the edge of farce similarly do not preclude a sense of pathos, since the clumsiness of the expression of feeling is both comic (because the awkwardness represents a failed gesturing towards an elegant and serious tone), and tender (because that very awkwardness hints at real emotion and genuine yearning). Frank O'Connor, referring to the thrice repeated "*Pok!*" sound's interaction with Hynes's recitation, explains how "the three corks represent the three volleys over the hero's grave and the lament is the pinchbeck substitute for a Dead March".⁴⁴ Such wit does not deny a perception of authentic grief. The presence of half-hearted, cynical canvassers and the

⁴³ Deane, 'Dead ends: Joyce's finest moments', *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. Attridge and Howes, p.32

⁴⁴ Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice* (Cork: Cork City Council, 2003), p. 79

setting of a bleak, small room in a dull Dublin suburb do not prevent Joyce from observing the dignity of Hynes' emotions. How different is Hynes' recitation to a small crowd, Joyce implicitly asks, to the clique which gathers in A.E.'s house in order to nudge spiritual feelings into place as they listen to each other's poems? (Joyce is sceptical about Little Chandler's rather precious hope of reading his poems to "a little circle of kindred minds" [68]). Joyce neither ignores the complicated unshapeliness in front of him, nor does he try to turn it into something grander or more absurd than it actually is. Stanislaus recognised this quality when describing his brother's imagination:

He accuses the romantic temper of being impatient [...] of creating symbols of ideals that obscure the light. The classical temper, he declares, accepts the place in nature that is given us without doing violence to the gift, and so fashions the events of life that the quick intelligence can go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered.⁴⁵

I understand this to mean that Joyce's restraint and accuracy allow things to speak for themselves and so, despite an apparent coolness and flatness, create a profound suggestibility which is more mysterious than any glamorous effects produced by the much vaunted 'Imagination'.

Hynes' poem is modelled on patriotic ballads which, according to Robert Welch, were "the dominant form of popular Irish writing up to the period of the literary revival".⁴⁶ The influence of Thomas Moore seems particularly strong, for example, 'Remember the Glories of Brien the Brave'. There is the dominating theme of betrayal, the faithful preservation of heroic ardour and glimpse of possible national salvation, the personification of freedom, and the final image of a drinking toast ("Pledge in the cup she lifts to Joy"), which is a recurring motif in Moore's poems. Thomas Davis's 'Lament for the Death of Owen Roe O'Neill' provides the

⁴⁵ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p.169

⁴⁶ Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 135

following elements: cowardly assassination, the call for the nation to weep in anguish, the sense of a tragic missed opportunity for freedom, the phrase “the Mighty One” (cf. Hynes’ “He fell as fall the mighty ones”), the contrast between the fallen hero’s quiet rest and his bereft followers’ anxiety. James Clarence Mangan’s ‘Lament for the Princes of Tir-Owen and Tirconnell’ is a shadow here, too. The lament romanticizes Ireland as Erin, suggests the geographical sweep of Irish grief (cf. Hynes’ “In palace, cabin or in cot”), and personifies the Irish cause as “Freedom”.⁴⁷ Diction such as “Erin”, “wrought”, “sundered” echoes back to the poetic formality of such nineteenth century patriotic poetry, and, contrasting markedly with the Dublin slang which characterizes the story’s verbal texture, ushers in the reverential tone at the poem’s close.

An important aspect of Hynes’ reverie is a sense of belonging. His memory of his patriotic passion momentarily reminds him of how he was once close to the centre of his city’s communal aspirations and disappointment. Parnell’s popularity was especially strong in Dublin,⁴⁸ and Declan Kiberd outlines the appeal of his ghostliness in popular mythology: “Soon after his burial, rumours began to circulate to the effect that the casket had not contained his corpse, being filled instead with stones. The Chief was still alive, away in the hills, so the stories went, biding his time before a triumphant return.”⁴⁹ Parnell, it could be said, was the modern, urban, petit-bourgeois alternative to the Revivalists’ Cuchulain, whose lonely heroism seeks to redeem a lost Ireland. Nowadays nobody knows whose side Hynes is on and, up until his recitation, he appears a marginalized figure. His poem, however, briefly reconnects him to a tribal myth and its recitation turns him into a shamanistic figure who voices a community’s visceral political impulses. The clichéd nature of the poem and its genre is an aspect, that is to say, of the poem’s pathos since the political disappointment Hynes memorialises is central to Irish Catholic experience. As Seamus Deane observes, “before Parnell, before *Congal*, the tradition of the lost leader was well established in Ireland. Since the early seventeenth century

⁴⁷ *The Penguin Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Brendan Kennelly (London: Penguin 1970), p. 168

⁴⁸ “Parnell’s funeral was the biggest ever seen in Dublin, a notable claim in a city which could boast of considerable expertise in the ritual.” Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 141

⁴⁹ Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p. 379

there had been a line of military heroes, from Hugh O'Neill to Robert Emmett.”⁵⁰

The power of such a sense of belonging is a feature of other spiritual moments, too, as Joyce surveys the institutions which help Dubliners keep at bay their consciousness of, as Mr Duffy puts it, “the soul’s incurable loneliness” (107). Polly Mooney, in ‘The Boarding House’, Lenehan, in ‘Two Gallants’, and Maria, in ‘Clay’, hope that soon they will find not only romance but the social respectability and status which come with marriage. Conversely, Mr Duffy feels that, having lost his chance of love with Mrs Sinico, he is now a marginalized figure, “outcast from life’s feast”. Farrington’s vision of drinking in the pub in ‘Counterparts’ links to the respect and solidarity he will enjoy as a major figure at the heart of Dublin’s drinking community (a confidence he can not enjoy in his work or domestic life), where the Holy Grail of Irish masculine approval is to earn the sobriquet of Tom Kernan in ‘Grace’: a “character” (153). Little Chandler’s hopes of literary success in ‘A Little Cloud’, so intense that he misses his turning on the way to Corless’s, are partly shaped by his desire to fit into the tradition of great Irish writers (“the English critics, perhaps, would recognise him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems” [68]), and his hope of finding, like Farrington, a standing in Dublin mythology which eludes him privately and professionally. Tom Kernan, in his brief awe at the power and tradition of the Irish Catholic Church, shares with his friends a sense of being part of a legendary national community, which validates his own precarious status as an alcoholic tea-seller in professional decline. Mrs Kearney’s plans for her daughter, in ‘A Mother’, are partly motivated by the desire to link herself to the impressive musical traditions of Dublin, which is so vividly evoked in the dinner-table conversation in ‘The Dead’: “those were the days, he said, when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin.” (200) Gabriel, in his apprehension of Michael Furey’s ghostly presence, feels a surge of mythic west coast Irishness rise within him, a counterblast to the earlier charge that he is barely Irish, a “West Briton” (190). Such desire to feel the cloak of Dublin’s historical tradition wrapped around their shoulders seems to connect to

⁵⁰ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 74. *Congal* is Sir Samuel Ferguson’s epic poem of 1872 which records the defeat of the pagan hero, Congal, by the new forces of Christianity.

the capital's Catholic, petit-bourgeois citizens' insecurity as citizens of a despised capital.

The dreamy quality of Hynes' abstraction and other such moments in *Dubliners* take shape at a more local level in Joyce's frequent use of the word "gaze". The boy's disappointed dreaming at the close of 'Araby' suggests the connection: "Gazing up into darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity" (28), as does Polly Mooney's dreaming of domestic bliss in 'The Boarding House': "her hopes and visions were so intricate that she no longer saw the white pillows on which her gaze was fixed or remembered that she was waiting for anything." (64) Joyce seems to like the word 'gaze' partly because its semantic concentration can express a variety of moods. There is, for example, no direct equivalent for 'gaze' in French where either an adverbial phrase is needed to clarify the nature of the looking (*regarder fixement / dans le vague / d'un air méditatif*), or a verb captures the dominant mood, such as *songer*. In 'Araby' it expresses blank indifference together with respectable politeness: "The other houses of the street, conscious of the decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." (21) This tone can slide into detached contempt, as we find in 'A Little Cloud' where, in the face of his wife's harangue, Little Chandler "sustained for one moment the gaze of her eyes" (80); in the same story Little Chandler's peremptory suggestion that Gallaher will inevitably be forced into dreary domesticity is countered by "his friend's gaze" (76). In 'Counterparts' it indicates sexual desire filtered through the control imposed by social manner and the heavy telescoping of inebriation and fatigue: in the presence of a flirtatious actress, Farrington "gazed admiringly at the plump arm which she moved very often and with much grace; and when, after a little time, she answered his gaze he admired still more her large dark brown eyes." (91) There is something of this mood, too, in the old man's attitude towards the boy in 'An Encounter': "I met the gaze of a pair of bottle-green eyes peering at me from under a twitching forehead." (19) In 'The Sisters' there is a sense of fearful wonderment evident in the intrigued engagement of the young "Rosicrucian" towards Father Flynn: "Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word *paralysis*." (1) Wonderment and idealised reverence are evident in the manner of "the knot of gazers" (38) admiring the glamorous racing

drivers in 'After the Race', and in Gabriel's appreciation of his wife as he stands on the stairs "gazing up" at her ('The Dead', 210, 211). In 'The Sisters' 'gaze' possesses nuances of memory-laden, melancholic contemplation: the mourners "all gazed at the empty fireplace" (6) thinking of the enigmatic dead priest; similarly, Old Jack in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' ruefully ponders his son's wayward life "gazing into the fire" (117).

To 'gaze' can mean both to stare fixedly at a distinct object and to look wistfully into space at nothing in particular, and it is this combination of vagueness *and* intensity which suggests the world of dreams, vision, yearning. Since the dreams of Joyce's Dubliners are themselves inchoate and half-glimpsed, 'gaze' works perfectly in its implication of possible moods. The suggestive nature of 'gaze' is a measure of how the characters know they want something more than the mundane reality around them but cannot quite articulate or bring into focus exactly what that is. The pregnant silence of their gazing might indicate anything from profound, emotional contemplation to bovine, glazed emptiness. As Tom Kernan and friends "gazed formally" (171) at the distant sanctuary lamp in the Jesuit Church on Gardiner Street, as Mr Duffy "gazed out of his window on the cheerless landscape" after reading of Mrs Sinico's death (111), as Little Chandler "turned often from his tiresome writing to gaze out of his office window" (65), what thoughts run through their minds? Does the detachment the word 'gaze' implies transport them lingeringly, momentarily, into another world, or do they look blankly, unsure of what to think, or not prepared to think at all?⁵¹

Walter Pater's influence is evident in *Dubliners* where drifting political canvassers and

⁵¹ I am wary of the psychoanalytical cliché of 'the male gaze'. I disagree, for example, with Sheila C. Conboy's remarks about the "queer old josses" in 'An Encounter': "As the narrator looks up at the man and meets "the gaze of a pair bottle-green eyes", he is placed in the uncomfortable position of the feminine: the stare of the dominating male freezes him, and he sees himself exposed and objectified in the eye of the other. The passive position is not chosen by the boy; rather, it is forced upon him as a harsh reversal of his expectations for a day of active and 'manly' adventure." ('Exhibition and Inhibition: The Body Scene in *Dubliners*', *Twentieth Century Literature* 37.4 (Winter, 1991), p. 408 (p.405-20)). Here "gaze" slides into the unargued 'stare', and no textual evidence is then offered to support the idea of the boy being frozen psychologically or put in a 'harsh' position, neither is the claim about the boy feeling 'exposed and objectified' given any precise support. As I argue in my discussion of the story (chapter 4), the old man's sexual interest in the boy is mixed with a wistful nostalgia for childhood and the promise of sensual delight, which underlies the faraway longing in "the gaze of a pair of bottle-green eyes". Also, the boy, unlike his friend, is fascinated by the mystery of the old man and chooses at some level to stay, so that it is not true merely to say that his position is 'forced'.

sporting vagrants can be as receptive to spirituality as the Oscar Wildes and W.B. Yeatses of this world. In their moments of imaginative intensity figures such as Hynes are, in a complex way, following in Pater's aesthetic tradition:

To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy is success in life [...] While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment.⁵²

Pater here appropriates the language of religious bliss ("ecstasy" and "set the spirit free") as a manifesto for pagan-artistic joy which conflates sensual and aesthetic delight ("burn always" and "passion"). Whilst Hynes's mood is too complex to be called "exquisite", it seems that he is momentarily "free" from a sense of the dull here-and-now on a "dismal" winter's day in Dublin (116). His "lifted horizon" is both a reminder of his own latent poetic talent and his dormant political passion, and a fleeting encouragement that his world is not always circumscribed by rain, bottles of beer, and compromise.

I am wary of the term 'epiphany' in the context of *Dubliners* both because Joyce seems to use it to refer to moments other than the psychological pressure-points I am discussing, and because its connotations of self-knowledge and revelation can be misleading. However, Judith Ryan's elaboration of the Paterian moment, in *The Vanishing Subject*, as a *pause* fits my sense of what Joyce is experimenting with when he presents Hynes lost in a dreamworld after his recitation, or Maria in 'Clay', carried away with emotion, repeating the first verse of *The Bohemian Girl*. Ryan writes:

the 'moment' emerged from the undifferentiated swirl of elements as a particular intensity of perception in which the vanishing away was temporarily

⁵² Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1873), p.210

stayed, a triumph of vision that both paved the way for art and was itself a kind of art.⁵³

In such moments of vision there is precisely this fleeting arrest of time as the quick of identity is glimpsed, however briefly and obscurely (though “triumph” does not fit most of these moments in *Dubliners*). In fact, both Hynes’ and Maria’s reveries constitute cameos of Pater’s vision in the Conclusion since their intense engagement with Art (the Parnell poem, ‘I Dreamt that I Dwelt’) is inextricably linked to a heightened consciousness of mortality. Remembering Parnell’s death, having seconds previously felt clay between her fingers, Hynes and Maria discern the beauty and pathos of existing “on this short day of frost and sun”.⁵⁴ As Perry Meisel has observed, the ending of *Dubliners*, Gabriel Conroy’s dwindling and dissolving state of consciousness, seems to echo “the deliquescent vision” of the Conclusion in which Pater writes of the instability of human identity and the need, like Gabriel, to “pass boldly” into other worlds. Joyce’s words may be softly falling in a final, silent tribute to one of the presiding spirits of the collection.⁵⁵

Madame Bovary is important, too, as a major influence on Joyce’s presentation in *Dubliners* of a seemingly ordinary person’s (a bourgeois wife’s) intense, dreamlike moments within a domestic setting. At one end of the scale, Emma Bovary moves into reverie through sensual literary imagining, such as her teenage enjoyment of Scott’s novels and later the opera, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and through seemingly normal imaginative projection relating to her present life, such as her wondering who she might have married had she not met Charles. At the other, she appears to hallucinate in a manner suggestive of complex mental disturbance, such as her dreams of celestial bliss when she is severely ill having been abandoned by Rodolphe, or when, desperate to escape the shame of financial ruin at the end of the novel, she visualizes thoughts and memories in a torrential outpouring, which Flaubert compares to the explosion of a thousand fireworks going off at once, or when, on her death-bed, she thinks she can see the

⁵³ Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 28

⁵⁴ Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p. 211

⁵⁵ Moliterno, *The Dialectics of Spirit and Sense in Pater and Joyce*, p. 134

nightmarish face of the beggar rising up out of darkness to look at her. In between, there are strange visions such as when, having first slept with Rodolphe, she contemplates the unfolding of their affair:

Elle entrait dans quelque chose de merveilleux où tout serait passion, extase, délire; une immensité bleuâtre l'entourait, les sommets du sentiment étincelaient sous sa pensée, l'existence ordinaire n'apparaissait qu' au loin, tout en bas, dans l'ombre, entre les intervalles de ces hauteurs.

Alors elle se rappela les héroïnes des livres qu'elle avait lus, et la légion lyrique de ces femmes adultères se mit à chanter dans sa mémoire avec des voix de sœurs qui la charmaient. Elle devenait elle-même comme une partie véritable de ces imaginations et réalisait la longue rêverie de sa jeunesse, en se considérant dans ce type d'amoureuse qu'elle avait tant envié.⁵⁶

There seem to be at least three points of similarity here with Joyce's approach in *Dubliners*. Firstly, there is the daring conflation of the tradition of Catholic vision with the imagining of profane desire: "Elle entrait dans..." perhaps parodies the imagery of a young woman joining a convent, an idea fleshed out through the mixing of sacred and erotic voices in Emma's memory (with a hint of male fantasy about what might happen in a convent). Secondly, there is a delicacy in the tonal ambiguity, which shifts between mockery (the incongruity of "la légion lyrique" questions the authenticity of the emotions communicated by these sisterly ghosts) and sympathy (for all Emma's apparent abandonment to unreal worlds she seems more engaged in the reality of human existence than characters seemingly rooted in the here-and-now such as Homais or Binet,

⁵⁶ Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Paris: Flammarion), p.229-30. "She was entering a marvellous world where all was passion, ecstasy, delirium. A misty-blue immensity lay about her; she saw the sparkling peaks of sentiment beneath her, and ordinary life was a distant phenomenon down below in the shadowy places between those heights. She remembered the heroines of the books she had read, and that lyrical region of adulteresses began to sing in her memory with sisterly voices that enchanted her. She was becoming a part of her own imaginings, finding the long dream of her youth come true as she surveyed herself in that amorous role she had so coveted." Trans. Alan Russell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p.175.

a commitment to the imaginary which Flaubert himself shared).⁵⁷ Thirdly, there is a consciousness of how literature can insidiously and cruelly shape the working of the imagination (the run of abstract nouns, “passion, extase, délire”, echoes the sensational novels into which Emma has earlier escaped; “bleuâtre” has literary connotations).

Joyce’s reading of Baudelaire would have complemented his response to Pater and Flaubert in this regard, particularly *Tableaux parisiens* (1861) with its evocations of yearning amidst squalor, lassitude and the banality of daily routine, as in ‘Le Crépuscule du matin’: “C’était l’heure ou l’essaim des rêves malfaisants / Tord sur leurs oreillers les bruns adolescents”.⁵⁸ ‘An Encounter’, for example, seems to show traces of Baudelaire’s influence. The narrator has a highly sensitive fascination with the decadent, mysterious “queer old jossler”; he is preoccupied with exotic escape and “unkempt and fierce and beautiful girls” (12); there is a general mood of boredom and weariness (“Leo the idler” [12], “the weariness of school life” [13], “too tired to carry out our project” [16], “jaded thoughts [16]”); there is observance of surprising delicacy in a mundane urban, domestic setting (“the peaceful odour of Mrs Dillon was prevalent in the hall of the house” [11]); the boys’ movements are similar to flaneur-style drifting through a city (“we wandered through the squalid streets where the families of the fishermen live” [16]); there is brief evocation of a visionary capacity (“I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined, the geography which had been scantily dosed to me at school gradually taking substance under my eyes” [15]). The rarefied states of consciousness in French symbolist poetry may, on a general level, have offered a model for Joyce’s evocation of spiritual states.⁵⁹

In presenting working-class and petit-bourgeois Dublin Catholics as capable of ‘spiritual’ experience, when Revivalists denied such a possibility, Joyce ironically (given the *national* strain of the Celtic Twilight) replicates the work of Thomas Davis in ‘The Nation’ after 1842. Seamus

⁵⁷ Recounting to Louise Colet his experience in writing *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert wrote, “Voilà une des rares journées de ma vie que j’ai passé dans l’illusion, complètement, et depuis un bout jusqu’à l’autre.” Letter 23rd December 1853, *Correspondances*, p. 483. « This has been one of the rare days of my life passed completely in illusion, from beginning to end.” Trans. Steegmuller, p.277.

⁵⁸ *Charles Baudelaire, Selected Poems*, edited and translated by Joanna Richardson (London: Penguin 1975), p. 179. ‘Dawn of Day’: It was the time when dreams swarm, noxious, / And on their beds brown adolescents toss”.

⁵⁹ I will suggest later that ‘Eveline’ alludes to Mallarmé’s ‘Brise marine’.

Deane summarizes Davis's achievement thus: "His attacks on the philistine utilitarianism of English civilization and the contrasting spirituality of the Irish [...] stressed the Irish capacity for nobility of spirit in order to counteract the current British view of them as little more than ramshackle drunkards [...] savage and simian creatures".⁶⁰ F.S. Lyons points out in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, that since the English conquest of Ireland, 'Protestantism' had become identified with 'civilization' and 'Catholicism' with 'barbarism' (a process accentuated by images of suffering during the Famine and later Fenian activity).⁶¹ Despite idealizing rural Catholics, the Revivalists seemed implicitly to perpetuate the idea of the urban working-class Catholic as a strangely aberrant creature. As regards *Dubliners*' capacity for spiritual experience, Terry Eagleton's comment is apposite:

Joyce's contact with the European avant-garde allows him to reach back to Ireland and re-create it in modern rather than atavistic form. His priestly aestheticism turns the tables on the Celticists, treating their nationalist piety with something of the disdain they themselves reserved for the Young Irelanders; but in embracing an autonomous art, one claiming allegiance to no particular culture, he is able to enroll Ireland among the nations.⁶²

To be Catholic, petit-bourgeois and a Dubliner at the turn of the century meant, in important cultural quarters, that you were not properly Irish, that you lacked, in Seamus Deane's phrase, "the mystique of Irishness".⁶³ Edward Hirsch elaborates on the nature of such unease:

Many Catholic Dubliners affected English manners, styles, and habits, stigmatizing the Gaelic League and peasant customs as a badge of social

⁶⁰ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 75

⁶¹ F.S. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. 11

⁶² Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 258

⁶³ Hirsch, 'The Imaginary Irish Peasant', p. 1117

inferiority and backwardness. Their insecurity suggests that as colonials they had internalized English attitudes and stereotypes. But because they were also nationalists, they liked to idealize and sentimentalize their roots, and they were especially vulnerable when attacked for their 'West Britonism'. This new Anglicization left the Catholic Dubliners with the painful feeling that they had no identity, that they had lost their native culture without being subsumed by English customs and culture.⁶⁴

Dubliners gives the city's Catholic petit-bourgeoisie this "identity", it declares that Dublin possesses its own, distinct "native culture" which both questions and affirms notions of being 'properly Irish'.

The title of Joyce's set of stories seems pointed in this respect since it was fashionable in the 1890s for short story and poetry collections to be single words and plural, such as Arthur Symons' *Silhouettes* (1896), Hubert Crackanthorpe's *Vignettes* (1893), Ella D'Arcy's *Monochromes* (1895), and George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893).⁶⁵ The choice of *Dubliners*, actual and precise, signals, with an ironic gesture towards the modish taste for plurals, that the people of the city deserve hitherto ungiven attention. Yeats observed that peasants "have the spade over which man has learnt from the beginning [...] The people of the cities have the machine, which is *prose* and a parvenu."⁶⁶ *Dubliners* is the work of a writer who delighted in turning such aphorisms on their head. As mischievous corner-boy insouciantly announcing himself in Dublin's literary salons, Joyce shows there can be poetry in prose and that you can find dreams in a city. To quote Lenchan:

- That takes the solitary, unique, and, if I may so call it, *recherché* biscuit! (44)

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 1124

⁶⁵ Stephen Connor, *James Joyce* (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1996), p. 9

⁶⁶ W.B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Walter Scott, 1888), p.xii

(3) A.E.I.O.U.

‘The Boarding House’

In 1904 A.E. sat self-assuredly at the centre of Dublin’s spiritual world:

Yogibogeybox in Dawson Chambers. *Isis Unveiled*. Their Pali book we
tried to pawn. Crosslegged under an umbrel umbershoot he thrones an
Aztec logos, functioning on astral levels, their oversoul, mahamahatma.
The faithful hermetists await the light, ripe for chelaship, ringroundabout
him. Louis H. Victory. T. Caulfield Irwin. Lotus ladies tend them i’ the
eyes, their pineal glands aglow. Filled with his god he thrones, Buddh
under plantain. Gulfer of souls, engulfer. Hesouls, shesouls, shoals of
souls. Engulfed with wailing creecries, whirled, whirling, they bewail.

In quintessential triviality

For years in this fleshcase a shesoul dwelt. (*Ulysses*, 245)

Although outwardly polite and respectful to A.E. in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’, Stephen privately turns over his thoughts about his role in the Theosophical Society in a comic manner reminiscent of Buck Mulligan, who will soon arrive. His friend’s presence is evident in the slang locution ‘box’ for the room in Dawson Chambers and in the failed attempt (based on historical fact) to profit from the sneaky theft of the Ur-book of Theosophy, the very fountainhead of universal Ur-myth. The grand sententia A.E. offers about the nature of art, his apparent relish of Eglinton’s overly deferential manner, and his cultivation of an imposing, mysterious persona take shape in a mock-heroic vision of the mystic as Dublin god radiating power over his acolytes. In the National Library he appears like a gothic intellectual villain holding court in his castle,

announcing his presence by echoing low laughter, pronouncing like an oracle “bearded amid darkgreener shadow” (236). As the epicentre of the Charybdis whirlpool, A.E. gathers to himself the flotsam of Dublin intellectual life: the minor men of Irish letters, complete with academic-sounding names and mediocre verse, the Asparas of Hindu mythology turned quiescent, middle-class mystical dabblers.

The allusion to Cleopatra being tended by her gentlewomen both smirks at A.E.’s otherworldly self-importance and hints at the easy, worldly chauvinism which dictates such an arrangement with the “Lotus ladies”. As A.E. rather smugly observed of the typical female attendant at spiritualist meetings, “she rarely understands our metaphysics, and she gazes on the expounder of the mystery of the Logos with enigmatic eyes which reveal the enchantment of another divinity”.¹ A.E. here both basks in, and affects to belittle, the sexual attention of his stereotypical admirer; his magical metaphor suggests wit but in fact points to a self-regarding sense of his own charisma. The innuendo of “their pineal glands aglow”, playing on the concept of “the third eye” capable of transcendental vision, and picking up on “ripe for chelaship”, suggests an unspiritual mystic bond which unites the devotees, an electric tension which vitalises the “ringroundabout” A.E.. Brenda Maddox in *George’s Ghosts*, notes the “sexually charged” nature of the initiation rituals of the Second Order of The Golden Dawn with their daggers, swords, incense, cords and chains, and how “the heady atmosphere thus created was particularly attractive to the well-bred female.”²

The apparent calm of the scene, however, is illusory in Stephen’s eyes since the transcendental mood of Buddhist meditation belies intellectual chaos. The closing imagery of wailing souls recalls Dante’s description of the carnal sinners in canto 5 of the *Inferno*, who are whirled about by “a hellish storm which never rests [...] shrieking and moaning and lamenting”.³

Joyce’s attitude towards A.E.’s spiritualism at the time of writing *Dubliners* was as sceptical as Stephen’s, though not entirely unsympathetic. He had visited A.E. in August 1902

¹ A.E., ‘Religion and Love’, in *Imagination and Reveries* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1915), p. 118 (p.118-27)

² Brenda Maddox, *George’s Ghosts* (London: Minerva, 1988), p. 7

³ Don Gifford, ‘Ulysses’ *Annotated* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 212

and, according to Stanislaus, remained talking about the spirit world until the early hours of the morning. A.E., so the story goes, believed he had a new convert for the Hermetic Society and told an American interviewer that Joyce “came to him in the small hours of the morning to ask him about planes of consciousness”. Joyce, obviously amused, later recalled this “quaint misconception” in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’,⁴ imitating the American’s surprise: “A.E. has been telling some yankee interviewer. Wall, tarnation strike me!” (237). In ‘Acolus’, when O’Molloy, recalling the story, asks what he “really” thinks of “that hermetic crowd, the opal hush poets: A.E. the master mystic”, Stephen remains silent, though the urgency of his interior response suggests vanity and insecurity mixed with regard for A.E.’s opinion: “Speaking about me. What did he say? What did he say? What did he say about me? Don’t ask.”⁵ Joyce had probably not been “pulling A.E.’s leg”, as Professor Magennis (and Gogarty) had presumed; A.E., at least, did not get this impression since he wrote to Lady Gregory that Joyce had “sat with me up to 4 a.m. telling me of the true inwardness of things from his point of view.”⁶

As Stanislaus points out, Joyce was keen to learn: “His interest in it had been aroused by reading Yeats and Russell, and though he never belonged to either the Hermetic Society or to the Theosophical Society [...] he read with serious intent expository works on theosophy by Madame Blavatsky, Col. Olcott, Annie Besant, and Leadbeater.”⁷ Stanislaus quotes his brother’s explanation of his curiosity: “They interest me [...] In my opinion, they are writing about a very real spiritual experience you can’t appreciate [...] And they write about it [...] with a subtlety that I don’t find in many so-called psychological novels.” Signs of this engagement are evident in his possession of H.S. Olcott’s *A Buddhist Catechism* dated May 7, 1901, his reading of F.W.H. Myers’ *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, which appeared in the National Library in October 1903, and the poem *Nirvana* (which Stanislaus alludes to but of which I can find no trace). Stanislaus may be right when he explained that “mysticism disappointed him [...]

⁴ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 99

⁵ Ibid, p. 178

⁶ Henry Summerfield, *A.E.: That myriad-minded man* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1975), p. 109

⁷ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, p. 140

because it had allured him with the promise of intuitions of a reality,”⁸ but he appears to overstate this reaction: “Theosophy may have been the only intellectual adventure of his nonage that he regarded as a pure waste of energy.”

Dubliners shows Joyce reacting against the mystical idealism of a poem such as A.E.’s ‘The Heroes’ (1904) in which the poet, amidst the streets of Dublin, enjoys a vision of the beauty of souls untarnished by the degradation of the bodies in which they dwell and the squalor of their surroundings (“rotteness”, “where the brawling shouters stamped their feet”, “filth”, “splashing from the heel”). The poet reminds himself that each person he encounters is a hero who has descended to earth to “wrestle with the chaos till the anarchy to the light be bowed.”⁹ This last phrase suggests the political nature of A.E.’s vision is in its millenarian optimism in the inevitability of hidden Irish virtue, with justice on its side, realising itself and so achieving national freedom. As Tracey Teets Schwarze explains, A.E.’s spiritual ambitions began with Ireland but were apocalyptic and universal:

Russell, especially, believed that expansion of theosophical lodges would help to create in Ireland the unified, spiritual essence that would lead not only to Ireland’s independence from England but also to the establishment of Ireland as the spiritual redeemer of the world; he wrote to Yeats in 1896 that “out of Ireland will arise a light to transform many ages and peoples.”¹⁰

By the summer of 1905, Joyce’s knives were sharpening for an attack on A.E.. In 1903 he had written to Stanislaus, “words cannot measure my contempt for A.E. at present [...] damn Russell [...] damn free-thinkers, damn vegetable verse and double damn vegetable philosophy!”¹¹ Upon being asked by A.E., in 1904, to write something for ‘The Irish

⁸ Ibid, p.140

⁹ Summerfield, *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 79

¹⁰ Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians*, p. 64

¹¹ Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus, February 8th, 1903. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 14

Homestead' which showed he didn't "mind playing to the common understanding and liking", Joyce submitted 'The Sisters', which questions cosy notions of the Irish 'home'. 'The Holy Office' mocked A.E. for his diluted Christianity, his legendary capacity for Blake-like visions, and his awkward attempt, in the form of *Deirdre* (1902), to present Irish myth in the ennobled form of Greek tragedy. Joyce refuses to join ranks with

him who once when snug abed
Saw Jesus Christ without his head
And tried so hard to win for us
The long-lost works of Æschylus

(the diphthong of "Æschylus" calling to mind Russell's pseudonym). Like Swift, in whose octosyllabics he writes, the coarse language of his claim marks out his territory with rhymes such as "Thus I relieve their timid arses / Perform my office of katharsis" (playing off the earlier reference to Greek tragedy). There was a personal element of bitterness here since A.E. had been vocal about the manner of Joyce's dramatic departure from Dublin, saying, according to Richard Ellmann, that Joyce had "behaved caddishly" and that "a touch of starvation would do him good".¹² Although Yeats is the first of the Celtic Twilight set Joyce attacks in the poem, Joyce regarded 'The Holy Office' partly as a form of revenge on A.E. for the criticism of his conduct: "About Russell: I have written to my printer in Dublin and am to release my 'Holy Office' in a week".¹³ Having completed 'Clay' early in 1905, he curtly instructed Stanislaus, "Sell it to Mighty AUM, and forward the money", AUM being a Sanskrit word meaning a combination of 'creation, being, dissolution, ultimate reality'.

Joyce's sense of himself as "Katharsis-Purgative" for Celtic Twilight notions of spirituality is evident in 'The Boarding House' (July 1905) which parodies A.E.'s *Deirdre*.

¹² *Selected Letters*, p.43

¹³ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, November 19th, 1904, *Selected Letters* ed. Ellmann, p. 43

A.E.'s publication of a collection of short stories, *The Mask of Apollo*, in 1904, may also have focused Joyce's response. The iconic 8th or 9th century legend of Deirdre had previously been retold by Hull, O'Grady and de Jubainville, and in verse by Thomas Stott (1825), Robert Dwyer Joyce (1876), Samuel Ferguson (1880), and Aubrey de Vere (1882). A.E.'s version coincides with Herbert Trench's impressionistic narrative poem, *Deirdre Wedded* (1901), and Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902). A.E.'s *Deirdre* was first published in the *All Ireland Review* in July 1901, and first performed on April 2, 1902 at St. Teresa's Temperance Hall on the same bill as Yeats' *Kathleen ni Houlihan*. A.E. conceived the play as a protest against his sense of the degradation of the Gaelic heroes in Moore's and Yeats' play *Diarmuid and Grania* (1901). He spiritualised the legend by turning Deirdre into a seeress in the manner of Cassandra, a change in line with the play's mood of Greek tragedy as A.E.'s noble characters struggle against their inexorable fate ordained by the gods.¹⁴ Although initially unimpressed, Yeats came to like what he saw as the play's "quiet dreamlike beauty, much like that of a mural frieze,"¹⁵ and felt inspired to set up the Irish National Theatre Society, which, in turn, led to the formation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. Subsequent dramatic interpretations by Yeats himself in 1907 and Synge (published posthumously in 1910) confirmed the canonical status of the Deirdre legend in the Irish Revival.

The word "allusion" appears twice in 'The Boarding House' ("allusions of that kind always made her feel awkward" [59], "one of the music-hall artistes [...] had made a rather free allusion to Polly" [63]), and Joyce's story itself refers covertly to the Deirdre legend. The misty dreaminess of ancient myth becomes, in a Dublin boarding-house, mischievous gossip and rumour: "details had been invented by some", "the affair was sure to be talked of", "her mother's boarding-house was beginning to get a certain fame." (60-61)¹⁶

¹⁴ A prophecy has stated that Deirdre will bring about the destruction of the Red Branch. This happens when she falls in love with Naisi, a relationship which causes friction between the Red Branch and Conobar.

¹⁵ Summerfield, *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 114

¹⁶ The story might also be a parody of Dublin Theosophical circles in Dublin at this time. There was a real 'boarding house' for Theosophists at 3 Upper Ely Place, run by Frederick Dick and his wife, from 1891 onwards. A.E. lived there for seven years, at which point the lodge turned into the Hermetic Society based in Dawson's Chambers. The word 'lodge' refers to a Theosophical community and in the story the residents pay for "board and lodgings" (57); like the friends at Ely Place these lodgers "shared in common tastes and occupations and for this reason they were

Like Deirdre, Polly is hidden away out of sight, not because of danger from druids who are fearful of a fateful prophecy, but because her estranged father keeps pestering her in the corn-factor's office: her mother "had taken her daughter home again and set her to do housework" (57). Her seclusion is emphasised by her mother's decision to keep her within the confines of the boarding-house so as to encourage Mr Doran's interest. Polly has "light soft hair" (57) like her counterpart with "golden hair."¹⁷ The colour of her eyes, "grey with a shade of green through them" (57) echoes the description of Deirdre in the original legend: "beautiful grey green eyes."¹⁸ Polly is associated with music, singing coquettishly for the residents on Sunday evenings (a siren for Doran), as Deirdre, alone, intermittently hears the bird-song of the inspired Angus. In both stories the love affair follows the convention of the romance genre, being forbidden, surrounded by danger (Jack Mooney as the druids / Concobar),¹⁹ and kept alive by secret, night-time trysts: "They used to go upstairs together on tiptoe, each with a candle, and on the third landing exchange reluctant goodnights." (62) This gentle, nocturnal secrecy echoes the way Deirdre first meets Naisi in a dream, approaching him closely and whispering in his ear the way to her valley. Both women know sorrow, Deirdre foreseeing the mortal fate of her beloved but remaining powerless in the hands of fate, Polly in tears, clinging to Doran's neck and then sitting alone on her bed, uncertain of his affection and aware that her reputation hangs in the balance. A pillow features in both women's emotional wranglings: after her ominous dream of destruction, Deirdre says "as I awoke from my sleep my pillow was wet with tears falling softly, as out of another

very chummy with one another." (57) Just as there is "a floating population" in Hardwicke St. (56), so, according to Henry Summerfield, "the composition of the community, which came to be known as the Household, was not constant." As Mrs Mooney's residents have a weekly "reunion" for entertainment on a Sunday (57), so the Theosophists would have classes on a Friday (for beginners) and a Monday (for the advanced). Yeats, in his *Autobiographies*, refers to A.E.'s attempt to disentangle a romantic liaison within the Theosophist lodge. References to meat in the story (Mrs Mooney's former butcher's shop, the way she "dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals with meat" [58], the breakfast remains of "morsels of bacon-fat and bacon-rind" [58]) might be ironic in terms of Theosophical predilection for vegetarianism: according to Yeats, "no meat was eaten" at Ely Place, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1926), p. 298. See Summerfield's *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 33-5, Yeats's *Autobiographies*, 'Ireland After Parnell', p. 291-8.

¹⁷ A.E., *Deirdre* (Dublin: Tower Press, 1907), p. 16

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8

¹⁹ In the play, Concobar, despite knowing the prophecy that Deirdre would destroy the Red Branch, has spared her life and arranged that she should live in obscurity with Lavarcam. Deirdre is in danger from him because he continually broods about whether he has made a mistake.

world”;²⁰ Polly, conversely, begins to move from anguish to hope as, looking at her bed, “she regarded the pillows for a long time” (63).

Both women are presented in terms of light, suggestive of the effulgence of divine presence. This is particularly so in A.E.’s poems where his ubiquitous “shining ones” are visionary presences comparable to the elementals, nymphs and dryads of classical writers who live in a heaven-world identical to the Devechan of Theosophy, where the soul enjoys the results of its good karma before being reborn. Light, in this respect, is synonymous for A.E. with pure, angelic love which can generate, often unconsciously, love in others: “The soul may or not be aware of the position it is placed in or its new duties, but yet that Living Light, having found a way into the being of one person, does not rest there, but sends its rays and extends its influence on and on to illumine the darkness of another nature.”²¹ Deirdre’s face “shone” at her lover, Naisi,²² (who also appears as a shining presence in Deirdre’s supernatural dream of him), and this denotes her intense spirituality as “a symbol of eternal beauty.”²³ Likewise, Polly lures Doran in the glow of her candle, though, bathetically, it is her feet which glow: “her white instep shone in the opening of her furry slippers and the blood glowed warmly behind her perfumed skin.” (62).²⁴

Deirdre’s visionary capacity is shared by Polly, though typically Joyce shadows with doubt Polly’s naive expectation of a happy marital future: “she waited on patiently, almost cheerfully, without alarm, her memories giving place to hopes and visions of the future. Her hopes and visions were so intricate that she no longer saw the white pillows on which her gaze was fixed or remembered that she was waiting for anything.”²⁵ (64) The irony of her

²⁰ *Deirdre*, p. 28

²¹ A.E., ‘The Hero in Man’, 1897, in *Imagination and Reveries* (Dublin, 1915), p. 152 (p.143-61)

²² *Deirdre*, p. 18

²³ A.E., ‘Nationality and Cosmopolitanism in Literature’, *Literary Ideals in Ireland*, J. Eglinton, W.B. Yeats, A.E., W. Larminie (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), p. 51

²⁴ Joyce, in fact, added the paragraph which details Polly’s coy seduction to his final version of the story *The James Joyce Archive*, ed. by H.W. Gabler (London: Gabler, 1978), p. 37

²⁵ There is pathos in Polly’s youthful “hopes and visions of the future”. Mrs Mooney’s willingness to rush her daughter into a possibly unsuitable marriage risks the replication of her own disastrous marital experience (*Ulysses*, where Doran appears as an unhappy drunk, proves this to be the case). The sadness of Polly’s sacrifice of her youth, virginity, and sexual possibility for financial security and societal respectability, the traditional cultural formulation of the marriage contract for a woman, is that she will not find in her day-to-day marital experience the stability, harmony and ease which she presumably dreams about.

forgetfulness includes a sense of how Doran's importance in causing her dreams to come true is balanced by his apparently negligible role in her fantasy of the future: she seems already to have sidelined a hopelessly trapped husband. In A.E.'s play, Deirdre's visions, by contrast, entirely centre around her doomed lover: "where thou art, the dream ends, and beyond it there is no other dream."²⁶ The bathos in the irony here is partly secured by an echo of Lavarcam's (her foster-mother's) grand reassurance that Deirdre should not feel guilty about forgetting her since: "in this love heaven and earth will be forgotten, and your own self unremembered or dim and far off as a home the spirit lives in no longer."²⁷

Bob Doran's condition corresponds to Naisi's exile status since he is domestically rootless, living in a boarding-house. His "three days' reddish beard" (60) suggests the connection with Naisi's tribe, the Red Branch of Ulster. He gestures towards the romantic intensity of A.E.'s hero in his "delirium" (62) of sexual desire (cf. "the beating of my heart", "passionate tumult")²⁸, and in the passionate embrace which signals defiance towards the oncoming storm: "He felt against his shirt the agitation of her bosom" (62) (cf. Naisi's words: "But first, before thou goest, bend down thy head - low - rest it on my bosom. Listen to the beating of my heart."²⁹ Doran, like Naisi wanting to fight Concobar, is conscious of an impulse of manly duty, a sentiment presented by Joyce in the language of epic chivalry: "his sense of honour told him that reparation must be paid for such a sin." (62) However, whereas Naisi is prepared to fight against his fate to the very end like the Greek tragic hero he is modelled on, Doran is made of feebler stuff and meekly accepts his doom: "What could he do now but marry her or run away? He could not brazen it out." (61)

Mrs Mooney, her surname suggesting the world of primitive paganism, plays the role of Lavarcam, a modern druidess who will worship (quickly) on this fateful Sunday at the Catholic church on Marlborough Street. Just as Lavarcam has for years maintained Concobar's trust by

²⁶ *Deirdre*, p. 30

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 17

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 18, 20

²⁹ *Deirdre*, p.20

keeping her charge hidden, so Mrs Mooney “was a woman who was quite able to keep things to herself”, and we are told that, seeing love blossom between Polly and Doran, she “kept her own counsel” (58). Both figures seek to shape their daughter’s happiness (a surrogate arrangement in *Deirdre*) through romantic manipulation. Lavarcam promises to Deirdre “If I can make your dreams real, I will, my beautiful fawn”,³⁰ and is upbraided by Concobar for her treachery towards him: “A Druid makes prophecies, and a Druidess schemes to bring them to pass! Well have you worked together!”³¹ This is paralleled by Mrs Mooney’s solicitous cunning on behalf of her daughter: that Polly “did not wish it to be thought that in her wise innocence she had *divined* the intention behind her mother’s tolerance” (59) suggests a teasing clue to the provenance of the story (cf. Lavarcam’s “I would divine the future”).³² She is the spiritually inverted “Mighty Mother” of A.E.’s poetry writ large.

The word “divined” alerts us, too, Joyce’s parody of mystical mind-reading and visionary insight in A.E.’s play:

DEIRDRE: “O, Naisi, I have looked within thy heart, and thou hast there imagined a king with scornful eyes thinking of thy flight.”

NAISI: By the gods, but it is true!³³

Telepathy was important to A.E in Theosophical terms, as Henry Summerfield explains: “as the body, through the organ of sight, can perceive extremely distant parts of the universe, so the psyche is capable of making divine contact with all humanity, and the spirit, the highest element in man, mirrors the images in the Divine ideations.”³⁴ In ‘The Boarding House’, the characters are forced to play their cards in respect to how well they can judge the other characters’ potential behaviour. At the start of the affair, Polly and her mother successfully read each other’s thoughts:

³⁰ Ibid, p.14

³¹ Ibid, p.41

³² Ibid, p.17

³³ Ibid, p. 25

³⁴ Summerfield, *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 50

Polly knew that she was being watched, but still her mother's persistent silence could not be misunderstood. There had been no open complicity between mother and daughter, no open understanding but, though people in the house began to talk of the affair, still Mrs Mooney did not intervene. (58)

Such telepathy naturally carries through to the moment of crisis when Mrs Mooney determines her daughter's future:

Both had been somewhat awkward, of course. She had been made awkward by her not wishing to receive the news in too cavalier a fashion or to seem to have connived and Polly had been made awkward not merely because allusions of that kind always made her awkward but also because she did not wish it to be thought that in her wise innocence she had divined the intention behind her mother's tolerance. (59)

Mrs Mooney also successfully reads Doran's state of mind, which enables her to pressurize him into marriage: "If it had been Mr Sheridan or Mr Meade or Bantam Lyons her task would have been much harder. She did not think he would face publicity." (60) Similarly, Doran envisages the expected attitudes of his employers and Mrs Mooney ("the implacable faces of his employer and of the Madam stared upon his discomforture" [63]), the disapproval of his friends if he married Polly ("he could imagine his friends talking of the affair and laughing" [61]), and the hostility of Jack Mooney who is determined to protect his sister's honour ("they saluted coldly; and the lover's eyes rested for a second or two on a thick bulldog face and a pair of thick short arms. When he reached the foot of the staircase he glanced up and saw Jack regarding him from the door of the return-room." [63])

Mrs Mooney may be a tongue-in-cheek portrait of Madame Blavatsky, who, having died in 1891 at the age of 60, had been the most famous ‘druidess’ of the nineteenth century. Because of Mrs Mooney’s authority in the house, “all the resident young men spoke of her as *The Madam*”. In turn of the century Dublin, the term “Madame” might have called Madame Blavatsky to mind. Like the earth-goddess of Theosophy, Mrs Mooney is physically impressive: “a big imposing woman [...] a great florid face” (56, 60). From Yeats’s memories of her salon it seems that the distinctive image visitors gained of Madame Blavatsky was that of a, large, imposing woman, who sat enigmatically at her table looking at her tarot cards: “a sort of female Dr Johnson [...] that wrinkled old face bent over the cards”;³⁵ T.S. Eliot chooses this picture of her as the basis of Madame Sosostris in ‘The Waste Land’. In determining the fate of Doran, *The Madam* “sat in the straw arm-chair” and silently worked out her plan, her scheming suggested by the imagery of playing cards, which primarily intimates the craftiness of a poker-player, but also hints at the divination of tarot: “She counted all her cards again before sending Mary up to Mr Doran’s room to say that she wished to speak with him. She was sure she would win” (58). (MacGregor Mathers, after 1887, introduced the The Golden Dawn and Yeats to the practice of meditating on symbolic patterns on pieces of cardboard in order to induce visions).

That Mrs Mooney governs her house “cunningly” and tricks Doran into marriage through assumed moral outrage connects to longstanding suspicion about the genuineness of Madame Blavatsky’s spiritual claims. In 1885 a representative of the Society for Psychical Research had famously denounced her as a charlatan after hearing reports from her servants about secret sliding panels and other such sleight-of-hand paraphernalia; there was no evidence, apart from her own word, to substantiate her claim that she had received secret wisdom from Tibetan monks through a direct encounter with them and through telepathy.³⁶ Yeats suggests the native craftiness of Madame Blavatsky in his description of her as “a sort of old Irish peasant woman with an air of humour and audacious power.”³⁷

³⁵ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ‘Four Years: 1887-1891’, p. 216-7

³⁶ Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*, p. 59-64

³⁷ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ‘Four Years : 1887-1891’, p. 214

Mrs Mooney's short period of mental machination is described by a word which Joyce's contemporaries associated with the spiritual meditation practised by Madame Blavatsky and her followers: "Mrs Mooney glanced instinctively at the little gilt clock on the mantelpiece as soon as she had become aware through her reverie that the bells of George's Church had stopped ringing." So intense is her thinking that she has, momentarily, lost touch with everyday reality, though her machiavellian strategies are at the opposite extreme to the refined transcendentalism hinted at by "reverie". The other-worldly connotations of "reverie" are evident in *Autobiographies* in which Yeats uses the word interchangeably with 'dream'. Explaining his experiments with George Pollexfen and Mary Battle in which they used cabalistic symbols and telepathy, he writes that the former "saw me using images learned from Mathers to start reverie"; elsewhere he describes a mystical experience as "vision", "dream", "reverie", and ponders the possibility of telepathy on a national scale as a mood of shared, mystical unity: "nation-wide multiform reverie."³⁸ Polly's meditation over her future, as her mother talks to Doran, is also described as a "reverie": "she rested the nape of her neck against the cool iron bed-rail and fell into a reverie. There was no longer any perturbation visible on her face." (64) The irony here of Polly achieving Buddhist, trance-like calmness works through a sense of how worldly and selfish her thought-processes actually are, and how much of a contrast her relaxed state-of-mind is to that of the harassed Doran in the room below.

The Madam is also the slang term for the proprietor of a brothel. The occupations of a number of the characters in the story involve direct financial exchange (commission agent, corn-factor, sheriff's man, wine-merchant) and Mrs Mooney joins their ranks as she arranges her daughter's marriage to the hapless Doran. This links to other oblique sexual references in the story: the innuendo of the story's title since 'to board' has an early slang meaning: 'to make sexual advances'; the description of Polly as "a little perverse madonna" (57); the ambiguity implied in Mrs Mooney's plans for Polly: "the intention was to give her the run of the young men" (57); and the *double entendre* of "vamped accompaniments" (57) given a vamp is "a

³⁸ Ibid, p. 319, 321, 325

woman who sets out to charm or captivate men (frequently from disreputable or dishonest motives) by an unscrupulous use of sexual attractiveness”.³⁹

The satire of marriage in Dublin as a form of legalized prostitution, in which the Catholic Church retains its social control through manipulation of social attitudes towards sex, also works through the equivocation in the word “reparation”: “The question was: What reparation would he make? [...] There must be reparation in such cases” (59), “only one reparation could make up for the loss of her daughter’s honour: marriage” (60), “he was almost thankful at being afforded a loophole of reparation” (60), “his sense of honour told him that reparation must be made for such a sin” (62). Jeri Johnson explains the different meanings:

The restoration of a thing to its proper state (which is here strictly impossible), or spiritual restoration or salvation (not within his power; except in the strict Catholic sense where penance is made ‘in satisfaction of...sins’; ‘satisfaction’ being ‘reparation of the injury and insult offered to God by sin, and of the injustice done to our neighbour’ (Maynooth 303), but also, the action of making amends for a wrong done, especially in the material sense of providing compensation (and there she has him).⁴⁰

Such awareness of the inevitability of “reparation” (Doran’s sense of *karma*, as it were) connects to Joyce’s parody of the classical model of fate in ‘The Boarding House’. In A.E.’s play, Deirdre senses the irrevocability of the prophecy telling Naisi “fate is stealing on us with the footsteps of those we love.”⁴¹ Doran, similarly, is aware of the invisible but doom-laden presence of religiously underpinned social respectability as he goes from his room to meet his future mother-in-law, “a force pushed him downstairs step by step. The implacable faces of his [Catholic] employer and of the Madam stared upon his discomforture.” (63) This silent force is

³⁹ Johnson ed., *Dubliners*, p. 224

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 225

⁴¹ *Deirdre*, p. 28

“the weight of social opinion” (59) and “publicity” (60) which creates the irresistible momentum behind Mrs Mooney’s manipulation of Doran’s sexual guilt into a marriage proposal: “she was sure she would win” (59), “she felt sure she would win.” (60) Doran’s role as the story’s hapless, Pooter-esque victim is emphasized by description of him as “sitting helplessly on the side of the bed” as Polly comes to tell him of her mother’s wish to speak to him, and being “more helpless than ever” as he then dresses before the show-down (60-1). In *Deirdre*, Naisi, youthful, presumptuous and reckless, displays a ‘modern’ scepticism as he dismisses the prophecy about Deirdre and the destruction of the Red Branch: “I will not leave nor forget for a thousand prophecies made by Druids in their dotage.”⁴² Doran, likewise, must finally acknowledge that it is all very well for him to keep up with modern free-thinking ideas in private (“he still bought a copy of *Reynolds’s Newspaper* every week” [61]),⁴³ but he still has to maintain his “religious duties”, which, of course, now involves marriage to Polly. Whilst he shaves nervously and ponders his future, the “constant peals” coming from “the belfry of George’s Church” outside his room this Sunday morning must seem extra intense.⁴⁴

The irony, of course, at the heart of the story’s satire is Mrs Mooney’s use of religion for worldly ends, her appropriation of a moral stance for an entirely pragmatic purpose. She plays the role of “an outraged mother” (59) but isn’t one since she has encouraged the relationship to develop. She contrasts her principled attitude with other mothers who “would be content to patch up such an affair for a sum of money” (60) when in fact she *is* blackmailing Doran and marriage in her eyes *is* a financial arrangement with Doran representing excellent business. She presents herself as solely concerned for Polly’s welfare whereas she is strongly motivated by a selfish reason: “she thought of some mothers she knew who could not get their daughters off their hands.” (60) The “acute pain” caused in Doran by the priest at confession (60) has its counterpart

⁴² Ibid, p. 20

⁴³ Reynolds Newspaper is a radical London newspaper which reported on scandalous events. (Brown, *Dubliners*, p. 268)

⁴⁴ The ringing of church bells might be another parodic touch given the frequency of bell-ringing in spiritualist circles. A.E., for example, records his first vision thus: “Now and then the silvery sound of bells broke on my ear. I saw nothing for a time. Then there was an intensity of light before my eyes like the flashing of sunlight through a crystal.” *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 65

in the actual bodily harm threatened by Jack Mooney's "thick bulldog face" and "pair of thick short arms" and his promise to deal violently with "any fellow [who] tried that sort of a game on with *his* sister" (63). That is to say, Joyce explores the hidden reality of the priests' cynical and brutal power lying beneath the respectable surface of petit-bourgeois Dublin life, which includes "Hardwicke Street" (56),⁴⁵ "*artistes*" (56), "lace curtains" (58), an "awkward" mother and daughter conversation about sex, "the little gilt clock on the mantelpiece" (59), "reparation". In such a context, there appears an ominous quality in the focused and semi-secretive mood of those who attend mass at George's Church, "revealing their purpose by their self-contained demeanour no less than by the little volumes in their gloved hands." (58)

In the language of Theosophy, this is Joyce's 'The Secret Doctrine' of 'The Boarding House'. The satire, which turns appearance on its head, parodies the fundamental aspect of A.E.'s transcendental mysticism:

The foundation of his faith was the Indian concept of the division between Reality and Illusion, or, more accurately, between Absolute Reality and Relative Existence. Only the One or the Deity can be said without qualifications to exist [...] All else belongs to the realm of *Maya*, or Illusion [...] A human being, held in a prison of which the windows are his five senses, perceives phantoms and not reality, the Many and not the One.⁴⁶

'The Boarding House' sets the record straight as to which tribal leaders hold the keys of spiritual power in Dublin: the Catholic Church or the Golden Dawn or the Nietzschean free-thinkers. As for Theosophy, in the context of a Dublin world in which a wife must evade her husband attacking her in the night with a meat cleaver and then plot her own and her daughter's survival,

⁴⁵ This is a "street of respectable terraced houses on the north side of the city." (Brown, *Dubliners*, p. 267)

⁴⁶ Summerfield, *A.E.: That myriad-minded man*, p. 43

it seems a middle-class intellectual parlour game, a “quintessential triviality”.

One of the dirty secrets of ‘The Boarding House’ is the skewered morality which makes natural sexual desire inevitably tangle itself up in the respectable-seeming but soul-destroying institution of marriage. Marilyn French, in ‘Women in Joyce’s Dublin’, remarks:

The Dublin approach to sin is one of avoidance of the occasion, that is, avoidance of emotion, of extremes, and of course, sex. The resulting morality is one of blandness, respectability, conformity, and propriety [...] Dubliners [...] can achieve the proper external appearance only by denying and repressing their desires, and in time utterly obliterating all awareness of desire. The evil implicit in sex spreads like a circle of taint; not just sexual desire but all desire is suspect; not just sexual pleasure but sensuous pleasure is to be avoided [...] Dublin’s spiritual barrenness, its scrupulous meanness, is the result of this pious selflessness. And in Dublin, as in all patriarchal cultures, the most stringent requirements are placed on women. The women care for the men, the children and the house; they support the church; they tend to others and to society – that is, to proprieties, but not to themselves.⁴⁷

Another dirty secret which Joyce reveals is that the modern Irish girl (Polly has “a shade of green” in her eyes) is as likely to be a disingenuous minx as an etherealised visionary or chaste model of womanhood of fictional stereotype, as much a manipulator of the power of her sexuality as a suffering martyr-figure of popular political iconography. Shari Benstock observes that “post Victorian Irish society held to the belief that women embodied the highest moral and ethical principles of western civilization [...] that her nature was innately superior to that of men, and that she served as a model of spiritual victory over the baser instincts that controlled men”.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Marilyn French, ‘Women in Joyce’s Dublin’ in *James Joyce, The Augmented Ninth*, ed. Benstock, p. 269

⁴⁸ Shari Benstock, ‘City Spaces and Women’s Places’. *Ibid*, p. 300 (p.293-309)

Arthur Griffith believed complacently that “all of us know that Irish women are the most virtuous women in the world.”⁴⁹ Similarly, William Sharp, quoting Renan, claimed in *Lyra Celtica* (1896):

No other human tribe has carried so much mystery into love. No other has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, nor been more dominated by it. It is a kind of intoxication, a madness, a giddiness [...] Woman appears as [...] a kind of vague vision, an intermediary between man and the supernatural world [...] woman, as chivalry conceived her – that ideal of sweetness and beauty set up as the supreme object of life – is a creation neither classic, Christian, nor Germanic, but in reality Celtic.⁵⁰

In Sharp’s novel, *Silence Farm* (1899), the milkmaid heroine, renounces the world in order to maintain her pure, spiritual connection with the land, almost as if her farm has become a private version of a convent. This is the climax of the story:

She had no wish but to be left alone, in the rough of the fields and the farm; no instinct but to go back to these rude lands, to be ever in close touch with them, to have the companionship of the kindly brutes she knew and loved, to be intimate with every natural sight and sound – the moorland, the gray skies or great cloud-swept azure, wind and rain, mist and dew, the haze of frost and haze of heat, where alike the breaths of the kye hung in smoky drifts above the grass.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. Attridge and Howes p. 181

⁵⁰ William Sharp, *Lyra Celtica*, p. 47-8

⁵¹ Fiona MacLeod, *Silence Farm* (London: Grant Richards, 1899), p. 242. The story is set in Scotland but the Celtic nature of the novel allows it to be classed as ‘Irish’ in this respect.

Instead of sensual, bodily contact, Sharp offers a sexual-sounding but chaste communion with the soil (“in close touch with”, “companionship”, intimate with”). She wants to be an agricultural, ‘Celtic’ nun.

Joyce despised such views, saying in a letter to Stanislaus, in the context of Sinn Fein’s outrage about “venereal excess”:

I am nauseated by their lying drivel about pure men and pure women and spiritual love and love for ever: blatant lying in the face of truth. I don’t know much about the ‘saince’ of the subject but I presume there are very few mortals in Europe who are not in danger of waking some morning and finding themselves syphilitic. The Irish consider England a sink: but, if cleanliness be important in this matter, what is Ireland? ⁵²

Polly Mooney, Eveline, and Mrs Sinico do not share the “wish but to be left alone” like Sharp’s milkmaid, an impulse which is unnatural and sterile, and Griffith’s coy euphemism “virtuous” is put to the test by complex forces to do with cultural approval and economic survival. Such attitudes towards sex constitute an aspect of the false spirituality which Joyce found so dangerous in Celtic Twilight mythology. ‘Araby’ is not only a rebuke to Celtic Twilight idealism on a political, but also on a sexual level. Such a romanticized version of Irish femaleness combines with traditional Catholic veneration of the chaste woman to create a cultural climate in which the boy’s rites-of-passage disappointment is inevitable. As Tracey Teets Schwarze says of the story’s conclusion, “the image of the ideal, angelic woman – who does not exist – [...] has been tarnished. The fall of Mangan’s sister – of all female forms, including the Catholic Virgin – from their brilliance-bathed pedestals is clear; the light in the bazaar gallery is not the only one that has gone out.”⁵³ Revivalist spiritual idealism and traditional Catholic

⁵² Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus, November 13th, 1906, *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 129

⁵³ Tracey Teets Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians*, p. 130

repressive attitudes towards sex combined to create an asceticism which Robert Spoo argues is central to Joyce's preoccupations in the stories:

Joyce points to Irish celibacy as one of the chief symptoms of the spiritual paralysis he wished to dissect [...] In *Dubliners* Joyce depicted a society in which the ascetic ideal had come to dominate, rendering its practitioners morally abject and spiritually docile.⁵⁴

Joyce's choice of the Deirdre legend was particularly provocative given its status among the Celtic School and their reverential view of such iconic stories. A.E. states:

what we know as myth and folk-tale is not primitive at all, but the decayed fragments of once mighty religions or literatures shrunk from their living richness to be mere skeletons of themselves, yet with the articulation of the bones preserved ready for the imaginative poet or story-teller to clothe them once more with life and renew their original shapeliness.⁵⁵

Yeats had numbered Deirdre, together with Cassandra, Helen, Lear, and Tristan, as among "the august sorrowful persons of literature".⁵⁶ It is a measure of how seriously such legends were regarded that A.E.'s play, itself a response to the perceived vulgarity of Moore's and Yeats' *Diarmuid and Grania*, was attacked by Standish O'Grady for degrading the heroic figures by parading them on stage. A.E. might have felt that Joyce, like the "little blond Londoner" who upsets Jack Mooney, is being "rather free" in his "allusion to Polly".

Joyce's modernised version of the legend is, however, more true to the original story in

⁵⁴ Robert Spoo, *James Joyce and the Language of History* (New York; Oxford: OUP, 1994), p. 23-4

⁵⁵ A.E., *The Living Torch*, ed. by M. Gibbon (London: Macmillan & Co., 1937), p. 243

⁵⁶ W.B. Yeats, 'The Celtic Element in Literature' (1897), in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1961), p. 182 (p.173-189)

some respects than A.E.'s romanticised account. As Jeffrey Gantz observes in the introduction to his translation of the story, "originally it was as much a story of treachery and honour as of romance."⁵⁷ The Deirdre of this narrative is as sexually forward as Polly since, as soon as she hears that her ideal man, Naisi, is close by, she finds him and initiates the romance by attracting his attention and quickly revealing that she prefers him to Concobbar. When he hesitates because of the danger of the prophecy, she bullies him into submission, accusing him of cowardice (compare Doran's timidity), and physically intimidating him: "Deirdru leapt at him and seized him by the ears, saying 'Two ears of shame and mockery these unless you take me with you!'"⁵⁸ A.E.'s version chooses to stay in line with the pre-Raphaelite image of the dreamy, ethereal princess and it is hard to imagine his Deirdre, played by the aristocratic and fervently nationalistic Countess Markievicz, boxing her warrior round the head in this way. In the original story, Deirdre, for all the sympathy inspired by her later grief, does show a reckless disregard for the druid prophecy and justifies the prediction that "there will be trouble on her account."⁵⁹ Like Polly, she is "*a...naughty girl.*"

In *Yeats and A.E.*, Peter Kuch illustrates A.E.'s determination to de-sexualize his heroine:

Russell's heroine is sexless to a nicety. To emphasize that her premonitions of doom come from seership rather than sex, he has her say to Naisi: 'You know when we fled that night; as I lay by your side –thou wert yet strange to me – I heard voices speaking out of the air...' The parenthetical disclaimer is unnecessary. Not only is it distressingly coy in its attempt to prevent what in any case would be an untenable interpretation – sex does not produce clairvoyance- but also [...] it aptly reflects that nineteenth century preoccupation with using archaisms, circumlocution, and euphemisms to at

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), 1981, p.256

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 256

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 259

once admit and then immediately repress sexuality.⁶⁰

Such refinement of an original myth was typical of the Celtic Twilight approach to the legends which, they claimed, constituted an essential heroic Irishness. A. Norman Jeffares comments on Lady Gregory's *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904) that "she omitted some of the violence and sexuality of the originals."⁶¹ Similarly, Martyn's *Maeve* (1900) presents the goddess as etherealized and mystical whereas in the original stories, the queen, who leads the men of Connacht against the men of Ulster to seize the great bull of Cooley, cuts a very different figure. According to Robert Welch, she is "accredited with numerous sexual partners [...] and was said never to be 'without one man in the shadow of another' [...] a scheming virago, willing to barter her own favours and her daughter Findabair's for the services of any hero who will oppose Cuchulainn."⁶²

The mixture of sex and mysticism in 'The Boarding House' might also be a reminder to Dublin Theosophists that they themselves, as the opening passage from *Ulysses* suggests, were not as Platonically-minded as they often liked to appear. In 1889, Theosophist circles had been convulsed by accusations levelled at Mabel Collins, the editor of their journal, *Lucifer*, who was alleged to have led two apprentice celibates astray, and later there was widespread shock at Mohini Chatterjee's dalliances. The mystical marriage between Maud Gonne and Yeats expressed itself through suggestive visions about Celtic Rites initiation ceremonies which barely concealed explicit sexual desire: Maud Gonne wrote, "I have had a partial initiation of the sword but feel it is not complete. This too we must try together."⁶³

In his presentation of Polly's sexuality, Joyce goes one step further than George Egerton, the perceived 1890s expert on female psychology and sexual liberation, who had argued that men had "overlooked the eternal wildness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in

⁶⁰ Peter Kuch, *Yeats and A.E.* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1986), p. 201

⁶¹ A. Norman Jeffares, *A Pocket History of Irish Literature* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1997), p. 72

⁶² Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 362

⁶³ Foster, *W.B. Yeats*, p. 203

the mildest, best woman" ('The Vision', *Keynotes* [1893]).⁶⁴ The collusion of mother and daughter in 'The Boarding House' contrasts with her short story, 'Virgin Soil' (*Discords*, 1894), in which the young heroine of a middle-class family berates her mother for forcing her into an unhappy marriage at too young an age: "You sold me for a home, for clothes, for food; you played upon my ignorance, I won't say innocence, that is different."⁶⁵ Joyce responds laconically to Egerton's grandiloquent psychological patterning by suggesting how sexual desire, an impulse towards independence and social status, and a shrewd eye for economic security blur in a worldly-wise, but pathetically innocent, manner in Polly's snaring of Bob Doran. Whereas A.E. might see Polly's sexuality as an emanation of 'the Spirit' in mystical, neo-Platonic terms, Joyce observes her spirited quality in a different light: she is "very lively" (57). Joyce's message to the author of *Deirdre* is Polly's to the *artistes* as she sings in the drawing-room on a Sunday evening: "*You needn't sham*".

The irony of the parody of *Deirdre* cuts both ways, therefore, in that Joyce's evocation of Polly's sexual vitality and physical attractiveness acknowledges the origins of A.E.'s desire to mythologise and celebrate femininity in a figure such as the semi-divine Deirdre. In 'Religion and Love' (1904) A.E. celebrates female sexuality as an aspect of his diagnosis of how priests have caused Irish marriages to be spiritually inert:

I do not enter a defence of the loveless coquette, but the woman who has a natural delight in awakening love in men is priestess of a divinity than which there is none mightier among the rulers of the heavens. Through her eyes, her laugh in all her motions, there is expressed more than she is conscious of herself. The Mighty Mother through the woman is kindling a symbol herself in the spirit, and through that symbol she breathes her secret life into the heart, so that it is fed from within and is

⁶⁴ George Egerton, *Keynotes* (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane; Boston: Roberts Bros, 1893), p. 22

⁶⁵ George Egerton, *Discords* (London: John Lane, 1894), p. 157

drawn to herself [...] Time, which is for ever bringing back the old and renewing it, may yet bring back to us some counterpart of Aphrodite or Hera as they were understood by the most profound thinkers of the ancient world; and woman may again have her temples and her mysteries, and renew again her radiant life at its fountain, and feel that in seeking for beauty she is growing more and more into her ancestral being, and that in its shining forth she is giving to man, as he may give to her, something of that completeness of spirit of which it is written, “neither is the man without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Highest”.⁶⁶

In the same essay A.E. gallantly argues that “the lightest desires even, the lightest graces of women have a philosophical value for what suggestions they bring us of the divinity behind them.”⁶⁷

In her flirtatiousness, Polly imitates the eroticised abstract figures in A.E.’s poetry. ‘Desire’ shows the poet desperate to connect with “the Spirit”: “White for Thy whiteness all desires burn. /Ah, with what longing once again I turn!”⁶⁸ ‘The Symbol Seduces’ tells the story of the poet leaving this world to pursue beauty and truth having been tempted by the vision before him:

There in her old-world garden smiles
A symbol of the world’s desire,
Striving with quaint and lovely wiles
To bind to earth the soul of fire.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ A.E., *Imagination and Reveries*, p. 121

⁶⁷ A.E., *Imagination and Reveries*, p. 123

⁶⁸ A.E., *Collected Poems*, p. 22

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 27

‘A Vision of Beauty’, ‘Dream Love’, ‘Love’, ‘The Vision of Love’, and ‘Aphrodite’ all treat an abstract idea in female form in a romantic, chivalric manner.

Polly’s occasional resemblance to “a little perverse madonna” (57) contains an irony in that there is something inherently ‘perverse’ or *unnatural* in the concept of a madonna, a sexualized virgin. There is something very *natural* about Polly’s combination of innocence and sexuality so that she is divine in a pagan sense. In the seduction scene in Doran’s bedroom, Polly appears as a goddess, swathed in light (her candle, the shining instep of her foot), her bodily vitality offering up incense to her own youthful beauty and fertility: “the blood glowed warmly behind her perfumed skin. From her hands and wrists too as she lit and steadied her candle a faint perfume arose.” (62) As a symbolic avatar of feminine power, Polly, in A.E.’s terms, possesses “radiant life” and “a natural delight in awakening love in men”. She is “some counterpart of Aphrodite or Hera”.

This connects to the mood of the lovers’ late night trysts which suggests a domesticated, Dublin version of Tir-na-nOg or Devechan in Theosophy. Polly’s tenderness in serving Doran his dinner late at night transports him into a strange, rarefied state: “he scarcely knew what he was eating, feeling her beside him alone, at night, in the sleeping house”, and his “delirium” corresponds to A.E.’s depiction of nirvana: “that spiritual consciousness with its untrammelled ecstasy”.⁷⁰ The haven of comforting, eroticized rest which Polly provides at the end of a day, with a “warmed up dinner” and “a little tumbler of punch” if “the night was anyway cold or wet or windy”, fits A.E.’s evocation of “the Land of the Living Heart, a tender name which showed that it had become dearer than the heart of woman, and overtopped all other hopes as the last dream of the spirit, the bosom where it would rest after it had passed from the fading shelter of the world.”⁷¹ *Deirdre* similarly presents the heroine’s sexual blossoming in terms of the Otherworld: Deirdre says “I have passed the fairy sea since dawn, and have found the Island of

⁷⁰ A.E., ‘Nationality and Cosmopolitanism in Literature’, in *Ideals in Ireland*, p. 53

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 84

Joy", and Lavarcam observes that she "has entered the kingdom of her youth."⁷²

Further, in a country in which the population has halved in sixty years and a significant proportion of young, fertile Irish men and women are streaming abroad, there is something positive, in a primitive, species-enhancing way, to be drawn from Polly's ensnarement of Doran. Joyce's evocation of Dublin is, after all, a country dying on its feet with a disproportionate number of spinsters and bachelors (and celibate priests): the Morkan sisters of 'The Dead', Nannie and Miss Flynn in 'The Sisters', Maria in 'Clay', Lenchan and Corley of 'Two Gallants', Mr Duffy in 'A Painful Case', Freddy Malins in 'The Dead'. "By the end of the century, the Irish were among the most 'celibate' as well as the most migratory of populations", David Fitzpatrick informs us in *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*.⁷³ This is a claim supported by Joseph Kelly's research in 'Joyce's Marriage Cycle', which points out that one third of women in Ireland between the ages of 35 and 44 were unmarried.⁷⁴

The "very lively" Polly offers regenerative hope for Ireland. Whilst she is the Eve who draws Man to destruction, she is also the Eve who will produce children. Such a context might explain why Joyce changed the location of the Mooneys' butcher's shop from "Fairview" to "Spring Gardens" in the second sentence. The opening thus deftly mirrors the first sentence of A.E.'s play in which Deirdre enthuses about the delights of the new season, which is a metaphor for her own sexual awakening:⁷⁵ "Dear fostermother, how the spring is beginning! [...] the spring flows from the lips of the heart [...] the spring and the music are in my heart!"⁷⁶ This links, too, to the original plan of the Celtic Theatre, as stated in their manifesto of 1897, to "have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays", the seasonal timing being based on the old festival of Beltaine.⁷⁷

The sexually mythic dimension of 'The Boarding House' complements the fabliau

⁷² *Deirdre*, p. 22-3

⁷³ David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921* (Dublin: Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1984), p. 39

⁷⁴ Joseph Kelly, 'Joyce's Marriage Cycle', *Studies in Short Fiction* 32.3. (Summer, 1995), p. 367-78

⁷⁵ *The James Joyce Archive*, ed. by Gabler, p. 13

⁷⁶ *Deirdre*, p. 9

⁷⁷ Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, p. 184, 208

aspects of the tale: the cartoon-like violence; the trickery; the combination of sexual desire and seasonal cycles (“it was bright Sunday morning of early summer, promising heat [58]”); the mock-heroic tone absorbing the language of romance (“visions”, “*artistes*”, “the lover’s eyes rested”) and the demotic talk of the streets (“handy with the mits”, “his sit.”, “a good screw”). Brutal and absurd as it may be, this is how the world goes round. As Stanislaus observed of Joyce, “in the mirror of his art the ugliness of the Gorgon’s head may be clearly reflected, but it is clearly severed and does not turn the beholder’s eye to stone.”⁷⁸ ‘The Boarding House’ does not celebrate the sham that is Doran’s and Polly’s engagement, but it is, nevertheless, a hellish fertility fable.

Mrs Mooney knows from her own bitter marital experience and financial difficulties that a young woman’s future in Dublin is uncertain. Her ex-husband not only tried to kill her with a cleaver, but he ruined the investment in the butcher’s shop so that she had to set up the boarding house with “what remained” of her resources (56) (since her father employed a foreman, her ex-husband, she presumably was reasonably well-off as a young woman). The pre-War Dublin Joyce depicts is a rootless, shifting economic landscape of casual labour, boarding-houses, a middle-class exodus to the suburbs, a petit-bourgeois anxiety to hold on to status which the spectre of unemployment and collapsing housing threatens to submerge. Such conditions of deracinated insecurity help to explain why Mrs Mooney is keen to preserve the economic value of her daughter’s virginal honour and settle her with an apparently stable husband. If she has to store the “sugar and butter safe under lock and key” away from the secretly marauding threat of her “floating population” (59, 56), it is no surprise that, in a Dublin where there was, according to Joseph Kelly, “an exceptional surplus of women”,⁷⁹ she should be any less solicitous of her daughter’s settlement. Such a difficult economic climate created a potentially dangerous milieu for young working-class women in Dublin at the turn of the century (as the city’s number of prostitutes indicated) and Joyce, for all the satirical bite of ‘The Boarding House’, shows a

⁷⁸ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, p. 53

⁷⁹ This was because of the high migration of women from rural areas. Kelly, ‘Joyce’s Marriage Cycle’, p. 373

sympathetic awareness of how mothers preferred to set daughters up in potentially unhappy marriages than risk worse, unknown dangers.

Joyce's disagreement with A.E. in 'The Boarding House' is not so much that it is 'unrealistic', but that its idealism about human nature and the possibilities of art, particularly when entwined with cosy patriotic visions, is false and dangerous. Even Yeats disparaged A.E.'s moral naivety: "a bad literary critic, demanding plays and poems where the characters must attain a stature of seven feet, and resenting as something perverse and morbid all abatement from that measure."⁸⁰ We catch something of this spirit in *Deirdre* when Concobar, speaking to Lavarcam at the start, offers a virtual prologue designed to remind the audience how they should take note of the characters' heroism and, having spilt back on to the streets of Dublin after the play, should try to replicate such honourable behaviour: "a great tradition is shaping a heroic race [...] the gods who fought at Maytura inspire the present generation to be truthful and courageous [...] and through the memory of our days and deeds, the gods will build themselves an eternal empire in the mind of the Gael."⁸¹ *Deirdre* purports to be both the recording of that tradition and one of the means by which the tradition of Irish heroism should be perpetuated in the modern world. A.E. had elaborated this idea in 'Nationality and Cosmopolitanism in Art' (1899), arguing that legends such as Deirdre and Cuchulain "have the most ennobling influence on a country."⁸² Such art is an expression, through the Druid poet, of divine wisdom and allows its audience a visionary glimpse of the Otherworld, which is also a vision of a future ideal Ireland.

At the end of the first performance of the play, A.E., who had played the role of the druid, Cathvah, addressed the audience: "Better to perish through an excess of noble trust than to live through the vigilance of suspicion."⁸³ To spell out such a meaning seems crude artistically and naïve morally, since dying in a blaze of idealism can be self-regarding and scepticism has an ethical value. *Deirdre* is dangerous in Joyce's view because it encourages a misleading

⁸⁰ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 'Ireland After Parnell', p. 303

⁸¹ *Deirdre*, p.12

⁸² A.E., 'Nationality and Cosmopolitanism in Art', in *Literary Ideals in Ireland*, p. 86

⁸³ Summerfield, *That myriad-minded man: A.E.*, p. 114

perception of human heroism and a distorted image of the possibilities of human happiness. Characters in *Dubliners* become disappointed often because they fictionalise their own romantic worlds. Eveline's sense of Frank's presence slides into stereotype of the knight-in-shining-armour who will rescue her from a dreary, pained existence. Mr Duffy has read so many kinds of literature that he has no conception of what actual human needs and desires are: Mrs Sinico was always going to fall short of his high standards. Little Chandler is frustrated with his life partly because in its apparent banality it lacks the glamour of poetry, the passion which he thinks he can discern in Byron and the Celtic School. Such attitudes betray the same, though more understandable, naivety of the boy-narrators in 'An Encounter' and 'Araby', which expresses itself in the hope that adventure and romance can be found as readily on the streets of Dublin as in the pages of Scott and *The Halfpenny Marvel*. Fiction such as *Deirdre*, an example of the Celtic School's "dreamy dreams", generates a cultural climate which fosters the unrealistic "hopes and visions" of Polly Mooney.

Against the claims of fashionable, dramatic presences such as A.E., Joyce presents himself as a visionary in the tradition of the judicious medieval scholar:

For every true-born mysticist
A Dante is, unprejudiced,
Who safe at ingle-nook, by proxy,
Hazards extremes of heterodoxy,
Like him who finds a joy at table
Pondering the uncomfortable.
Ruling one's life by common sense
How can one fail to be intense?

(‘The Holy Office’)

Joyce's vision shares Dante's sense of vividness and seriousness and is "unprejudiced" by the

narrow political motivation of A.E.'s so-called visionary sense. He is a "mysticist" of the domestic world who, from his chimney-corner, imagines himself into Mrs Mooney's breakfast room and divines the truth about Dublin through its "plates on which lay yellow streaks of eggs with morsels of bacon-fat and bacon-rind" (58). Unlike Mrs Mooney's hard-edged "pondering [...] at table", however, Joyce's vision is one of "joy". 'The Boarding House' penetrates, like Blake's 'The Garden of Love', to the heart of malign priestly control of sexual desire. He is the Ibsenite prophet who speaks the "uncomfortable" truth about his home as "the centre of paralysis" since *Dubliners* finally went to print in a city in political deadlock over Home Rule and at a near economic standstill, eclipsed by Belfast and in the grip of unemployment and industrial action. Joyce's visionary capacity is "intense" not because of any druidic fervour, but because his "common sense" incorporates a determined, Aristoteleian logic to see things as they are, and a sensitivity to the nature of "common" life for most Dubliners.

For all this, however, Joyce's response to A.E. might not be as aggressive as it at first appears. His nocturnal visit to A.E.'s home and evident respect for his personal goodness, his reading of esoteric literature, and his appreciative account of Buddhism in 'A Suave Philosophy' (1903), indicate, for all the dismissiveness of his remarks in letters to Stanislaus and the bite of the *Deirdre* parody in 'The Boarding House', a certain ambivalence, or, as Stanislaus termed it, an attitude of "merciful scepticism."⁸⁴ Because of A.E.'s presence in the National Library in *Ulysses*, Stephen's thoughts about the protean nature of identity mix theosophical theories about the constantly evolving, fluid nature of the soul with Aristotle's view of memory as a means of maintaining the soul's continuity and the biological reality of endless chemical changes in the body. With Jesuit casuistry, he ponders whether, in the light of this flux which might have made him a different 'Stephen', he can evade repaying A.E. his loan of one pound:

Wait. Five months. Molecules all change. I am other now I now. Other I got pound.

Buzz. Buzz.

⁸⁴ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 121

But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms.

I that sinned and prayed and fasted.

A child Connemee saved from pandies.

I, I and I. I.

A.E.I.O.U.

The joke hinges partly on the transformation (in a context of ideas about transformation) of a cryptic mystical pseudonym, suggesting the ‘aeon’ of eternity, into a corny semi-acronym about a minor debt. The apparent childlike delight of finding the vowel sequence as the basis for a slick witticism is ironised by the hovering sense that this joke has been waiting in the wings for some time. The amused cleverness of the formulation suggests, too, the irony that Stephen seems more interested in playing with words than considering how he might actually *pay* the debt. From the perspective of 1922 this aspect of the joke might gain added piquancy since Joyce, in a hurry to leave Dublin in 1904 and an impecunious exile for the next eighteen years, might not have paid the debt even by then. Conscious, however, of A.E. as the publisher of his first three *Dubliners* stories, and as the whetstone of his own visionary powers, Joyce’s wit hints at a more profound debt.

(4) *Dubliners* and telling tales of Tir na nOg

‘The Sisters’, ‘An Encounter’, ‘Counterparts’

By the time of Joyce’s writing of *Dubliners*, the status of the Irish fairy story had passed from Crofton Croker’s charmingly whimsical diversions which might appeal to child or antiquarian (1825) through John O’ Hanlon’s humorous, semi-encyclopedic record of tales and superstitions (1870) to mythical literary crypt which revealed the history and movement of the Celtic soul (Yeats’s *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* [1888], and *The Celtic Twilight* [1893]). Jeremiah Curtin, an American, in his scholarly anthropological *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland* (1890), fostered the view of the purity of Irish folklore by stating that Gaelic mythology “is better preserved than the mythology of any other European country.”¹ Oscar Wilde’s light, sentimental collections, *The Happy Prince* (1888) and *A Bunch of Pomegranates* (1892) were aimed more specifically at children, though they traded on the fashionability of “Celtic genius” as popularized by Matthew Arnold with its defining features of melancholy, magic, and an “airy and insubstantial” imagination which existed in “rebellion against fact.”² In contrast to the more commercially-minded *West Irish Folk Tales and Romances* by William Larminie (1893) and *In Chimney Corners – Merry Tales of Irish Folk Lore* by Seumas McManus (1899), A.E. presented the spiritually exotic *The Mask of Apollo* (1904).

Influenced by Samuel Ferguson, whose “spirit had sat with the old heroes of his country” as he translated Celtic epic into poetry,³ the heroic sagas of Standish O’Grady (*The History of Ireland*, 1880), and the ideas, after 1885, of returning Fenian exile and cultural revivalist, John O’ Leary, revivalists began to collect oral folk tales from the west of Ireland. This was an urgent activity since the folk tales seemed in danger of disappearing because of the twin English threats

¹ Jeremiah Curtin, *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland* (London: Sampson Law, Marston Searle & Rivington, 1890), p. 12

² Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1867), p. 81-3

³ Yeats in an 1886 essay on Ferguson, quoted from Coote, *W.B. Yeats*: 54

of increased literacy and industrialization. Douglas Hyde's *Beside the Fire* (1890), a collection of long heroic stories about Irish mythical figures, reacted against the perceived trivialization of folk stories which were "told conversationally as any other story might be told". Hyde presented his book as a miracle of cultural preservation since it was a "mystery" that he could still find stories written in Gaelic (he could find only six in existence in the west of Ireland): "they have been trampled in the common ruin under the feet of the zeitgeist". He also underlined the growing claim that Irish folk stories possessed a special mythic significance by suggesting that they were "about the last visible link connecting civilized with pre-historic man."⁴

Yeats viewed fairy stories as a literary terrain equivalent to a psychic Garden of Eden in terms of Irish moral and imaginative health. He chided earlier Anglo-Irish folklorists for their Arcadian and belittlingly comic tendencies and dignified supernatural aspects of the stories as latent signs of spirituality. Hyde's gathering of Gaelic texts and his own recording of stories aimed to preserve the magical presence of the Celtic Otherworld: the earth "has got old and fallen into decay. What wonder if we try and pilfer the treasures of that other kingdom!"⁵ "Fairy-lore of Ireland", Robert Welch observes, "came to be seen as a unique body of almost sacred literature of Celtic (and ultimately Aryan) origin, encapsulating truths and realities occluded or destroyed by the advance of a materialistic civilization."⁶ It was no embarrassment for Yeats to admit to a literal belief in fairies since he would have questioned what 'literal' might mean, and his sense of the Otherworld was formed by the ancient Celtic notion of there being a blur between actual and spiritual planes of existence. He wrote to Hyde that Colonel Olcott "is probably quite right about the real existence of these Irish goblins. At least I never could see any reason against their existence", an opinion he publicly repeated when reviewing Hyde's own *Irish Folk Tales*, where he railed against rationalism as "that great sin against art".⁷

Developing Hyde's implicit political remarks about fairy stories ("to be found only

⁴ Douglas Hyde, *Beside the Fire* (London: David Nutt, 1890), p. 36, 10, 41

⁵ W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight*, p. 7

⁶ Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 523

⁷ Foster, *W.B. Yeats, A Life*, p. 77

among the oldest, most neglected, and poorest of the Irish-speaking population”),⁸ Yeats sentimentalized the supernatural elements of the fairy story by claiming that they were the expression of a dispossessed class whose fantasies were the consequence of minds starved of material comforts and satisfactions. *Beside the Fire* was a

chronicle of that world of glory and surprise imagined in the unknown by the peasant as he leant painfully over his spade. His spiritual desires ascended into heaven, but all he could dream of material well-being and freedom was lavished upon this world of kings and goblins. We who have a less terrible need dream less splendidly.⁹

There is a suggestion here of how the struggles of Irish heroes against goblins, wicked kings, giants and witches might slide into subdued, symbolic metaphors of the fight against imperial rule. For Yeats, fairies represented an ideal symbol of Irishness: a pre-Christian national mythology which short-circuited sectarian division; an insubstantial, elusive, poetic world which stood against modernity and Saxon materiality (he once described fairies as “dramatizations of our moods”);¹⁰ a mystic political vision which blended ancient aristocracy (the fairies were descendants of the gods) and a Land League inspired modern rural primitivism. This last idea is evident, for example, in Yeats’s elaboration of typical fairy activity: “Their chief occupations are feasting, fighting, and making love, and playing the most beautiful music.”¹¹

Such stories were the more precious since these were truths which escaped modern writers:

It is perhaps [...] by no means strange that the age of ‘realism’ should be also

⁸ Hyde, *Beside the Fire*., p. 41

⁹ Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight*, p. 208

¹⁰ Ellmann, *Yeats, The Man and the Masks*, p. 119

¹¹ W.B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1973), p. 12

the harvest-time of folk-lore. We grow tired of tuning our fiddles to the clank
of this our heavy chain, and lay them down to listen gladly to one who tells us
of men hundreds of years old and endlessly mirthful.¹²

According to Yeats, the stories of an obscure Sligo peasant such as Paddy Flynn were closer to the spirit of Homer than those of the much-vaunted modernist Ibsen. A.E. concurred with this view in 'Nationality and Cosmopolitanism' (1906) where he argued that "the national spirit seems to be making a last effort to assert itself in literature and to overcome cosmopolitan influences and the art of writers who express a purely personal feeling"; such Irish writers are "building up an overwhelming ideal [...] [they] create, in a sense, a soul for their country."¹³ Yeats's grand plan, according to J. W. Foster, was "to wire the fragmentary and relatively unsystematic beliefs Lady Gregory collected into a European intellectual circuitry of magic, alchemy, and the occult", which had been driven underground by humanism and experimental science.¹⁴ As Seamus Deane outlines, the system Foster describes relates also to Yeats's Theosophical interests: "folk tales and legends were local examples of the great world memory, in which the writing of Blake [...] Boehme and Swedenborg were prominent manifestations."¹⁵ Fairy stories were special because, as manifestations of the great world memory, they revealed, according to Yeats, the great epic patterns of human existence:

These folk tales are full of simplicity and musical occurrences, for they are the
literature of a class for whom every incident in the old rut of birth, love, pain,
and death has cropped up unchanged for centuries: who have steeped
everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol. They have the spade
over which man has leant from the beginning. The people of the cities have

¹² Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight*, p. 200

¹³ A.E., *Some Irish Essays* (Dublin: Tower Press, 1906), p. 10

¹⁴ Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 210

¹⁵ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 143

the machine, which is prose and a *parvenu*. They have few events. They can turn over the incidents of a long life as they sit by the fire. With us nothing has time to gather meaning, and too many things are occurring for even a big heart to hold.¹⁶

In Theosophical terms, Yeats defined the fairies as “the lesser spiritual moods of that universal mind, wherein every mood is a soul and every thought a body.”¹⁷

Joyce showed his irritation with such grand Celtic Twilight claims about fairy stories in his caustic review of Lady Gregory’s *Poets and Dreamers* (published in the *Dublin Daily Express*, March 1903), a derivative version of Yeats’s *Celtic Twilight* (which Joyce says he admires in the review). That Joyce was setting himself up against the received wisdom of Dublin’s literary circles was evident from the newspaper editor’s distancing himself from the article: he printed it above Joyce’s initials and delayed its appearance whilst he tried to persuade Joyce to write a more favourable version. Joyce remembers the controversy through Buck Mulligan’s mockery in *Ulysses*: “Longworth is awfully sick [...] after what you wrote about that old hake Gregory. O you inquisitional drunken jew jesuit! She gets you a job on the paper and then you go and slate her drivell to Jaysus. Couldn’t you do the Yeats touch?” (278). Beyond the dullness of the stories and Lady Gregory’s lack of judgment in presenting uncritically material full of “senility”, Joyce’s real target is the national propagandist urge at the heart of the collection:

This book, like so many other books of our time, is in part picturesque and in part an indirect or direct utterance of the central belief of Ireland. Out of the material and spiritual battle which has gone so hardly with her Ireland has emerged with many memories of beliefs, and with one belief - a belief in the

¹⁶ W.B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Camelot Classics, 1888), p. xii

¹⁷ Ellmann, *Yeats, The Man and the Masks*, p. 70

incurable ignobility of the forces that have overcome her - and Lady Gregory, whose old men and women seem to be almost their own judges when they tell their wandering stories, might add to the passage from Whitman which forms her dedication, Whitman's ambiguous word for the vanquished - 'Battles are lost in the spirit in which they are won.'¹⁸

Lady Gregory's uncritical indulgence of the storytellers is implied by their seeming to be "almost their own judges", a moral claustrophobia which partly accounts for the storytellers inevitably losing the battles which they fight. Joyce's sense of the feebleness of the whole Celtic revival impetus is apparent in the phrase "many memories of beliefs", which suggests the second-hand nature of the commitment and the parallel senility of the story-tellers' minds and the imagination of the Celtic school.

In 'The Sisters', Joyce appropriates the fairy story plot of adult evil intent towards innocent children as a means of presenting the complicated relationship between Father Flynn and the boy. Old Cotter's concern mixes anti-clerical prejudice about brain-washing with worry about the moral influence of a strange, possibly defrocked, priest. : "- I wouldn't like children of mine, he said, to have too much to say to a man like that [...] - What I mean is, said old Cotter, it's bad for children [...] - It's bad for children, said old Cotter, because their minds are so impressionable. When children see things like that, you know, it has an effect ..." (2-3). What "like that" actually *is*, is left indeterminate in the story, Joyce allowing the phrase to suggest both Cotter's ignorance and the vague sense of menace surrounding the priest. For example, in the boy's "dream", the priest seems to pursue him in a deliberate, unrelenting manner: "But the grey face still followed me [...] I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me" (3). A sense of the uncanny here comes not only from the

¹⁸ *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 75. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen remarks of the Irish peasant: "To begin with he's cute as a fox - try to pass a false coin on him and you'll see. But his cleverness is all of a low order. I really don't think that the Irish peasant represents a very admirable type of culture [...] a life of dull routine - the calculation of coppers, the weekly debauch and the weekly piety - a life lived in cunning and fear between the shadows of the parish chapel and the asylum." *Stephen Hero*, p. 53

irony of a priest wanting to confess to a boy, but also from the way the priest insinuates himself into the privacy of the boy's imagination against his will (the boy has tried to distract himself with pleasant thoughts of Christmas) and follows him into the intimacy of his bed (the boy's drawing blankets over his head suggesting an attempt to hide from the priest's face). The unnerving effect is augmented by the image of the priest salivating as he seems to take pleasure in confessing his "sin" to the boy: "I wondered why it smiled continually and why the lips were so moist with spittle". This is a memory-echo, as happens in dreams, of the priest's behaviour when listening to the boy as he "pattered" his responses to the Mass, since Father Flynn would "smile pensively" and "let his tongue lie upon his lower lip" (5).

This attempted seduction of the boy's "soul" takes place in "some pleasant and vicious region", which points to the boy's imaginative engagement and, ironically, to the danger the priest's presence places him in, "vicious" here carrying the sense of morally depraved. The setting of swooning, luxurious abandonment chimes with the fragment of the dream recalled by the boy the next day: "I remembered that I had noticed long velvet curtains and a swinging lamp of antique fashion. I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange - in Persia, I thought." (6) The eastern exoticism links with the boy's memory of stories about Rome and the early Church fathers: the "customs" which are "strange" echo "the complex and mysterious [...] institutions of the Church"; "velvet" recalls Father Flynn's explanation of "the different vestments worn by the priest"; "a swinging lamp of antique fashion" hints at the censer used in a Mass ceremony; the gentle, sensual implications of "Persia" and "velvet" fit the unnerving intimacy of the priest "murmuring" dark secrets to the boy beneath his bed covers.

The world of fairy story appears evident in the idea of the "dream" and the eastern touches (which recall the *Arabian Nights*, which had popular appeal for children's in the nineteenth century: Joyce may have read Sir Richard F. Burton's translation of 1885-8). In the suggestion that the old priest takes pleasure in anticipated devouring of the boy (the smiling and the salivating lips) we sense a generic commonplace of the fairy story, the wicked adult's threat to cannibalize a vulnerable child (for instance, the story of Hansel and Gretel). Joyce seems to

evoke the story of Little Red Riding Hood. The priest, during the lesson, “used to uncover his big discoloured teeth” (4) which echoes the young girl’s impression of the wolf, dressed up as the grandmother: “And what long teeth you have, Grandmamma!”¹⁹ That he “let” his tongue fall out and “used to uncover” his menacingly outsized teeth suggests he is in control of what he is doing in his manipulation of the boy’s “uneasy” feelings (5). (Thomas Dilworth, though, argues that “of course the grotesque smile is merely a consequence of physical paralysis”, a complacent reading in my view).²⁰ In Perrault’s version the girl even addresses the wolf as “Father Wolf”. The catechism lessons take place in “the little dark room behind the shop” with the priest “sitting in his arm-chair by the fire” (4), and, like the girl offering her cakes to the wolf, the boy offers a gift (of snuff) to the priest. There is also reference to the priest’s appearance being potentially misleading since the “constant showers of snuff” might be responsible for giving “his ancient priestly garments their green faded look”. That the priest might be a wolf in sheep’s clothing is hinted at in the description of his face in the coffin being “circled by a white scanty fur” (6).

Father Flynn’s ghost possesses a similarly corrupt, magnetic appeal as the “queer old josser” of the next story, ‘An Encounter’ (16-20). Both are “queer” (1,18), educated, elderly men who exercise a gothic fascination over the young boys who remember them (“queer” only takes on the meaning of ‘homosexual’ in 1922, according to the O.E.D., though it is probable this sense was in use before then). As the priest’s face pursues his protégé, so the old man in ‘An Encounter’ returns to the boy-narrator on the grassy slope, transfixing him to the extent that the boy, in a state of “agitation”, feels he is escaping danger as he “abruptly” takes his leave. Both are similarly attired (“he was shabbily dressed in a suit of greenish black”), have decayed teeth (“he had great gaps in his mouth between his yellow teeth”), and appeal to the young boys’ sympathy in their confessions (“his voice [...] seemed to plead with me that I should understand him”). The retrospective parallel emphasises the sexually charged nature of the priest’s interest in the boy (a teasing-out of Old Cotter’s “like that” euphemism), a ruse Joyce might have used

¹⁹ Charles Perrault, *Fairy Stories* (London: Oldbourne Press, 1960), p. 54

²⁰ Thomas Dilworth, ‘Not “too much noise”: Joyce’s ‘The Sisters’ in Irish Catholic Perspective’. *Twentieth Century Literature* 39.1 (Spring, 1993), p. 100 (p.99-112)

partly to avoid censorship complications.

The title 'An Encounter' has several meanings. Firstly, a brief, illicit sexual meeting (the stranger speaks of taboo desires, the boy, shy and sensitive, appears to feel guilty and compromised by his interest or respectful attention). Secondly, the disappointed meeting of romantic expectation and sordid reality (with an amused sense of how 'encounters' are what happen in Wild West stories as the hero deals with local Indian skirmishes), a juxtaposition Joyce ironises by the adult narrator's consciousness that this genuinely *was* an adventure involving fear, excitement and discovery (as otherwise why would he have remembered it and written about it?). Thirdly, a self-examination of the narrator's past experience as he meets himself again in words and memory. Another possible meaning, in a story centrally concerned with how we read and are influenced by texts (Wild West comics, Roman history, Moore, Scott, Lytton), is Joyce's engagement with the ideas of the Celtic Twilight. The mysterious, literate stranger with "bottle-green eyes" nostalgically idealises his past, before freeing himself into a semi trance-like state, which corresponds to Celtic Twilight romanticizing of heroic legend and predilection for reverie.

This story of strange childhood adventure involving a frightening, mysterious adversary is, more particularly, rooted in the fairy story genre. The second half of the story takes us into another world through both the movement into gradually less familiar locations for the boy (he crosses the Liffey, wanders into Ringsend and catches sight of the Dodder, and so finds himself at the coast, facing England), and through the boy's increasingly imaginative viewpoint. He experiences a limited form of exotic vision ("Mahony said it would be right skit to run away to sea on one of those big ships and even I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined, the geography which had been scantily dosed to me at school gradually taking substance under my eyes"[15]). He also begins to blend mythical stories with his actual sensory experience in Dublin's quays: "I came back and examined the foreign sailors to see had any of them green eyes for I had some confused notion[15]".²¹ This sense of transition into a state close to dream-world is accentuated by the boy's fatigue, by the disappearance of the sun, and by the way in which no

²¹ According to Terence Brown a medieval tradition said that Odysseus had green eyes. (36)

other people are present during the ‘encounter’ (even Mahony leaves). At the very moment the old man enters into the story and the boy’s consciousness, Joyce conjures up the world of ancient Celtic superstition and legend:

When we had lain upon the bank for some time without speaking I saw a man approaching from the far end of the field. I watched him lazily as I chewed one of those green stems on which girls tell fortunes. (16)

This refers to the practice of consulting young unmarried women, who made occasional rounds through districts in the south of Ireland, as to the romantic / marital aspirations of a given man or woman. According to John O’Hanlon in *Irish Folk Lore* (1870), such itinerant visionaries were supposed to have “supernatural knowledge respecting family secrets.”²² Vivian Heller observes that “the stranger taps the ground with his stick as though it were a divining rod.”²³ Hélène Cixous remarks that both ‘The Sisters’ and ‘An Encounter’ are “taking place in magic settings.”²⁴

The description of the old man as “queer” has fairyworld connotations, too. In *The Land of Heart’s Desire* (1894), Mary Bruin speaks of a figure tempting her to come outside, who she will later discover is a fairy: “A little queer old man / Made me a sign to show he wanted fire / To light his pipe.”²⁵ The visionary Carden Tyrrell, of Martyn’s *The Heather Field* (1899), is thought to be “such a queer creature”.²⁶ Synge, in *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), presents Dan Burke, who magically resurrects himself part way through the play, as “always queer [...] them that’s queer and they living men will be queer bodies after [...] an odd man [...] and it’s always up on the hills he was, thinking thoughts in the dark mist”. T.R.Henn remarks in his editorial comments on the play that the word “has overtones of the fey, the supernatural, as well as

²² John O’Hanlon, *Irish Folk Lore* (Glasgow: Cameron & Ferguson, 1870), p. 310

²³ Vivian Heller, *Joyce, Decadence, and Emancipation* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 25

²⁴ Hélène Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce* (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 393

²⁵ *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 60

²⁶ Edward Martyn, *The Heather Field and Maeve*, p. 32

derangement of the mind.”²⁷

The “queer old josser” is, I think, a complex parody of the wise old man figure who imparts wisdom in a fairy story or who actually tells the fairy story (showing an intuitive sagacity comparable to Homer, according to Yeats). Yeats tells us that in order to hear about fairy legends:

You must [...] make friends with the children, and the old men, with those who have not felt the mere pressure of daylight existence, and those with whom it is growing less, and will have altogether taken itself off one of these days.²⁸

Yeats’s favourite story-teller, Paddy Flynn, is “a little bright-eyed old man” who “peered out of his wrinkled holes [with] the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures”, an attitude shared by the old josser who looks at the boy with eyes “peering [...] under a twitching forehead”. Similarly, Curtin tells us that his story-tellers are all “well advanced in years, and some very old”,²⁹ and Hyde declares that his tellers are “amongst the oldest” of the population in the west of Ireland.³⁰ A.E.’s *The Mask of Apollo* contains aged wise men in three of the six stories.

The “queer old josser” in Joyce’s story appears advanced in years. He moves in an awkward, measured manner, “very slowly [...] with one hand upon his hip”, and with the help of a stick, and he sits down “slowly and with great care”; he has an old-fashioned hat (“what we used to call a jerry hat”); he “seemed to be fairly old for his moustache was ashen-grey”; he is nostalgic about his schooldays with a taste for no longer fashionable writers. As the wise old men in A.E.’s stories offer veiled, esoteric knowledge, so the josser communicates privately and

²⁷ Synge, *The Complete Plays*, p. 88, 26

²⁸ W.B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Walter Scott Ltd, 1893), p. 3, 6

²⁹ Curtin, *Myths and Folklore of Ireland*, p. 7

³⁰ Hyde, *Beside the Fire*, p. 41

secretly with the boy, speaking “mysteriously as if he were telling us something secret which he did not wish others to overhear” and “as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery”. His age and drifting manner of speaking (from books to sweethearts to the prettiness of girls to the pleasure of whipping boys) remind us of the typical story-teller Joyce identifies in Lady Gregory’s *Poets and Dreamers* (1903) who “begins one story and wanders from it into another story.”³¹ In this respect, the parallel with Father Flynn cuts both ways since it not only reinforces the lurking sense of sexual threat in the priest, but also confers upon the josses an occult, mystic aura so that his style of addressing the boy resembles a priest reading the mass (“he gave me the impression that he was repeating something which he had learned by heart”, “he repeated his phrases over and over again, varying them and surrounding them with his monotonous voice [...] as he led me monotonously through the mystery”). Within the structure of the story, he is placed in relation to a religious figure, Father Butler, who also talks about literature and frightens boys with the implied threat of chastisement (“now, Dillon, I advise you strongly, get at your work or...” [12]); Father Butler is observed “frowning” (12) whilst the josses are shown with a “twitching forehead”. Leo Dillon drops out of the trip since he is afraid of meeting Father Butler unexpectedly, but the boys in fact encounter Father Butler’s sinister double. The word “josses”, meaning ‘fellow / simpleton / layabout’ in Dublin slang also has connotations of ‘joss’, the word for a Chinese figure of a deity (“he might as well have appealed to a bronze joss”, OED).

Joyce gives a further clue about the josses’s mystic presence through the reference to “some of Lord Lytton’s works which boys couldn’t read”, probably an allusion to the writer’s most notorious book, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834). The novel’s Egyptian villain, Arbaces, seems a model for the josses since he is a high-priest of profane, secret, sensual rites in the temple and introduces a young man (the brother of the young woman he plans to seduce) to sexual delights in the hidden recess of the temple of the gods. This is “a scene, which no Sybarite ever more than rivalled” and which involves “the initiatory secrets of the sombre philosophy of

³¹ James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 74

the Nile – those secrets plucked from the stars.”³² Like the josses, Arbaces’ sexual appetite feeds on imagining about younger females:

As you [Calenus, a sinister priest] feed the victim for the slaughter, / I love to rear the votaries of my pleasure. I love to train, to ripen their minds – to unfold the sweet blossom of their hidden passions, in order to prepare the fruit to my tastes. I loathe your ready-made and ripened courtesans; it is in the soft and unconscious progress of innocence to desire that I find the true charm of love: it is thus that I defy satiety; and by contemplating the freshness of others, I sustain the freshness of my own sensations. From the young hearts of my victims I draw the ingredients of the cauldron in which I re-youth myself.³³

Such psychology perhaps offers an oblique insight into the josses’ fixation with juvenile romance and punishment (a fantasy, not a confession of action). This preoccupation might link to his yearning for the brightness and hope of youth and his sense of his own vulnerability in the face of time. In Arbaces’ words, he ‘re-youths’ himself through the contemplation of children’s “freshness” and his and their “hidden passions”.

In these moments the josses appear to be abstracted, in a state of reverie, an intense ecstasy of reflection carrying parodic shades of mystical, religious rapture. Like Hynes in the recitation of his poem, the josses are addressing an audience but also communing with his inmost secret desires (which has the added erotic thrill of scaring and connecting with the young boy who listens.) The absence of Mahony and the boy’s silence (mentioned four times in this last section of the story) contributes to the surface calmness of the scene and so sustains the mood of elevated contemplation. So deep is the josses’ self-communion, of which his (almost certain)

³² Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1847), p. 81. In *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom also seems to see Stephen as a means of rejuvenation: his name makes her think back to her youth in Gibraltar (“I declare to God I don’t feel a day older than then”), she thinks about learning Italian from him, and feels that it would be “great fun” to have him stay as a lodger (927-8).

³³ *Ibid.*, p.38

masturbation is the exterior image, that it is as though he were magically entranced by the manifestation of his own soul cries: “magnetized by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit” (18), magnetism being a form of kinetic magic. The josses’ words appear to come from some source which is strangely both his own psyche and another unidentified provenance: “he repeated his phrases over and over again, varying them and *surrounding* them with his monotonous voice” (18). The cosmic imagery suggests that the quest for such pleasure is emotionally profound: “he said that there was nothing in this world he would like so well as that (19) [...] he would love that, he said, better than anything in this world” (20). As Jacques Chenevière, a reviewer of *Dubliners* in 1926 noted:

This is a book of an interview, of the unavowed; he treats - and with a hallucinating truth - only secrets: lusts, despairs, secret or even aborted impulses. And one thinks of the comment of *Copperfield*: “very often things which do not happen to us have over us, in reality, as much effect as those which are accomplished.”³⁴

Joyce appears to base the josses on the figure of the leprechaun of Celtic superstition, a mischievous creature who, like any type of fairy, is prone to snatching a child out of this world and hiding him in the Otherworld. The boy worries about such a kind of capture: “saying that I was obliged to go, I bade him good day. I went up the slope calmly but my heart was beating quickly with fear that he would seize me by the ankles” (20). The speed and violence of “seize” contrasts with the impression of the man’s age, the extreme slowness of his movements and the repetitious, static nature of his verbal engagement with the boy. Perhaps the boy himself links this sinister stranger with the fairy stories he has read (there are three stories about stolen children in Yeats’s *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*) and with a figure like blind old Pugh

³⁴ Jacques Chenevière, ‘Les Livres, Traduction’, *Bibliothèque universelle et Revue de Genève*, ii (August 1926), p.267-8: a review of the French translation of *Dubliners*. *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Deming, p. 72 (p.71-2)

from *Treasure Island* (“in the other hand he held a stick with which he tapped the turf lightly” [16]). Joyce may be making a veiled reference here to the actual danger of child abduction in Dublin at this time, which was often linked to prostitution. Michael McCarthy refers to this problem in *Priests and People in Ireland* (1902), claiming that “there is no city in North Europe which so reeks with derelict young people of both sexes as does Dublin.”³⁵

John O’Hanlon’s description of the leprechaun’s characteristics in *Irish Folk Lore* appears to match the josser point for point. The leprechaun is “less richly clad” than other fairies, the josser is “shabbily dressed”. The leprechaun has “a three-cornered cocked hat”, the josser has “a jerry hat with a high crown”, (though hats were much more common in Joyce’s day and this is a different kind of hat). The leprechaun has “a green coat of antique cut”, the josser has “a suit of greenish-black” (16). The leprechaun’s “countenance is grotesquely deformed” and “his jagged teeth are of a yellowish-white colour”, the josser has a “twitching forehead” and “great gaps in his mouth between his yellow teeth”. The leprechaun has “piercing black eyes, always twinkling with mischief or dry humour”, and the boy sees “bottle-green eyes peering at me”. The leprechaun “plays all sorts of tricks”, his “love of evil-doing makes him a great object of suspicion”, he is “a great rogue”, and the josser appears roguish in his (probable) masturbation in public, and in his sly introduction of the disreputable Lord Lytton as a prelude to his talk of young girls and whipping; he possibly teases the boy with macabre talk of whipping boys of his age, which is a sort of trick. The leprechaun enjoys “lonely habits and love of solitude”, and the josser probably masturbates and seems lonely, given that he wants to converse with young boys. The leprechaun “knows where all hidden treasures lie”, and the josser walks “so slowly that I thought he was looking for something in the grass”; similarly, he relates his desires in the form of opening up a secret, “as if he were unfolding some elaborate mystery”. The leprechaun appears “especially towards the close of a warm summer’s day”, and the josser appears as the sun disappears and the tired boys think of returning home.³⁶ Lady Wilde’s descriptions of the

³⁵ McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland*, p. 303

³⁶ O’Hanlon, *Irish Folk Lore*, p. 237-40

leprechaun in her taxonomy of fairies correspond with this sketch, as do Yeats's: "withered, old and solitary [...] the great practical jokers among the good people".³⁷ Joyce's parallel is in itself rather mischievous, the kind of trick you might find in the "rubbish [...] wretched stuff" which Father Butler warns the boys away from since it is, no doubt, thrown together by "some wretched scribbler that writes these things for a drink" (12).

Even more daringly, Joyce parallels the "queer old josser" with one of the great figures of Irish myth, Oisín. According to the Yeats' version, 'The Wanderings of Oisín' (1889), Oisín is a pitiable lost soul, trapped in a Catholic Ireland he detests and yearning for the days of his glorious youth when he hunted and fought with the Fenians and travelled and loved with the beautiful Niamh. Such a parallel with a mythic figure (Oisín is over three hundred years old and has seen the Otherworld) further emphasizes the godlike aspects of Joyce's "queer" old man. The old josser's experience of his present world feels similarly dislocated to Oisín's: "He began to talk of the weather, saying that it would be a very hot summer and adding that the seasons had changed greatly since he was a boy – a long time ago." As Oisín's life is characterized by 'wandering', both in his past and present existence, so the old josser is aimlessly walking around the field, and, as Oisín holds a one-sided conversation with St. Patrick in Yeats's poem, so the old josser dominates the conversation with the boy (the word "monologue", used three times in the story, perhaps hints at the poetic origin of the old josser's discourse). Oisín's ruined, aged physical state is emphasized by Yeats: "bent, and bald, and blind, / With a heavy heart and a wandering mind" [I.1-2], "weak and poor and blind, and lies / On the anvil of the world" [II.202-3], "A whitebeard stood hushed on the pathway, the flesh of his face as dried grass" [III.173], "shaken with coughing and broken with old age and pain" [III.217].³⁸ He is "a show unto children, alone with remembrance and fear" (III.218) in a similar way to the old josser who becomes the subject of Mahony's impertinence (asking him about "totties") and private mockery (drawing attention to his presumed masturbation). Both old men are described as shivering: "And

³⁷ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, p. 80

³⁸ W.B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 1-32

lonely and longing for Niamh, I shivered and turned me about" (III.181); "I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something or felt a sudden chill".

Oisin shares the same desperate nostalgia for youthful times as the old josser: "Sad to remember, sick with years" (I.5); "he said that the happiest time of one's life was undoubtedly one's schoolboy days and that he would give anything to be young again." (17) Both Oisin and the old josser want to return to 'The Land of the Young', which the former can visualize powerfully through his visionary capacity, and which the latter sees embodied in the two young boys whom he encounters in the field. The parallel with Oisin helps to make sense of the narrative purpose of Mahony's boyish pursuits: "hardly had he sat down when Mahony, catching sight of the cat which had escaped him, sprang up and pursued her across the field. The man and I watched the chase. The cat escaped once more and Mahony began to throw stones at the wall she had escalated." This parodies Oisin's longing for his hunting days with the Fenians and his enjoyment of the chase in the Otherworld: "O Patrick! for a hundred years / I chased upon that woody shore / The deer, the badger, and the boar" (I.343-5). There may be an echo, too, of Oisin's love of bloody, violent sport in the old josser's dream of seeing a boy being given "a good sound whipping". Both old men recall youthful female beauty fondly and regretfully with a nostalgia which includes a mournful sense of their own aged exclusion from such delights: Oisin is tantalized by the memory of "the white body that lay by mine" (I.10) and an Otherworldly existence in which "the blushes of first love never have flown" (I.85) and "the softness of youth" (I.410) never disappears; the old josser is obsessed by "sweethearts" and claims "there was nothing he liked [...] so much as looking at a nice young girl, at her nice white hands and her beautiful soft hair". In presenting the old josser as "strangely liberal", Joyce may be wittily alluding to the anti-Christian celebration of paganism in 'The Wanderings of Oisin' ("joy is God and God is joy" [I.286]), which the hero embodies in his opposition to St. Patrick.

In 'An Encounter' the old man's dream of returning to 'The Land of the Young' involves seeing himself, momentarily, as a father figure to the young boy, passing on his knowledge about books and wanting to share emotional intimacy. This is another link with Father Flynn of 'The

Sisters', whose psychology Thomas Dilworth reads sympathetically:

Whether or not he ever regretted not marrying, he may wish he had a child.

He does seem to look to the boy as a substitute son, someone to whom he can pass on his knowledge and priesthood. If the boy were to become a priest, the old priest could 'live on' in him. In this sense – which is, of course, strictly imaginary – the father finds immortality in the son.³⁹

In such a context, the old man's yearning vision shares a similarity with other nostalgic reveries in *Dubliners*. Hynes's recollection of his Parnell poem brings him face to face with his idealistic youth in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room'. Maria, in 'Clay', as she confusedly sings 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt', fights, inchoately, against her knowledge of a doomed spinsterhood. Mr Duffy, in 'A Painful Case', feels, in the darkness of Phoenix Park, a heightened consciousness of his own mortality and exclusion from sexual vitality because of the presence of Mrs Sinico's ghost and the "venal and furtive loves" which lie in the grass nearby (113). Gretta's rapt state in 'The Dead', as she remembers Michael Furey through 'The Lass of Aughrim', is touched by a glimpse of her own youthful first love.

Perhaps the real source of terror for young boys in the Dublin of 1905 was not a frustrated, strange, lonely old man wandering around in a field, but, Joyce suggests, the monster that is the Catholic Church. *This* is the mysterious bogey-man who suffocates young men's energy and spirit of adventure. One moment Joe Dillon seems ready to conquer the world, the next he has been strangely silenced ("everyone was incredulous" [11]), and will no longer come out to play. Joe Dillon's brother, Leo, also chokes on the all-pervading fear which Catholicism surreptitiously leaks into the Dublin air since he loses his nerve over the truant adventure because he "was afraid we might meet Father Butler or someone out of the college" (13), a self-evident absurdity, as Mahony points out, as his teachers would inevitably be occupied in their jobs at

³⁹ Dilworth, 'Not "too much noise": 'The Sisters' in Irish Catholic Perspective', p.101

school. The system of Catholic education in Dublin might appear lazy and complacent, comically hypocritical (transparently Father Butler as well as his victim, the hapless Leo, has not prepared for the lesson), and predictable in its self-satisfied snobbery, but it is ruthless and fierce in its encounters with individuality and spirited rebellion. Father Butler is “Bunsen Burner” (14), a hell-threatening, fire-breathing dragon, ready to threaten physical beating at any given moment (“get at your work or...”).

Equally dangerously and frighteningly, the Church’s influence is mysteriously present and powerful even when it seems to show no trace of itself. The josses line up alongside the Dillon brothers as a victim of Catholic education since his contradictory desire to dwell on sexual attraction *and* punish such thinking about sex, and his paradoxical wish to punish secret passion whilst he *himself* is expressing such a forbidden longing, seem to betray an attitude towards sexual matters almost entirely characterized by guilt. “Hunger [...] for wild sensations” (12) can lead to whipping; whipping can itself be hungered for as a “wild sensation”; whipping a young boy for wanting “wild sensations” can be a pleasurable “wild sensation”. As we read the text of ‘An Encounter’, we catch the old josses trying to get away with entering into his own “chronicle of disorder” (12), attempting to edge through his own “doors of escape” (11), in the same way as Father Butler traps Leo Dillon reading stories, which are “circulated secretly” (12), and furtively under his desk. Hence, even the josses, a frightening presence for the boy, shows fear of being somehow overheard by the wrong person: “I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something or felt a sudden chill.” (This fear might explain his volte-face in regard to youthful romance: “he seemed to have forgotten his recent liberalism”). Leo Dillon’s face, like the josses’s mind, is “confused” (12).

In the same way that the boy in ‘The Sisters’ endlessly turns over his thoughts about Father Flynn,⁴⁰ so Joyce invites us to remain alive to the mysteries of his stories. Joyce wants us to wonder about his characters, not judge them, as some critics so effortlessly do. We do not

⁴⁰ “I puzzled my head”, “I wondered why it smiled continually” (3), “I wondered at this” (4) “I wondered how anybody had ever found in himself the courage to undertake them” (5), “The fancy came to me” (6).

know that the “queer old josser” is a “sadist, pederast and general child abuser,”⁴¹ “certainly a sadist and homosexual”, “this obscene creature.”⁴² The description of the old man as “the pervert” seems woefully limited,⁴³ as does “the perverted stranger”, “eccentric”, who “frightens them with oracular sex preachments,”⁴⁴ and “the sadistic homosexual pervert.”⁴⁵ There seems something too neat in the formulation that the old man is “a dramatic and pathetic example of [...] the eventual and seemingly inescapable stifling of the imagination and the spirit of unruliness, a per-version of the spirit of carnivalesque liberality, turned around eventually into a sadistic version of authoritarian rule and conformity.”⁴⁶ The old man’s engagement with the boy is not necessarily “clearly an attempted seduction [...] while the man wields a phallic stick,”⁴⁷ since the old man’s motives appear mixed and complex, and “wields” sounds too aggressive for such a feeble physical presence.

In ‘Counterparts’, Joyce parodies another fairy genre popular with Celtic Twilight writers, the giant story. The mood of ‘Counterparts’ is primitive, intense, wild. Violence and heat permeate the imagery of the story: drinks are “hot punches” (86) and “poisons” (89); a former colleague has been “hounded” out of the office (88); after his impertinence, the office will now be “a hornet’s nest” for Farrington (88); a sharp idea is a “dart” (88); “yelling” urchins selling evening papers (89) and “whining match-sellers” fill the streets outside the pubs (90); there is a sense of latent animal aggression in the description of the amusement at Higgins’ version of the Mr Alleyne story: “Everyone roared laughing” (89). The immediate cause of Farrington’s anger with his son hints at the primitive world of caves, heat and hunger: “What’s for my dinner? I’ll teach you to let the fire out!” (94). The “dark snug” of O’Neill’s with its “gloom” and swirling

⁴¹ Chester G. Anderson, ‘Should Boys Have Sweethearts?’ in *Joyce and Popular Culture*, ed. R.B. Kershner (Gainesville: University Press Florida, 1996), p. 63 (p.49-64)

⁴² James F. Carens, ‘In Quest of a New Impulse: George Moore’s *The Untilled Field* and James Joyce’s *Dubliners*’, in *The Irish Short Story*, ed. by James Kilroy (Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 75 (p.45-95)

⁴³ Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce’s Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 97

⁴⁴ Florence L. Walzl, ‘*Dubliners*’, in *A Companion to Joyce Studies*, ed. by Zack Bowen and James F. Carens (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood, 1984), p. 169-75 (p.157-229)

⁴⁵ Margot Norris, ‘A Walk on the Wilde(e) Side’ in *Quare Joyce*, ed. by Joseph Valente (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998), p. 22 (p.19-35)

⁴⁶ Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, race, and empire*, p. 86

⁴⁷ R.B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 38

fog outside (84) seems, in fact, to be his preferred cave. As giants in fairy stories seem to have an instinctive, animalistic ability to smell blood (for instance, the one in Curtin's 'The Weaver's Son and the Giant of the White Hill' who can smell but not see a dead body outside his castle), so Joyce presents Farrington with a heightened perception of the odours in the air around him, such as the presence of Miss Delacour - "on the stairs a moist pungent odour of perfumes saluted his nose" (85) - and the alluring enticement of beer, "his nose already sniffed the curling fumes of punch" (89), "he longed to be back again in the hot reeking public-house" (93). The double mention of 'shepherd' in the story ties in with Joyce's ironic gesturing towards the rural setting of fairy stories in which giants roam around: Farrington wears "a shepherd's plaid cap" (84), and O'Halloran's story of his witty retort to his boss is "after the manner of the liberal shepherds in the eclogues" (89); in a similarly rural vein, Mr Alleyne blushes "to the hue of a wild rose" (87).

Plot elements of 'Counterparts' mimic the typical features of heroic legend. The drinking and swapping of anecdotes in the three pubs visited carries shades of heroic feasting and storytelling after battle ("they began to exchange stories" [90]), which seems particularly pointed since the men are partly celebrating Farrington's brilliant and courageous verbal conquest of Mr Alleyne, who is an enemy both as a boss and as an outsider (he is from Northern Ireland and is probably Protestant).⁴⁸ There is a mood of episodic saga in both the flat, factual detailing of who bought which round and when: "Nosey Flynn [...] stood Farrington a half-one [...] Farrington stood a drink in his turn [...] O'Halloran stood tailors of malt, hot, all round"[89]). And, implicitly, in the walking across Dublin to arrive at Davy Byrne's, the Scotch House, and Mulligan's (J.W. Foster says that "heroic journeys" are a feature of such sagas,⁴⁹ and the pattern of three attempts or journeys is typical of fairy stories). Joyce describes the arm-wrestling contest, in a context of "feats of strength" (91), as "a trial of strength" (92), a phrase twice abbreviated to "the trial" (92). Such phrasing links to fairy stories such as Yeats' 'The Legend of Knockmany' in which Cuchulain wants to compete with Finn Maccool and travels to the

⁴⁸ cf. Yeats's Oisín who longs to wake the sleeping giant of book three in order to "talk of the battles of old" (l.63), *W.B. Yeats, The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 23

⁴⁹ *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 7

Causeway “to have a trial of strength with him”.⁵⁰

More specifically, Farrington is a version of Cuchulain, the most famous giant in Celtic epic, who, according to Declan Kiberd, “provided a symbol of masculinity for Celts, who had been written off as feminine by their masters.”⁵¹ Seemingly minor details emphasize the story’s parallel with the Cuchulain legends. The story’s opening with “a piercing Northern Ireland accent” (82) immediately hints at the parody of a saga from the Ulster Cycle. There is a flicker of the idea of heroic, tragic doom in Farrington’s misgiving that “his life would be a hell to him” (88). Farrington, “tall and of great bulk (82), shares the physical impressiveness of the great warrior. Joyce emphasizes his immense size: “he felt his great body aching again for the comfort of the public-house” (88), “he steered his great body along in the shadow of the wall of the barracks” (93); he moves with “a heavy step” towards Mr Alleyne’s office and leaves it walking “heavily” (82-3). His size contrasts with his boss, Mr Alleyne, a “manikin” (87), who has “a dwarf’s passion” (88), and with his young son, who is termed “the little child” (93-4). Farrington’s presence is so immense that he appears to dominate all the surrounding space in O’Neill’s pub, “filling up the little window that looked into the bar with his inflamed face” (84). What a normal man might perform in stages he is able to accomplish in one movement because of his size: his porter disappears “at a gulp” (84), and his strength is such that he feels able to achieve the work of several men: “he felt strong enough to clear out the whole office single-handed.” (86)

Cuchulain was known as ‘the Distorted One’ because of the grotesque ways in which his body would change when his battle-fury possessed him.⁵² One of his eyes would enlarge until it was “as big as a wooden bowl”.⁵³ Similar bodily extremes characterize the permanently enraged Farrington, such as his facial features: “a hanging face, dark wine-coloured”, “his inflamed face”, “Farrington’s dark wine-coloured face flushed darker still with anger and humiliation at having

⁵⁰ *Irish Fairy Stories and Folk Tales*, p. 278

⁵¹ Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p. 25

⁵² Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 26

⁵³ Gantz, *Irish Myths and Sagas*, p. 136

been defeated by such a stripling”, “a very sullen-faced man stood at the corner of O’Connell Bridge” (82, 84, 92). The epithet “dark wine-coloured” ironically recalls the epic heroism of Homer, with a sense, too, of how the drinking of so much porter and whisky has reddened his face. The description of Farrington’s eyes borders on fantastic caricature: “his eyes bulged forward slightly” (82), the incipient violence of “bulged” being later echoed by the picture of him arm-wrestling: “the veins stood out on Farrington’s forehead” (92).

Joyce chooses melodramatic language to convey Farrington’s raging moods, which seem to absorb him suddenly like Cuchulain’s demonic possession: “spasm of rage” (83), “execrate” (86), “enraged” (86), “revel in violence” (86), “spell of riot” (86), “savage”(88), “fiercely” (92), “revengefulness” (88, 93), “smouldering anger” (93), “his heart swelled with fury”, “his fury nearly choked him” (93), “furiously” (93), “viciously” (94)”. Cuchulain in the legends is given to extreme fits of rage and acts of violence. At the battlefield of Muirthemne, he wakes from a three day sleep to slaughter one hundred and thirty kings. He always decapitates opponents once he has killed them. As a boy, he picked fights with neighbours by breaking taboos. On one occasion, a wounded man asks for help in carrying his brother’s mutilated body, but Cuchulain refuses to help him and they wrestle: the victorious Cuchulain chops the man’s head off and journeys home, driving the head before him with his hurley stick.⁵⁴

Cuchulain famously slays his own son not knowing his identity, which is a consequence of both men being governed by a ‘geis’ preventing them from revealing their identity. He has a bloodlust for fighting with Condlae, his son, but is humiliated by his son getting the better of him in combat. At this point, he tries a surprise attack:

Chu Chulaind rose out of the water and deceived the boy with the *gae bolga* [‘lightning spear’] [...]He cast it at the boy through the water, and the boy’s innards fell at his feet. [The boy cries] ‘Alas that you have wounded me!’⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 138

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 151

At the close of 'Counterparts', Farrington is similarly unclear as to the identity of his son, because of his inebriated state and the darkness of the room:

- Who is that? said the man, peering through the darkness.
- Me, pa.
- Who are you? Charlie?
- No, pa. Tom (93)

His aggression towards his son is also fuelled by a feeling of humiliation since the boy's failure to keep the fire lit is perceived as a disrespectful, casual slight. Cuchulain's spear transforms into the "stick" which Farrington uses to beat his son and the blow is so hard that the weapon "cut his thigh" (94).

Cuchulain's relationship with women is also alluded to in Joyce's story. The warrior-giant is promiscuous, staying with a woman called Fand for a month and failing to understand why his wife, Emer, might be jealous. Similarly, Farrington is unfaithful to his wife ("a man with two establishments to keep up" [88]) and has a wandering eye, "staring masterfully at the office-girls" (89), and making flirtatious eye-contact with the English actress in Mulligan's. Both men, however, are bullied by women. Cuchulain has a dream in which two women "beat him with a horsewhip [...] for such a long time that there was scarcely any life left in him", and he is subjected, whilst ill and dreaming of Fand, to the bitter criticism of Emer: "Shame on you, lying there for love of a woman – long lying there will make you sick."⁵⁶ Farrington's wife is "a little sharp-faced woman who bullied her husband when he was sober and was bullied by him when he was drunk." (93)

Both Cuchulain and Farrington have a decided sense of tribal allegiance and personal, masculine honour. Herbert Howarth writes that "Cuchulain had a total loyalty to his obligations,

⁵⁶ Gantz, *Irish Myths and Sagas*, p. 157, 164

and unlimited capacity for sacrifice. His most celebrated feat was to hold the ford against the host of the enemies of Ireland.”⁵⁷ Cuchulain also famously rescues his uncle and king, Conchubar, from a battlefield as he lies wounded in a ditch, and then kills a man for his pig in order to feed the ailing king. J.W. Foster explains how Cuchulain’s self-sacrificing spirit was important to nationalists such as Patrick Pearse because of the warrior’s “acceptance of the denial of free action compelled by taboos [...] in his belief that fame, honour, and reputation are the highest goods to which all else, including himself, must be sacrificed.”⁵⁸ Herbert Howarth corroborates this idea, observing that for nationalists “Cuchulain represents, as much as Prometheus the heroic spirit, the redeemer in man [...] they had gathered the shreds of Messianic myth into one and infused it into Cuchulain.”⁵⁹ This, together, with his marital infidelity, allowed his mythical status to blur into that of Parnell in the 1890s.

Farrington shows a comparable sense of loyalty and honour by being prepared to pawn his watch in order to fund an evening’s drinking with his cronies, a night’s camaraderie which he essentially subsidizes (“Farrington stood a drink in his turn”, “Farrington stood a drink all round”, “then Farrington stood another round”, “Farrington was just standing another round when Weathers came back” [89-91]). Further, he has such a heightened sense of courtesy and principle, and such scorn for petty-minded meanness that he is prepared to pay for expensive drinks, for the whole group, without demur: “Weathers said that he would take a small Irish and Apollinaris. Farrington, who had definite notions of what was what, asked the boys would they have an Apollinaris too; but the boys told Tim to make theirs hot [...] Much to Farrington’s relief he [Weathers] drank a glass of bitter this time.” (90-1) He is understandably “discontented” (93) that his commitment to the unstated male code of honour as regards the rounds system, which is underpinned by notions of reciprocity, generosity and fairness, has met with such a feeble response from his so-called friends. Higgins and Nosey Flynn escape before they have to buy a round, their low-level sneakiness suggested by “bevelled off to the left” (90). Paddy Leonard’s

⁵⁷ Howarth, *The Irish Writer*, p. 27

⁵⁸ Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 11

⁵⁹ Howarth, *The Irish Writers, 1880-1940*, p.27

only fiscal contribution appears to be to introduce Weathers with his expensive taste in drinks, a man whose acrobatic skills include agile avoidance of putting his hand in his pocket. The corollary of Farrington's sense of honour in this respect is his contempt for men who, in an unmasculine way, do not behave openly and decently: "He cursed [...] all rounds he had stood, particularly all the whiskies and Apollinaris which he had stood to Weathers. If there was one thing that he hated it was a sponge." (91)

Farrington has sacrificed himself financially for the group, but his heroism has seemingly passed unrecognized, and he himself feels no pleasure from such selflessness. Like Cuchulain, he holds the fort, but when he turns round to savour his achievement, he sees that the fort was, after all, empty, and not worth the valiant struggle to defend it. As Weathers observes of Farrington, who will later try to "uphold the national honour" against him (92), his "hospitality was too Irish". Farrington, like Cuchulain, is doomed to a semi-suicidal, self-destructive end through the very virtues which made his existence honourable in the first place. Reviewing the day, Farrington thinks he "had done for himself" (93). Joyce, however, as he does in 'Grace', unpicks in 'Counterparts' the fragile, limited, value-system which underlies words such as "hospitality" and the whole male drinking culture of Dublin.

Written in July 1905, 'Counterparts' is Joyce's acerbic response to the Celtic Twilight versions of the Cuchulain myth which had surfaced in recent years. The title, 'Counterparts', hints at the idea of parody through the image of copying, and the story itself shows an awareness of how apparent reality transmutes into myth. Farrington "preconsidered the terms in which he would narrate the incident to the boys" (89), and his version introduces a self-regarding gloss as to his own poise, which places itself in a tradition of controlled, socialized male aggression ("coolly, you know [...] taking my time"). Having told Nosey Flynn, Farrington then repeats the story to O'Halloran and Paddy Leonard. Higgins, who saw the incident in the office, then gives his "version" of it, whilst theatrically doing a music-hall impression of the two protagonists' manner: "Everyone roared laughing when he showed the way in which Mr Alleyne shook his fist in Farrington's face. Then he imitated Farrington, saying, *And here was my nabs, as cool as you*

please..." (89-90). Farrington's job, we recall, is to create new versions of the same text.

Before Joyce's story, the following rewritings of the Cuchulain myth had appeared: Eleanor Hull's *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (1898), Lady Gregory's *Cuchlain of Muirthemne* (1902), Winifred Faraday's *The Cattle-Raid of Cualnge* (1904), Yeats's *On Baile's Strand*, and A.H. Leahy's *Heroic Romances of Ireland* (1905). J.W. Foster remarks that "rewriting the old stories for children [...] became a self-appointed task for revivalists, and produced an Irish equivalent of Victorian fiction for young boys of the Empire", and quotes A.E. saying that O'Grady's version of the myth would become to every Irish boy who read his story "a revelation of what his own spirit is".⁶⁰

The problem for Joyce was that subsequent re-tellings veered further and further away from the original story so that what seemed 'Celtic' was no such thing at all. Robert Welch is being polite when he writes that Lady Gregory's version is "somewhat marred by omission or bowdlerization of sexually explicit and grotesque elements in its sources."⁶¹ More direct is Foster's assessment: "In Lady Gregory's humorless biography, an exorbitant Ulster hero is forced into the mould of attractive culture-hero by a nationalist gentlewoman." He wittily plays upon the hero's propensity to assume grotesque facial features by remarking that "Lady Gregory's Cuchulain is very definitely the distorted one."

Foster gives examples of how sexually charged passages in the original are omitted or softened in order to make Cuchulain appear more respectable. In the original, the men of Ulster are afraid that Cuchulain will "ravish their maidens"; in Lady Gregory, the men are jealous "for their women and their maidens loved him greatly". Similarly, the original states that Cuchulain seizes Aife "by her two breasts", which Lady Gregory translates as he takes "a sudden hold of her".

Likewise, the violent and comical aspects of Cuchulain's demoniac rage are turned into the effects of divine transfiguration. The original, as translated by Gantz reads:

⁶⁰ Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 43-4

⁶¹ Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 126

Then his 'riastarhae' came upon him. You would have thought that every hair was being driven into his head. You would have thought that a spark of fire was on every hair. He closed one eye until it was no wider than the eye of a needle; he opened the other until it was as big as a wooden bowl. He bared his teeth from jaw to ear, and he opened his mouth until the gullet was visible. The warrior's moon rose from his head.⁶²

Lady Gregory's version reads:

And it is then Cuchulain's anger came to him, and the flames of the hero lights began to shine about his head, like a red-thorn bush in a gap, or like the sparks of fire, and he lost the appearance of a man, and what was on him was the appearance of a god.

Lady Gregory disingenuously justified such changes by saying "I have exchanged for the grotesque accounts of Cuchulain's distortion - which no doubt merely meant that in time of great strain or anger he had more than human strength - the more simple formula that his appearance changed to the appearance of a god."⁶³ In her dedication she claimed delicacy and refinement as the cause of her changes: "I left out a good deal that I thought you would not care for for one reason or another."⁶⁴

If 'Counterparts' takes issue with Lady Gregory's censoring of the Cuchulain story in terms of sex and violence, then it reacts against Yeats's presentation of the warrior as a tragic idealist in *On Baile's Strand*, which opened The Abbey Theatre in 1903. In the original myth, Cuchulain is characterized by action, not reflection, though he does have one dream which

⁶² Gantz, *Irish Myths and Sagas*, p. 136

⁶³ All quotations Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 26-8

⁶⁴ Howarth, *The Irish Writers*, p. 95

happens during a one year's period of sleep. He wakes, declaring "I had a vision last year, at Samuin", in which he is beaten up by two women; he then goes to the site of his dream where he actually meets the two women, who tell of Fand's love for him.⁶⁵ Yeats's Cuchulain speaks of supernatural visions: "We in our young days / Have seen the heavens like a burning cloud / Brooding upon the world", and, in a mood of lyrical yearning, evokes the beauty and wildness of his former lover whilst acknowledging the transience of any such romantic attachment: "I have never known love but as [...] A brief forgiveness between opposites".⁶⁶ That is to say, Yeats's Cuchulain sounds like the sensitive, dreamy poet-philosopher himself, reflecting elegiacally on the loss of Maud Gonne, after years of homage, to John MacBride. (This identification fits the play's theme of ignorance and self-destruction: the killing of a son, the suicidal fighting with waves).⁶⁷

'Counterparts' echoes *On Baile's Strand* as regards the theme of obedience to one's master (Cuchulain is obliged to swear allegiance to Conchubar after initial defiance, Farrington backtracks humiliatingly after his earlier impertinence), and the centrality of fire as an image (it is used as a symbol of Cuchulain's loyalty, Farrington's son is beaten because he allows the fire to go out). These parallels are incidental, however, to Joyce's presentation of Farrington as someone who loses himself in dreams, the equivalent of Yeats's Cuchulain, who the poet described, when discussing the play, as "restless".⁶⁸ Yeats's interpretation of Cuchulain as a free spirit too great for a mean, pragmatic world illustrates his view that giants were thought to be semi-divine descendants of Ireland's ancient gods: "When the pagan gods of Ireland - the Tuath-De-Danan - robbed of worship and offering, grew smaller and smaller in the popular imagination, until they changed into the fairies, the pagan heroes grew bigger and bigger, until they turned into the giants."⁶⁹

Farrington is "restless", but not in the refined emotional or spiritual sense which Yeats

⁶⁵ Gantz, *Irish Myths and Sagas*, p. 158

⁶⁶ *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 256, 259

⁶⁷ Written in 1903, it was first performed at the opening of The Abbey Theatre in December 1904 (Coote, *W.B. Yeats*, p.253-4)

⁶⁸ Coote, *W.B. Yeats*, p. 246

⁶⁹ Yeats, *Irish Fairy Stories and Folk Tales*, p. 260

imagines.⁷⁰ He becomes so absorbed in a cocktail of swirling impulses, his desire to “revel in violence”, his awareness of his own humiliated position, his plans to borrow money, his hope of later escape to Davy Byrne’s, that his reverie disconnects him from immediate reality: “his imagination had so abstracted him that his name was called twice before he answered.” (86) This abstraction recurs when, conscious of his disappointment with the evening, he becomes “so angry that he lost count of the conversation with his friends.” (91) Sensual yearning fixates him in the presence of the young, exotic English actress, at whose “plump arm” and “large dark brown eyes” he “gazed admiringly” (90). Waiting for the tram once the pubs have closed, he wants to escape the reality of the cold night air and the dull domesticity which beckons him: “he longed to be back in the hot reeking public-house.” (93)

The biographical shadow lurking behind Farrington is Joyce’s father whose aggressive behaviour towards his wife and family drew a furious tirade from Stanislaus at the end of his diary in which he lists his father’s four acts of destruction: the children’s poor health; “the handicap of his children’s chances in life (whereby Poppie’s chance, for example, is quite ruined)”; May Joyce’s ill health and death; young George’s death.⁷¹ John Joyce seemed particularly volatile in the aftermath of his wife’s death, the point at which his eldest son began writing *Dubliners*. On the 29th of March 1904, for example, Stanislaus records how he and James “relieve one another in the house like policemen as the girls are not safe in it with pappie [...] He catches at the nearest thing to hand - a poker, plate, cup or pan - to fling at them.”⁷² ‘An Encounter’ is similarly based on Joyce’s own personal experience: aged thirteen, he and Stanislaus played truant from Belvedere College and met a “queer old jossler”, in Stanislaus’s words.⁷³

In ‘An Encounter’ and ‘Counterparts’ Joyce uses the archetypal fairy story imagery to

⁷⁰ We should be wary, I think, of Yeats’s claim that his Cuchulain is tough and unidealistic (“Probably his very strength of character made him put off illusions and dreams”, Coote, *W.B. Yeats*: 246), since the speculative, romantic hero he presents is a far cry from the original: “a comic figure possessed of seven toes, three colours of hair, and seven pupils in each eye, and having to be dunked in a vat of cold water in order to have his ire cooled” (Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 7).

⁷¹ Stanislaus Joyce, *Dublin Diary*, p. 176

⁷² Ibid, p. 24

⁷³ Chester G. Anderson, *James Joyce* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), p. 6

suggest the danger which hovered around Dublin children, a reality which contemporary writers and society at large were not interested in addressing. As Kevin Lalor, in *The End of Innocence: Child Sexual Abuse in Ireland*, points out, though, such problems have existed from child sacrifice in pre-Christian Ireland, through the ninth century when the Brehon Laws prohibited paedophilia, to the establishment of The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1889 and the 1908 Punishment of Incest Act. He remarks of the statistic of 77 recorded cases of abuse of children between 1889 and 1955 (1% of which were sexual), that “it would certainly appear to have been the case that the concept of child abuse of children simply did not exist within the public domain in any meaningful sense. Consequently, society was neither sensitized to its existence nor educated to its insidiousness.”⁷⁴ Since the Cuchulain story was viewed by pacifists such as A.E. as ideal reading material for children, there is an extra sharpness in Joyce’s exploration of a culture which celebrated, in however censored and softened a way, a mythic figure renowned for his aggression and fighting exploits and a symbol of confident post-Boer War, Sinn Finn, IRB-led nationalism.

Both ‘The Sisters’ and ‘An Encounter’ can be read, however, as warnings *against* simplistic and histrionic attitudes towards so-called child-abuse since Father Flynn and the old josser connect with the narrators in ways which less subtle minds would not comprehend. This is a brave manoeuvre of Joyce since the stories were written, after the scandalous Oscar Wilde trial, in “an atmosphere of increasing moral panic over homosexuality, decadence, prostitution, and general sexual permissiveness.”⁷⁵ Similarly, Joyce locates Farrington’s violence in a context of economic aggression and social / moral stiflement which makes his rage at least understandable, as he outlines to Stanislaus in a letter of 1906: “I am no friend of tyranny, as you know, but if many husbands are brutal the atmosphere in which they live (vide Counterparts) is brutal and few wives and homes can satisfy the desire for happiness.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Kevin Lalor, *The End of Innocence: Child Sexual Abuse in Ireland* (Cork: Oak Tree Press, 2001), p. 6

⁷⁵ Clare Hutton, ‘Chapters of Moral History: Failing to Publish *Dubliners*’, *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 97 (2003), p. 510 (p.495-519)

⁷⁶ *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Ellmann, p. 130

The unsettling nature of the two stories, and of 'The Sisters', constitutes a rebuke to early Yeats's evocation of childhood, which Declan Kiberd outlines:

childhood is surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire* of nostalgia and escape. It is a world neither of change nor of growth: intense, unpurged feelings for childhood are not submitted to the test of adult life or, for that matter, of childhood itself. What the child actually *is* or *wants* means nothing in such literature, for this is the landscape of the adult heart's desire. Just as sexist portraiture depicted women not as they are but as men wish them to be, so here the child is reduced to an expendable cultural object. The inhabitants of Tir nan Og do not grow up, and this is not because they don't want to but because their adult creator (for the time being, anyway) prefers to keep them and his readers ignorant of a world based on sexual suffering and social injustice. This early Yeatsian attitude is based on the widespread but false assumption that childhood exists outside the culture in which it is produced as a state of unspoilt nature, and on the related assumption that children's literature can preserve for all values which are constantly on the verge of collapse. So, as a result of Yeats's equation between child and unselfconscious peasant, childhood is recommended as the zone in which the older forms of culture now now jeopardized by modernity are preserved in oral tradition.⁷⁷

Joyce parodies Celtic Twilight stories in order to expose the self-censoring nature of contemporary writing which, for all its reaction against the perceived dull authoritarianism of the national Church, helps to foster Dublin's secretive, claustrophobic moral world. He points out the ironies, too, of a 'Celtic Revival', which edits out the unappealing aspects of old Ireland

⁷⁷ Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 103-4

because of coy Victorian *English* sensibilities. Appropriating the terrain of fairy stories, allows Joyce to trace the mythic patterns of modern Irish consciousness and existence in the city of Dublin. 'The Sisters' evokes the complex emergence of artistic consciousness in and through conventional religious authority. 'An Encounter' traces fearful but fascinating sexual rites of passage. 'Counterparts' explores the psychological networks which lead to the brutalization of children, and, more generally, maps Irish economic and political frustration. In reclaiming Celtic myth, as he also does with the parody of A.E.'s *Deirdre* in 'The Boarding House', Joyce suggests the essential Irishness of his characters' experience and the idea of history's patterns endlessly repeating themselves. He is a version of Polly's father from 'The Boarding House', "a disreputable sheriff's man" (57), taking back what he feels rightly belongs to traditional Irish culture. In these stories, to rework his criticism of Lady Gregory's storytellers, he "preserves the strange machinery of fairyland". Unlike Lady Gregory's tales, however, Joyce's complex, beguiling stories do "appeal to some feeling which is [...] that feeling of wonder which is the beginning of all speculation."⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 74

(5) “The Irish Zola”! : *Dubliners* and the Naturalism of George Moore

‘A Little Cloud’, ‘Araby’, ‘A Painful Case’

It might seem, superficially, that at the time of writing *Dubliners* Joyce would have regarded George Moore as more friend than foe. This was the man, after all, who had (before Symons) written the first essays in English on Mallarmé and Verlaine and had championed the cause of Zola. A Nietzschean European exile from Ireland who wrote naturalistic novels, surely here was the writer who had made a work such as *Dubliners* possible? Isn't it something of a literary-historical commonplace that *The Untilled Field* is the rural equivalent of Joyce's exploration of urban paralysis in *Dubliners*?¹ Joyce himself did not seem to think so: “I have read Moore's ‘Untilled Field’ in Tauchnitz. Damned stupid.”²

Joyce viewed Moore as something of a fraud. In ‘The Holy Office’ he mocked Moore's recent alignment with the Celtic school, opposing himself to

him who will his hat unfix
Neither to malt nor crucifix
But show to all that poor-dressed be
His high Castilian courtesy.

¹ For example: “In ‘The Clerk's Quest’ Moore moved into the heart of Dublin, into the very world James Joyce would depict in *Dubliners*, into the seedy atmosphere of the lower middle class.” James F. Carens, ‘In Quest of a New Impulse: George Moore's *The Untilled Field* and James Joyce's *Dubliners*’ in *The Irish Story*, ed. Kilroy: 64. “Joyce's immediate debt to Moore can be seen more clearly in the themes of *Dubliners* than its structure or style. Both *Dubliners* and *The Untilled Field* portray Ireland as a stagnant or paralyzed country whose citizens lead unproductive, futile lives, both criticize the role of the Irish Church, and both describe efforts of Irishmen to escape. Several scholars have explored in detail the parallels between the two books. Brendan Kennelly concludes that in *The Untilled Field* ‘Moore began to examine a certain sickness at the very heart of Irish society which Joyce later examined at far greater depth.’ Karl Beckson agrees that Moore ‘provided the groundwork for *Dubliners* and forged a vision of Ireland that anticipated Joyce's in a variety of ways and provided an alternative to the romantic idealism of the Celtic revival’.” Deborah M. Averill, *The Irish Short Story Tradition* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1982), p. 48

² Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, November 19th, 1904. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 44

The metaphor of the school as a travelling company of actors points to the centrality of theatre in the literary revival and to the mannered approach of figures such as Yeats. The use of “mumming” is derogatory in its slight implication of amateurism and may also echo the title of Moore’s popular novel *A Mummer’s Wife* (1885), which shows Moore unconvincingly acting the part of Zola as he tries to write an English *L’Assommoir* (1872) or *Nana* (1880). (Part of the satire here could be that by the time of the writing of the poem Moore had dropped out of the revivalist movement and would not welcome being reminded of how skin-deep his initial enthusiasm was). Joyce presents Moore as a poseur: his apparent stern independence from the Dublin vices of drink and church is not an attitude of proud, principled detachment, but an aspect of his narcissistic aloofness. Moore wants everyone to know that he is a gentleman, the independent landlord of an estate in county Mayo. Even his status as a landowner betrays further posturing since, as Joyce hints at in *Gas from a Burner* (1914), it is hard to take seriously Moore’s enthusiasm for literary and political regeneration when for most of his life he has been an absentee landlord:

Moore, a genuine gent
That lives on his property’s ten per cent.³

In ‘The Holy Office’ Joyce sees himself as a street-fighting urchin of O’Connell Street with the swagger of a Dublin flaneur who knows his Baudelaire and is not going to be intimidated by a gentleman’s lordly manner and sophistication. It is no surprise that Moore, responding to suggestions that Joyce had made small borrowings from Symons in his early verse, should dismiss him as a corner-boy: “Why, he’s nothing but a - but a *beggar!*”⁴

Joyce sensed, too, that Moore’s conversion to the Celtic cause was motivated not so much by patriotic idealism as by the desire to find fresh inspiration for his writing, which by the turn of

³ *The Essential James Joyce*, ed. by Harry Levin (London: Grafton Books, 1977), p. 461

⁴ Ellmann, *James Joyce*: 135

the century was beginning to lose both critical and popular favour. His intuition proved true since, after falling out with Yeats in 1902, Moore shortly left Ireland to settle in London. For Moore, the Celtic Twilight was merely a passing phase, as a letter written in 1903 to Dujardin makes clear: "I have absolutely renounced all my Celtic hopes. Of the race there is now nothing but an end left over, a tattered rag, with plenty of fleas in it, I mean priests."⁵ Joyce articulated his criticism in 'The Day of the Rabblement' (1901):

Mr Martyn and Mr Moore are not writers of much originality [...] Mr Moore, however, has wonderful mimetic ability, and some years ago his books might have entitled him to a place of honour among English novelists. But though *Vain Fortune* (perhaps one should add parts of *Esther Waters*) is fine, original work, Mr Moore is really struggling in the backwash of that tide which has advanced from Flaubert through Jakobsen to D'Aununzio [*sic*]: for two entire eras lie between *Madame Bovary* and *Il Fuoco*. It is plain from *Celibates* and the later novels that Mr Moore is beginning to draw upon his literary account, and the quest of a new impulse may explain his recent startling conversion. Converts are in the movement now, and Mr Moore and his island have been fitly admired. But however frankly Mr Moore may misquote Pater and Turgeuieff [*sic*] to defend himself, his impulse has no kind of relation to the future of art.⁶

The central argument of the article, that an artist should not compromise with the mob out of fear or the desire for popularity, rings true in Moore's case. In his essay 'George Moore compromised with the Victorians', William C. Frierson explains how the novelist tried to balance his self-image as an avant-garde Naturalist with the desire to be a commercial success. The circulating libraries removed *A Modern Lover* (1883) from its shelves because it showed its

⁵ *The Man of Wax: Critical Essays on George Moore*, ed. Hughes, p. 18

⁶ *James Joyce, Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p. 51

amoral hero, Lewis Seymour, profiting from violation of the moral code, so in his next novel, *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), Moore played safe by avoiding sexual intimacies and providing a moral, though naturalistic ending. He did, however, allow for a coy, enticing advertisement to be inserted at the front of the book: "This book has been placed in the Index Expurgatorius of the Select Circulating Libraries of Messrs. Mudie and W.H.Smith and Son."⁷ Having attacked the circulating libraries in the pamphlet 'Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals' ("his swan song as a realistic artist"),⁸ Moore then proceeded to force the circulating libraries to take his books by arranging for serial publication in a newspaper, even though this entailed the additional censorship demanded by such publication. In his novels of the 1880s and 1890s Moore played at being a naturalist writer in a similar manner that he seemed to be playing a game by converting to Protestantism in 1903 ("a piece of play-acting" according to John Eglinton).⁹ Moore's capitulation in his novels to the conventional moralising which he so bitterly attacked in his critical writings, showed him trying to appease the different aspects of his vanity which demanded popular approval and consciousness of being at the fashionable cutting edge of European art. The dreary domestic melodrama that is *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), a muddled hybrid of Jane Austen and Émile Zola, is a forlorn testament to Moore's compromising spirit.

'The Holy Office' implicitly accuses Moore's Naturalistic pose as a cover for coy sexual voyeurism:

To sister mummers one and all
 I act as vicar-general
 And for each maiden, shy and nervous,
 I do a similar kind service.
 For I detect without surprise

⁷ *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p. 118

⁸ William C. Frierson, 'George Moore compromised with the Victorians', in *George Moore's Mind and Art*, ed. by Graham Owens (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1968), p. 48 (45-52)

⁹ *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p.21

That shadowy beauty in her eyes,
The 'dare not' of sweet maidenhood
That answers my corruptive 'would'.
Whenever publicly we meet
She never seems to think of it;
At night when close in bed she lies
And feels my hand between her thighs
My little love in light attire
Knows the soft flame that is desire.

Consider, for example, *Mike Fletcher* (1889), which Moore referred to as his “Don Juan book.”¹⁰ There is much talk of previous liaisons but the closest we come to sexual activity in the narrative is when the hero returns home with a woman and she “lay upon his knees in the black satin arm-chair.”¹¹ This is the literary demonstration of Sarah Purser’s witty observation about Moore’s mixture of voyeurism and self-censorship: “Some men kiss and tell, Mr Moore tells and doesn’t kiss”. Or consider the dwelling on Esther Water’s breast as she suckles her baby: “in a moment Esther’s face took on an expression of holy solicitude as she watched the little lips catching at the nipple, and the wee hand pressing the white curve, like a lamb with a ewe, for all nature is akin; and Jenny watched the gluttonous lips, interested in the spectacle.”¹² Or the shock of mother and daughter in *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) upon discovering that their artist husband / father, Mr Barton, has secretly painted their nude figures in a painting of a swimming-pool. Or the revelling, in the same novel, in the repressed lesbian tendencies of the hunchbacked Lady Cecilia as she yearns for the affection of the heroine: “she loved Alice. There was love in those wilful brown eyes - love that was wild and visionary, and perhaps scarcely sane. And the

¹⁰ *George Moore's Mind and Art*, ed. Owens, p. 51

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 51

¹² George Moore, *Esther Waters* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1936), p. 120

intensity of this affection had given rise to conjecturing.”¹³

All these passages seem coy (cf. “had given rise to conjecturing”) in their evocation of sex as no sooner is an image summoned than it is furtively distanced. Moreover, the idea of a father secretly painting his imagined naked daughter, of a woman watching another woman breastfeed, of a lesbian hunchback secretly pining away, suggests a sly fascination with the perverse, taboo aspects of sex which seems a world away from the image of the naturalist novelist as detached scientific observer. The mood is more sub-Swinburne erotica with a dash of fashionable pagan sensuality than realistic exploration of sexual psychology: Moore is playing the decadent sophisticate, content, as Frierson observed, to “evoke the charm of flowers, silks, scents, and sin.”¹⁴ To turn the crude naturalist theorizing on the practitioner himself, what animalistic motivation is driving Moore in these literary imaginings? Isn’t there the ironic whiff of bourgeois hypocrisy in Moore’s using a naturalistic agenda to satisfy his own fantasies? Moore’s absurd, unintentionally comical elaboration of Kate’s sexual attraction towards her amour, Dick, in *A Mummer’s Wife* (1885), suggests an inability actually to imagine desire:

What she wanted of him she knew not, but with a longing that was nearly madness she desired to possess him wholly. She yearned to bury her poor aching body, throbbing with the anguish of nerves, in that peaceful hulk of fat, so calm, so grand, so invulnerable to pain, marching amid, and contented in, its sensibilities, as a stately bull grazing amid the pastures of a succulent meadow.¹⁵

Moore seems to have enjoyed the reputation of a man-of-the-world upon arriving back in Dublin, an apparently sophisticated novelist who was familiar with the exotic and cultured ways

¹³ George Moore, *A Drama in Muslin* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1886), p. 3

¹⁴ William C. Frierson, ‘George Moore Compromised with the Victorians’ in *George Moore’s Mind and Art*, ed. Owens, p.46

¹⁵ George Moore, *A Mummer’s Wife* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1885), p. 151

of Paris. In *The Cat and the Moon* (1926) Yeats contrasts Moore with his close acquaintance, the celibate Martyn: “The old lecher does be telling over all the sins he committed, or maybe never committed at all.”¹⁶ *Ulysses* tells a similar story through his association with the cynical sexual adventurer Buck Mulligan: “*Notre ami* Moore says Malachi Mulligan must be there”; “Monsieur Moore [...] lecturer on French letters to the youth of Ireland”; (in the appropriate worldly, innuendo-driven, raconteur style of Laurence Sterne) “Tut, tut! cries le Fécondateur [Mulligan], tripping in, my friend Monsieur Moore, that most accomplished traveller (I have just cracked a half bottle *avec lui* in a circle of the best wits of the town), is my authority that in Cape Horn, *ventre biche*, they have a rain that will get through any, even the stoutest cloak. A drenching of that violence, he tells me, *sans blague*, has sent more than one luckless fellow in good earnest posthaste to another world.” (275, 530) Eglinton offers a fascinating glimpse of Moore regaling the Celtic crowd with exactly such stories upon his arrival in Dublin:

What was new to him, as he more than once confessed to me, was the apparent compatibility in his new friends of puritanism in morals with speculative license. When he became now and then reminiscent of the intimacies of his Parisian experiences we would listen with smiling interest, and would even suggest emendations and embellishments, always accepted with delight by him: until A.E., watching his opportunity, would suddenly raise the whole subject-matter to the sphere of abstraction, and conversation would once more become general and whole-hearted.¹⁷

This sounds similar to Little Chandler’s audience with Ignatius Gallaher in ‘A Little Cloud’, which is a representation of the repressed, timid sexuality of the Celtic school which Joyce had identified in ‘The Holy Office’ (Chandler hopes to be recognised “as one of the Celtic

¹⁶ *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p.36

¹⁷ *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p. 20

school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems” [68]):

Ignatius Gallaher puffed thoughtfully at his cigar and then, in a calm historian’s tone, he proceeded to sketch out for his friend some pictures of the corruption which was rife abroad. He summarised the vices of many capitals and seemed inclined to award the palm to Berlin. Some things he could not vouch for (his friends had told him), but of others he had had personal experience. He spared neither rank nor caste. He revealed many of the secrets of religious houses on the Continent and described some of the practices which were fashionable in high society and ended by telling, with details, a story about an English duchess - a story which he knew to be true. Little Chandler was astonished. (73)

Written in mid 1906, a year after Moore had left Ireland for London (where Gallaher has settled), the story appears to make fun of Moore’s brief, vainglorious sojourn back in his homeland. Gallaher’s appreciation of Irish life is insincere and, as Chandler recognises, “patronising” (76): he makes a clichéd tribute to Irish whisky (“better stuff than we get across the water” [69]); he suggests that Ireland is a comfortable but provincial contrast to glamorous European cities (“a bit of a holiday”, “dear dirty Dublin”, “it’s a relaxation to come over here, you know” [70, 73]); he uses token, self-congratulatory Gaelic (“let us have another one as a *deoc an doruis* - that’s good vernacular for a small whisky, I believe” [75]). Joyce here evokes the tone of Moore’s cypher, Harding, at the grandiloquent close of *The Untilled Field* (1903) in which he waxes lyrical about the mysterious pull of his homeland, despite all its obvious faults:

a pathetic beauty in the country itself [...] two women on the road [with] something pathetic and wistful about them, something dear, something intimate, and I felt drawn towards them. I felt I should like to live among

these people again [...] you tempt me with Italy and conversations about yellowing marbles; and you won't be angry with me when I tell you that all your interesting utterances about the Italian renaissance would not interest me half so much as what Paddy Durkin and Father Pat will say to me on the roadside.¹⁸

This is blarney, a nostalgic peroration by an Irisman standing in a London street, an author writing his Celtic swan-song.¹⁹

Like Moore, Gallaher is a middle-aged bachelor and both are rather untrustworthy, manipulative and spiteful to friends (as *Hail and Farewell* [1911] would later demonstrate). Like Moore, Gallaher has enjoyed a "vagrant and triumphant life" (75), makes much of his time in Paris as a man-of-the-world, and shows off his apparent sophistication in French tags and phrases: "Here, *garçon*," (69) "when the *cocottes* begin to let themselves loose" (72), "next year if I come, *parole d'honneur*" (cf. "Que voulez - vous ? Moore would say"). (271) Both men love the sound of their own voice, and the suggestion of tall stories in Gallaher's account ("some things he could not vouch for": his friend had told him) is paralleled by Moore's notorious tendency to invent details and whole stories. Graham Hough points out in 'George Moore and the Nineties' how *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886) is supposed to refer to experiences between 1873 and 1883, but is clearly indebted to Huysmans' *À Rebours*, written in 1884.²⁰ That Gallaher's conversation mostly draws attention to himself mirrors Moore's vanity and habit of including characters similar to himself in his stories: John Harding, the novelist and reviewer in *A Drama in Muslin* and *The Untilled Field*; Jasper Dean, the potential visionary leader of Ireland, in *The Bending of the Bough*; the poet, Ellis, who so impresses Rose with his cultural knowledge in *The Lake*. As Virginia Woolf observed of Moore, "all his novels are written, covertly and

¹⁸ George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), p. 419

¹⁹ After a quarrel with Yeats in 1902 over future collaboration, Moore dropped out of the movement.

²⁰ Graham Hough, 'George Moore and the Nineties', in *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p. 124

obliquely, about himself.”²¹ Chandler notices “something vulgar” (72) in Gallaher, and critics of Moore commented on a brash aspect to his character and writing at odds with his own sense of his “high Castilian courtesy”. Yeats said he was “more mob than man” and joked that when in Paris he resembled “a man carved out of a turnip, looking out of astonished eyes”;²² John Middleton Murry wrote of “the uniform and unvarying vulgarity” with which his stories were conceived.²³

In his account of European decadence, Gallaher sounds like the archetypal naturalist novelist. He follows Zola’s advice in the preface to *Thérèse Raquin*, the template of naturalistic theory, that the modern novelist should aspire to the detachment of a surgeon contemplating a dead body or a painter observing a nude figure: “in a calm historian’s tone, he proceeded to sketch for his friend some pictures of the corruption which was rife abroad. He summarised the vices of many capitals”. His “personal experience” of these matters is the equivalent of Zola’s journalistic research into the lives of his characters as the basis of authoritative, documentary-style realism. As Zola aimed to reveal the hypocrisies of bourgeois and aristocratic gentility, so Gallaher appears fearless in his bold exposé of corruption within the church and high society: “He spared neither rank nor caste. He revealed many of the secrets of religious houses on the Continent and described some of the practices which were fashionable in high society.” That one of naturalism’s tenets was the use of real people as the basis of fictional characters creates an amusing irony in which the most famous Irish exponent of naturalism is satirised through the very technique he champions.

A superficial account of Joyce’s aggression towards Moore would describe youthful desire to topple the established leading Irish novelist, and Richard Ellmann rightly states that “Joyce winnowed Moore of the preposterous; he found him a good man to improve on.”²⁴ Joyce’s charge against Moore was, however, more profound than either of these ideas suggest.

²¹ Ibid, p. 56

²² Ibid, p. 38-40

²³ Middleton Murry, *Wrap me up in my Aubusson Carpet* (New York: Greenberg, 1924), p. 17

²⁴ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 234

And it was this: Moore's brand of naturalism was the opposite of what it purported to be, a sentimental and voyeuristic form of writing dressed up in the sly disguise of European documentation. Measured against the reality of most Dubliners' sexual experiences (and non-experiences), novels such as *Mike Fletcher* and Gallaher's stories resemble adolescent, masturbatory fantasies: they are not detached, scientific analyses but the "dreamy dreams" Joyce identifies in 'The Holy Office'. In this respect, Moore's presentation of sex is, despite its Zolaesque posturing, as unreal as the mystical, idealising tendencies in A.E.'s *Deirdre* (1901). So that Moore and his crowd "may dream their dreamy dreams", Joyce must "carry off their filthy streams", an ironic reworking, perhaps, of Zola's angry response to charges of pornography in the preface to *Thérèse Raquin*: "Je m'étonne seulement que mes confrères aient fait de moi une sorte d'égoutier littéraire."²⁵ In *Dubliners*, "the filthy streams" do not constitute the sometimes cartoon-violence sexuality of Zola's novels, but the exploration of how sexual attitudes are an aspect of the city's "paralysis". A ghostly priest pursues a boy under his bedclothes and into his dreams; a "queer old jossler" interrupts a boy's outing with a disquisition on the pleasure of whipping; a dashing sailor tempts with alluring yet ambiguous promises; a friend relies on a friend to manipulate a young woman's romantic attachment in order to obtain a sovereign; a hapless office worker finds himself trapped in a web of lust and female collusion; two unhappily married men turn their frustration into aggression towards their children; a spinster is transfixed by images of affection and security; a bachelor's repression leaves him lonely and regretful; a schoolmaster's lustful feelings towards his wife leave him humiliated and self-accusing.

According to Moore's biographer, Joseph Hone, Moore viewed the publication of *The Untilled Field*, which originally appeared as six stories written in Gaelic, as "his true contribution to the Irish Revival".²⁶ Following his falling-out with Yeats (who claimed in *Samhain: 1902* that Moore had dropped out of the movement), *The Untilled Field*, according to Hone, represented Moore's opportunity to challenge for leadership of the future direction of Revivalist writing.

²⁵ Émile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin* (Paris : Carrefour, 1994), p. 9

²⁶ Joseph Hone, *The Life of George Moore* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), p.242

Dubliners could be understood as an immediate rebuke to Moore's lordly claim that *The Untilled Field* was written "in the hope of furnishing the young Irish of the future with models".²⁷ In particular, Joyce might have wanted to check Moore's ambitions as regards his own city. Commenting on Moore's 'The Culture Hero in Dublin Myths' ('The Leader', July 1901), Adrian Frazier observes that Moore presents himself as "the first of the Dublin folklorists, a humble collector and interpreter of popular tales".²⁸

Joyce attacks Moore because his mixture of voyeurism and sentimental romance fosters the stultified culture of pre-war Dublin in which such bleak human stories take shape. 'Araby', for example, is a precise reaction to 'The Clerk's Quest', a story in *The Untilled Field*. In Moore's whimsical story, a hard-working and punctilious clerk becomes enraptured with the sender of a "pale pink cheque", which arrives in a scented heliotrope envelope on his desk one summer's day. As identical cheques arrive each month, the clerk, Edward Dempsey, becomes increasingly obsessed with the lady who sends them: "the name and handwriting were pregnant with occult significance in Dempsey's disturbed mind", and, though never meeting her ("the perfume and the name were sufficient"), he gives her unwanted presents such as diamonds. This romantic yearning brings to the surface long repressed emotions so that "dreams that had died or had never been born floated up like things from the depths of the sea." The lady, Henrietta Brown, complains to the bank of his apparent (though harmless) 'harrassment' and this, together with his neglect of routine clerical duties, causes him to be sacked. Unconcerned, he then wanders out into the countryside: "he thought of her even to the simplest means of reaching her, and was content to walk about the streets in happy mood, watching for glimpses of some evanescent phantom at the wood's edge wearing a star on her forehead, or catching sight in the wood's depths of a glistening shoulder and feet flying towards the reeds." Despite suffering the robbery of his diamonds in a bar, Dempsey dies in romantic ecstasy: "he lay there looking up at the stars, thinking of Henrietta, knowing that everything was slipping away, and he passing into a

²⁷ John Cronin, 'George Moore: *The Untilled Field*', in *The Irish Short Story*, ed. Rafroidi and Brown, p. 114 (p.113-27)

²⁸ Adrian Frazier, *George Moore* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 302

diviner sense. Henrietta seemed to be coming nearer to him and revealing herself more clearly; and when the word of death was in his throat, and his eyes opened for the last time, it seemed to him that one of the stars came down from the sky and laid its bright face upon his shoulder.”²⁹

Both Dempsey and the boy in ‘Araby’ are more concerned with the ideal vision than the actuality; both suffer from the authority which notices their distraction from daily work (the schoolmaster in Joyce’s story); both end their stories staring up at the heavens. Joyce strengthens the comparison by verbal echoes so that Moore’s “his ideal was now by him and always” becomes “her ideal accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance” (22), and the lady’s name, Henrietta Brown, turns into “the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination” (25), and “her brown figure” (22). The boy imagines protecting his dream amidst the chaos of Dublin’s streets as “I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes” (23), which calls to mind the quest-romance of the Holy Grail, which, in turn, echoes the title of Moore’s story, ‘The Clerk’s Quest’.

The ending of ‘Araby’ pricks the balloon of Moore’s romantic afflatus: “gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger” (28). Such is the boy’s imaginative intensity, his seeing of himself appears to blur the conventional boundaries between the literal and the metaphorical. There are three possible angles of vision for the word “saw” here. (1) He recognises on an emotional level how his devotion to his friend’s sister has been motivated not by affection for her but by self-absorbed attention to his own refined sensibilities. (2) He momentarily visualises himself on the dark canvass of the bazaar ceiling as a trapped and frustrated animal, as he had earlier pictured the girl onto the scene around him: “at night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read [...] Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance.” (3) He sees himself from a cosmic perspective, (the “darkness” providing a sense of scale and space suggestive of the night sky beyond the ceiling), as an insignificant bundle of predictably selfish and myopic impulses: hence the cool detachment of “gazing” which might seem to contradict the volatility of “burned with anguish and anger”. The possibility that

²⁹ Moore, *The Untilled Field*, p. 190-4

the boy is having some sort of mystical vision, like a disappointed, moralized Blake, is accentuated by the physical aspect of the boy's looking ("gazing [...] my eyes"), by the imaginative gesture of the metaphor which personifies vanity as a cruel huntsman toying with his dream, and by the medial pause in the sentence which suggests that the boy sheds tears as a result of this humiliating self-projection.

Michael West sees the connection between the stories but seems to me to miss the point: "as the parallel suggests [...] Joyce like Moore is essentially affirming a deluded romantic imagination as preferable to the sordid realities of Irish life."³⁰ This does not seem, however, to be a valid reading of 'Araby'. Unlike Moore's cosy ending there are no stars, no comforting fairy vision of the beloved, no consolation that endings can pass into a vague, soulful "diviner sense". The "darkness" of the bazaar ceiling is just darkness, the closed down lid of a naturalist world in which nothing spiritual exists. Joyce blows the gaff on Moore's dreamy presentation of sexual desire as whimsical, courtly love which luxuriates in melancholic contemplation of its own disappointment and pain. The boy suddenly cuts through his idealising tendencies to see himself as an animal ("creature") who has failed to recognise the incipient sexual aspects of his romantic devotion, and the selfish, deterministic underpinning of his desire to reach his goal ("driven...by vanity"). Perhaps his initial idealism, which causes so much ultimate heartbreak, was generated by reading too many stories like 'The Clerk's Quest'.

"Who called Moore the English Zola?" Joyce asked Stanislaus in a letter of December 1906, "I wonder: he must have had large prowess of comparison."³¹ 'A Painful Case' shows Joyce both as naturalist writer and as parodist of the limitations of Zola's and Moore's naturalism. The story announces itself as a naturalistic text with its slab of authentic documentation in the form of the *Mail* newspaper report, its stereotypical figure of the fallen woman (Gervaise, Esther Waters, Tess), its reference to the naturalistic writer Hauptmann, its precise delineation of Duffy's room (compare the immense *nature morte* that is 'Ithaca'). Based

³⁰ Michael West, 'George Moore and the Hermeneutics of Joyce's *Dubliners*', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 26.2 (April, 1978), p. 219 (p.212-35)

³¹ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, December 7th, 1906. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 140

on Stanislaus Joyce, the characterization follows Zola's requirement in *Le Roman Experimental* (1880), which was designed to guarantee authenticity, that fictional figures should be based on people who are well known to the author, such as the author's aunt or mother-in-law.³² The language of characters' psychological reactions seems to allude to the preface to *Thérèse Raquin* in which Zola explains that he is concerned with "des personnages souverainement dominés par leurs nerfs et leur sang" and that the novel is a scientific-deterministic test-tube experiment on "l'union étrange qui peut se produire entre deux tempéraments différents."³³ This finds a corollary in Joyce's description of Mrs Sinico as possessing a "temperament of great sensibility" (105) and the "saturnine" (104) Duffy sensing that the shock of reading about Mrs Sinico's death was "attacking his nerves" (112). Generally the story is concerned with the characters' "reaction" on each other: their mutual attraction, Duffy's response to Mrs Sinico's late night advance, and his later complicated attitude towards her story. The change of title from 'A Painful Incident' to 'A Painful Case' suggests Joyce's desire to signal the naturalistic leanings of the story since the alteration might remind the reader of Zola's image in the preface of the writer as an objective, detached surgeon who clinically dissects the material in front of him. Stephen Reid, in fact, has suggested that Duffy is a particular, well known 'case' in Freudian terminology, "a compulsion neurotic",³⁴ and Randy Malamud has suggested that Duffy fits the condition of anomie as defined by Emile Durkheim in *Le Suicide* (1897), in which a person loses all sense of social value and order and becomes cut off from the world around him.³⁵

The idea of fate in Zola's novels (in his case genetic determinism) is paralleled in 'A Painful Case' where Joyce creates a sense that the relationship is doomed (this is also part of the parody of *Anna Karenin* in which Tolstoy manipulates fateful signs). As well as showing its characters misreading each other's words and gestures, the story carries warning signals which

³² Sonja Nejdefors-Frisk, *George Moore's Naturalistic Prose* (Upsala, 1952), p. 45

³³ Zola, *Thérèse Raquin*, p. 8

³⁴ Stephen Reid, 'The Beast in the Jungle and A Painful Case: Two Different Sufferings', *The American Imago: A Psychoanalytical Journal for Culture, Science, and the Arts* 20.3 (Fall, 1963), p. 229 (p.221-39)

³⁵ Randy Malamud, 'Durkheimian Sensibilities in Joyce: Anomie and The Social Suicide', in *Images of Joyce*, ed. by Hart, Sanduleson, Scott, Senn (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), p. 127-37

can be easily missed. The most obvious example of this is Mrs Sinico's ignoring of the railway's safety devices intended to keep passengers off the track: "The company had always taken every precaution to prevent people crossing the lines except by bridges, both by placing notices in every station and by the use of patent spring gates at level crossings" (110), though perhaps we should be wary of accepting the company's public relations legalese. Joyce 'places notices' in the details of the narrative which we can recognize only on a second reading, the proleptic ironies creating a tragi-comic sense of inevitable doom (fate has cruelly decreed that this is how things will happen), and pantomime farce (look out who's behind you!). The imagined "faint fragrance [...] of an over-ripe apple which might have been left there and forgotten" (104) produced on lifting Duffy's desk, suggests at the start of the story both its owner's emotional repression *and* the fate of Mrs Sinico. Duffy will later worry that at his death he will merely become a "memory - if anyone remembered him" (113); Mrs Sinico will be easily forgotten by Duffy, and has been for a long time by her husband: "he had dismissed his wife so sincerely from his gallery of pleasures that he did not suspect that anyone else would take an interest in her" (106). An "over-ripe *apple*" playfully anticipates the theme of temptation (with Phoenix Park a version of Eden?), and "over-ripe" hints at the characters' age since, as Joyce observed, this is a story of "mature life".³⁶

The plot of Hauptmann's *Michael Kramer*, which Duffy is translating, has a similar shape to the relationship between Duffy and Mrs Sinico. The artist's father struggles against debased taste, against the compromising politics of academic art and against "the vulgar soul" of his son, an apparently frivolous painter; the son commits suicide in the face of rejection by his contemporaries and his father's intransigence; the father recognises his role in the suicide and worries over the lack of warmth he had shown towards his son during his life, but it is all too late; finally he sees that his own life is as sterile as the "vulgar" people he had previously despised. Even the furniture and neatness of Duffy's room echo the play's stage directions in regard to the father's studio. The manuscript of Duffy's translation of the play is kept in the same

³⁶Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, September 24th, 1905. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p.78

desk as the ghostly apple whose possible existence is only hinted at: “on lifting the lid of the desk a faint fragrance escaped - the fragrance of new cedarwood pencils *or* of a bottle of gum *or* of an over-ripe apple which *might* have been left there and forgotten”. It is as if the desk, closed, used for writing on and containing writings, is a form of crypt containing the story’s memory, or a playfully foregrounded box of clues which Joyce challenges us to open up, “faint” though the hint is.

There are more examples of such proleptic irony. Duffy’s eyes give the “impression of a man ever alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others but often disappointed” (104), and so the events of the story prove, “disappointed” echoing forwards to how he feels “disillusioned” with her “interpretation of his words” (107) when she, on instinct, seizes his hand. Opera and concerts are described as “the only dissipations of his life” (104), an ironic, throwaway remark, but an irony which will later embrace the knowledge that it was at a concert that he began a liaison with a married woman which could have led to adultery. At their first meeting, the “house” is so empty-looking and quiet it “gave distressing prophecy of failure” (105), a warning which anticipates the fate of the relationship of the two people who constitute part of the “house” as well as the poor reception of the performance. Meeting Mrs Sinico, Duffy looked at her and tried “to fix her permanently in his memory” (105), an impulse which proves paradoxically both a success and a failure in that he seems quickly to forget her, though precisely this ease with which he does forget her forms part of the basis of his later guilty remembrance of her. In the process of analysing how he could never be close to Mrs Sinico, Duffy “heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognised as his own, insisting on the soul’s incurable loneliness” (107), yet at the end of the story he will hear Mrs Sinico’s voice which will equally forcibly make him realise how lonely he is, since it is the “impersonal” voice of her ghost. Mrs Sinico’s death is probably caused by “shock and sudden failure of the heart’s action” (110), and consciousness of this (his sense of Mrs Sinico’s presence) in turn gives Duffy a “shock”, attacking his stomach and nerves (112). Duffy’s brutal, pitiless judgment of her life and character is, in its way, “failure of the heart’s action”. Duffy twice characterizes the squalid nature of her demise as “What an end!”

(111), though he is about to discover that for him, at least, this “end” is only the beginning for him of “the narrative of her death” (111). As they are about to see each other for the last time Duffy becomes concerned that she will “collapse” (108): they are walking towards a tram. Mrs Sinico is described as his “confessor” (106) (and their last meeting as a “ruined confessional” [108]) because of her encouragement of his open expression of feeling, and her patient willingness to listen, without Duffy taking the trouble to listen to what she has to say: at the close he acknowledges his guilt in her presence, the confession metaphor acquiring a more literal sense: “She seemed to be near him in the darkness” (113). The associations of places such as Chapelizod, where Duffy lives, and Phoenix Park, where the two wander around before parting for the last time and where Duffy walks at the close, create a similar effect as both places are involved in the story of the doomed love of Tristan and Iseult.

Joyce also plays on the word “hand” because of its place in the defining moment of Duffy’s and Mrs Sinico’s relationship: “Mrs Sinico caught up his hand passionately and pressed it to her cheek” (107). His withdrawal at this point has been hinted at earlier by mention of his “distaste for underhand ways” (106), which is partly what he sees expressed in Mrs Sinico’s romantic gesture. The way she quickly “caught up his hand” in a spontaneous embrace echoes how Duffy was eager on their second meeting swiftly to establish a sense of his interest in her: “he met her again [...] and *seized* the moment when her daughter’s attention was diverted to become more intimate” (106). In the park, his sense of Mrs Sinico’s presence is through touch: “he thought her hand touched his”, “he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his” (112-3). The irony is compounded by Captain Sinico’s complacent misunderstanding, when Duffy visited his house, that not his wife’s but “his daughter’s hand was in question” (106).

Why, then, is there so much proleptic irony in the story? Joyce might want to create a mood of Greek tragedy in the manner of *Oedipus Rex* which accentuates man’s tenuous control over his own fate despite his protestations of power and self-determination. This mood is questioned by the modern, urban setting and the comic potential of the dramatic ironies: Duffy says retrospectively that he had not wanted to be involved in “a comedy of deception” (112) with

Mrs Sinico, but in narrative terms he was always at the heart of one. The gods become blank, expressionless voices in a narrative where naturalistic realism is suffused with the uncanny. There seems something spooky about how all these ghostly signs have come to be there in such profusion, hovering around Duffy and Mrs Sinico and even in their voices: verbal shadows replace eerie shapes in the corner. The allusions to the legend of Tristan and Iseult *are* epic (if mock-heroic), and are matched by the recent parallel with *Anna Karenin*, whose heroine's death at the railway track is the point of comparison with Mrs Sinico (both are knocked over by a goods train, though it is not clear that Mrs Sinico committed suicide). A second reason for all the proleptic irony is the story's concern with how things appear differently the second time round for Duffy. On first seeing Mrs Sinico, he tries to "fix" her in his mind, but his sense of who she is and how he relates to her will in fact fluctuate in the course of the story. In particular, he reappraises his initial reaction to her death and sees it differently second time round when he reads the "narrative" of her sad passing in a more sympathetic light.

'Naturalistic' though 'A Painful Case' evidently is, Joyce appears in the story to be having fun with the serious doctrinal verities of naturalism and with some of the simple-minded absurdities resulting from Zola's idea that late nineteenth century man is a sexually repressed, latently violent beast trapped in a bourgeois milieu where his destiny has already been mapped out in his blood cells. The irony of Duffy's character in a naturalistic story is that, at least at first, he is so unbodily, so unsexual. Further, in a highly self-consciously literary story (*Michael Kramer, Tristan and Iseult, Anna Karenin, Nietzsche, Duffy's bookshelf*) there seems something comically appropriate in Duffy, the central character in a naturalistic story, sounding like a shocked reader of *L'Assommoir* in his response to the story of the fallen woman that is Mrs Sinico:

The whole narrative of her death revolted him [...] the details of a commonplace vulgar death attacked his stomach. Not merely had she degraded herself; she had degraded him. He saw the squalid tract of her vice, miserable and malodorous [...]

He thought of the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman. Just God, what an end! (111)

Together with the tongue-in-cheek presentation of a pre-determined world in which free-will is an illusion, Joyce enjoys playing with the authentic recreation of the real world, a central tenet of naturalistic theory. It fits that the villain of the piece, the indifferent husband, Captain Sinico, should return on his mercantile boat from *Rotterdam* on the morning of his wife's suicide. Further, if, as Stephen Reid argues, Duffy is based on Joyce's sense of his own psychology (as well as Stanislaus's), there is an amusing irony in the way the unhappy life of "a compulsion neurotic" is charted in the knowingly meticulous, ordered style of a naturalist writer (and this goes beyond the free indirect style of parts of the story since Joyce writes so scrupulously in all the stories).

Just as Joyce appears to have used Moore's short story 'The Clerk's Quest' as the whetstone for 'Araby', so he seems to be reacting to Moore's novella *The Lake* (1905) in 'A Painful Case'. (More generally Joyce might have been thinking about the title of Moore's set of novellas, *Celibates* (1895), in which the story *John Norton* bears parallels with 'A Painful Case'). In *The Lake* Father Gogarty denounces the parish schoolmistress, Rose Leicester, from his pulpit because she has been seduced by a local man: he feels personally let down because he recommended Rose for the job. He then learns to regret this severe approach through correspondence with wise old Father O'Grady and worries that, having disappeared, she may have committed suicide. Fortunately she hasn't and the two begin an extremely long correspondence about all manner of things with the priest gradually realising how much he cares for Rose through the increasing intimacy of their exchanges, and through his jealousy over the presence of the writer, Ellis, who guides Rose on her travels in Italy and about whom Rose writes flatteringly. Perhaps, he realises, his denunciation of her sin was motivated as much by possessive jealousy as by righteous anger. Finally, he symbolically leaves his priestly garments

by the side of the local lake as he sets off to find her, and a happy ending, in Rome. The lake is important because it is an image of Father Gogarty's initial guilt over his treatment of Rose. He connects Rose to the lake because he saw her drowning in its waters in a dream he experienced in the first flush of guilt after her departure. The lake is also a symbol of his emotional opening-up as a consequence of his feelings of guilt and his developing self-knowledge and affection for her.

Joyce asked Stanislaus for a Dublin review of the book in a letter dated 4th December 1905, which suggests that he had read the book by then. 'A Painful Case' was not completed until after the summer of 1906. He told Stanislaus, in a letter dated August 31st 1906, "I have some loose sheets in my pocket about 5 pages to add to 'A Painful Case' but am not strenuous enough to continue in the face of such continual discouragement."³⁷ That *The Lake* was occupying his thoughts during the composition of the final form of 'A Painful Case' seems evident from his contemptuous evaluation of the story in the same letter for the benefit of Stanislaus, who had not yet read it:

I bought and read *The Lake*: and will send it when I know where to send it so that you may tell me what you think of it. *The Times* calls it a prose poem. You know the plot. She writes long letters to Father Oliver Gogarty about Wagner and the Ring and Bayreuth (memories of my youth!) and about Italy where everyone is so happy (!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!) and where they drink nice wine and not that horrid black porter (O poor Lady Ardilaun over whose lily-like hand he lingered some years back): and then she goes (in all senses of the word) with a literary man named Ellis - one of Moore's literary men, you can imagine what, silent second cousin of that terribly knowing fellow, Harding - and Father Oliver Gogarty goes out to the lake to plunge in by moonlight, before which the moon shines opportunely on 'firm erect frame and grey buttocks': and on the steamer he reflects that every man has a lake in his

³⁷ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, August 31st, 1906. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 99

heart and must ungird his loins for the crossing...³⁸

In response to Stanislaus's evident praise of the close of the story three weeks later, Joyce continued his tirade:

Yerra, what's good in the end of *The Lake*? I see nothing. And what is to be said of the 'lithery' man, Ellis, and all the talk about pictures and music. Now, tell the God's truth, isn't it *bloody* tiresome? To me it is.³⁹

Joyce's story similarly involves an ascetic figure (at one point Duffy is compared to a priest) whose adoption of a censorious attitude towards a sinning woman gives way to guilty self-condemnation and soul-searching as that initial position is critically reappraised. Father Gogarty exclaims to himself: "But how did he treat her in the end, despite all her kindnesses? Shamefully, shamefully, shamefully!" (46) Father Gogarty and Mr Duffy's characters are similar, too, in their nervous temperament ("a highly nervous, sensitive man"),⁴⁰ and in their Nietzschean sense of superiority: "this sinful dislike of poverty he had overcome in early manhood. A high religious enthusiasm had enabled him to overcome it, but his instinctive dislike of the lowly life - intellectual lowliness as well as physical - gathered within these cottages, seemed to have returned again."⁴¹

The most telling point of comparison, though, is that both characters feel haunted by the women they think they have betrayed. Consider the following passages from *The Lake*:

He seemed held back, and, unable to discover any natural reason for his hesitancy, he began to indulge in superstitious fears lest Rose's spirit

³⁸ Ibid, p. 99

³⁹ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, September 18-20, 1906. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p.106

⁴⁰ George Moore, *The Lake* (London: Heinemann, 1905), p. 101

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 86

haunted the lake, and that his punishment was to be kept a prisoner always. One day, as he stood at the end of the sandy pit, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, he was startled by a footstep. He fancied it must be she, but it was only Christy, the boy who worked in his garden.

Later on the illusion of her presence grew so intense that he started up from his chair and looked round for her. Had he not felt her breath upon his cheek? Her very perfume had floated past! There [...] it had gone again! No, it was not she - only the syringe breathing in the window.

She had descended from the trees into his arms, white and cold [...] They roamed again in the paths that led round the rocks overgrown with briars, by the great oak-tree where the leaves were falling. They had been smiling gently, but suddenly she seemed to tell him that he must abide by the shores of the lake.⁴²

Mrs Sinico's ghost is a rebuke not only to Duffy's cold heart but also to George Moore's compromising sentimentality. The point of Rose Leicester's appearances here is not to suggest Father Gogarty's guilt over his shabby treatment of a woman which might have led to her suicide, but rather his poetic sensitivity to mood and his burgeoning romantic feelings. In this rural Irish lakeside idyll Father Gogarty assumes a sub-Yeatsian persona as he wanders around in a melancholic dream, yearning for a tantalisingly close, beautiful, mysterious lady. The ghost is mere literary whimsy, a clichéd hand-me-down of the floaty, 'spiritual' nineties. As Joyce drily warned Stanislaus "You know the plot".

This is a morally idyllic world, too, since Father Gogarty does not have to live with (at least for long) the consequences of his initial misjudgment and pitiless attitude towards Rose. His victim proves to be remarkably forgiving, smiling at him benignly, hinting at future sensual

⁴² Ibid, p. 49, 55, 225

delights, and, through her suffering, opening up to him an emotional world which was previously closed:

‘Every man has a lake in his heart!’ He had not sought the phrase, it had come suddenly into his mind. Yes, ‘every man has a lake in his heart’. He sat like one stupefied in his chair.⁴³

This poetic inspiration is less a hard won realisation after hours of intense struggle, than a sensation of smug ‘spiritual’ triumphalism, the emotional equivalent of the uncorking of a bottle of “nice wine” in the Italian countryside with Wagner playing in the background and the moon shining overhead. This moment of insight prepares us for Father Gogarty’s final encounter with Rose’s ghost which is a semi-religious “rapture”:

He perceived the colour of her hair, and eyes, and hands, and of the pale dress she wore; but her presence seemed revealed to him through the exaltation of some sense latent as non-existent in his waking moods.⁴⁴

Goodbye to the dreary, stuffy constraints of the celibate priestly life, Moore implies, and welcome to the new spirituality of poetic feeling and dreamy romance: my naturalistic eye has identified the latent sensuality of your original theological yearning. This links back to Joyce’s irritation with the Celtic School’s claim to define Irishness whilst dismissing Catholicism since, as Seamus Deane observes, Moore “saw himself as the liberator of his native land from the thrall of priestcraft and Catholicism.”⁴⁵

Mrs Sinico is the “horrid black porter” to Rose Leicester’s “nice wine”, Joyce’s “filthy streams” of ‘The Holy Office’ to Moore’s “dreamy dreams”. Duffy’s ‘spiritual’ insight is that he

⁴³ Ibid, p. 59

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 329

⁴⁵ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 145

is guilty, regretful, and alone. When Moore writes of Father Gogarty wandering languidly in the lakeside forest we sense his moving emotionally closer to his distant love (“had he not felt her breath upon his cheek?”). When Joyce writes that Duffy, walking “under the gaunt trees” of Phoenix Park, “at moments [...] seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his”, we imagine how pained he feels to have lost the chance of love and to know how intensely alone he is. Mrs Sinico is a victim from the real world (the story originates in a newspaper story Joyce read), not a male fantasy of pliable compassion and romantic allure. Joyce implicitly attacks the “tiresome” compromise at the heart of Moore’s writing as exemplified in *The Lake*, the easy assumption that a writer can deal in real, naturalistic issues (the fallen woman, repressed sexual desire) and still force through happy, moralising endings which will please a sentimental public and bourgeois arbiters of artistic good taste.

Joyce’s writing at the close of ‘A Painful Case’ is as much a stylistic as a moral rebuke to Moore, the two concepts being perhaps inseparable in his imagination. The tight precision of the prose and careful organization of the narrative contrast with Moore’s “long, flaccid, structureless sentences” (Yeats),⁴⁶ and “tiresome” drawing out of the tale” (Joyce). Moore’s *The Lake*, for all its preening talk of high culture, lacks artistry. Joyce’s story, however, is elegantly shaped. That Duffy feels, in “shock” (112) when he imagines Mrs Sinico’s hand touch him in the darkness of Phoenix Park echoes, for example, his being “very much surprised” (107) at the moment in “the dark discreet room” (107) when Mrs Sinico did actually touch his hand. The echo suggests the bringing to the surface of Duffy’s repressed feelings about Mrs Sinico both at the moment when he claimed to disapprove of her passionate gesture and continuously over the past four years. He seems to acknowledge the bitter truth that now, when it is no longer possible, he would welcome her touch.

That Joyce shapes the complexity of his characters’ moments of contemplative intensity against Moore’s fiction should not be surprising given Moore’s reputation at the turn of the century as the writer of visions and reverie. In *The Untilled Field* a clerk dies rhapsodically

⁴⁶ Nejdefors-Frisk, *George Moore’s Naturalistic Prose*, p. 35

gazing at the night sky as he sees the visionary approach of his beloved ('The Clerk's Quest'); a grandmother dies as she looks longingly into the hearth fire remembering her wedding-day, her thoughts having turned wistful at the sight of her grand-daughter gaily leaving for the local ball in her handed-down wedding-gown ('The Wedding Gown'); an American exile yearns regretfully for the old country and a lost love ('Home Sickness'). In *A Drama in Muslin*, the audience for an end-of-term play drift into a communal rhapsody at the transcendental nature of art ("like warm vapour, one thought filled the entire hall");⁴⁷ Lady Cecilia Cullen, a friend of the heroine, Alice, is given to mystical visions, a crude naturalistic expression of her frustration as a deformed, suppressed lesbian; Alice herself has a "vision" both of the potential horror of spinsterhood and of an idealised married state.⁴⁸ In *Esther Waters* (1891) the heroine lies in bed "staring half awake, her eyes open but still dim with dreams"; later she has a "day-dream becoming softer and more delicate as it rounded into summer sleep", she has a waking "dream" of her baby boy's idyllic future, and is "startled" out of a "dream" mid conversation with her husband.⁴⁹ *Vain Fortune* (1891) begins with the image of its hero, Hubert Price, summoning inspiration for the writing of his play, "abandoning himself to every meditation [...] In such reverie and consideration he lay immersed, oblivious of the present moment"; his actress acquaintance, Rose, lives in a perpetual dreamworld: "her great dark eyes fixed, her mind at rest, sunk in some inscrutable dream."⁵⁰ Graham Hough describes Moore in the 1890's "oscillating between aesthetic reverie and naturalism".⁵¹ G. Owens quotes Desmond MacCarthy in *Portraits* as identifying the evocation of the dreamy and vaguely spiritual as Moore's forte, at its most powerful in *Hail and Farewell*: "His genius is a genius for reverie; phase after phase in his own life of some man or woman he has known, reflection after reflection, image after image, rise, turn and evaporate like wreaths of smoke."⁵²

Reverie in a naturalistic setting constitutes the psychological drama of *Dubliners*. It

⁴⁷ George Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p. 13

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 98, 101

⁴⁹ George Moore, *Esther Waters* (London: Vizetelly, 1891), p. 10, 51, 106

⁵⁰ George Moore, *Vain Fortune* (London: Henry Dent & Co., 1891), p. 2, 18

⁵¹ *The Man of Wax*, ed. Hughes, p. 137

⁵² *George Moore's Life, Mind and Art*, ed. Owens, p.103

seems natural to suppose that Joyce should shape the complex nature of these moments (the ironised tragi-comic points of view, the irresolute sense of revelation and self-knowledge, the allegorical political / cultural dimensions) against the short-hand 'spirituality' of dreams, visions and reverie in Moore's writing. Richard Ellmann's tracing of Gabriel's contemplative state at the end of *The Dead* to its possible origin in Hubert Price's philosophical mood at the close of *Vain Fortune*,⁵³ is an example of precisely this and indicates that Moore was not in Joyce's mind only in 'A Little Cloud', 'Araby', and 'A Painful Case'.⁵⁴

Since Ellmann has already drawn attention to the *Vain Fortune* / 'The Dead' parallel, I will compare two young women looking into the future and dreaming of romance, Kate Edie in *A Mummer's Wife*, and Polly Mooney in 'The Boarding House'. At this early stage in *A Mummer's Wife* Moore is establishing Katie's tendency to dream of a more exciting life, her predilection for romantic sentimentality which will eventually lead to her downfall in the manner of Emma Bovary:

The dreamy warmth of the fire absorbed her more direct feelings, and for some moments she dozed in a haze of dim sensuousness and emotive

⁵³ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 250

⁵⁴ I think Joyce also bases 'Eveline' on the first 100 pages of Moore's *Evelyn Innes* (1898), and 'Clay' on 'The Window' in *The Untilled Field*. Here is a brief sense of Joyce's reaction to these stories.

The heroine, in *Evelyn Innes*, aged 19 like Joyce's Eveline, lives alone with her father since her mother, a famous opera singer, has passed away; the father has made a promise to develop her musical talent. A handsome, sophisticated stranger, Sir Owen Asher, tells Evelyn that she is stifling her talent by remaining with her father and tries to lure her away to Paris, where she would be his mistress. After much hesitation, and a confession to her father about her state of mind, and a promise to him that she will stay, she in fact resolves to elope with Sir Owen. Plot correspondences, beyond the obvious ones implicit in this summary, include: Sir Owen as the ideal, romantic lover, who is associated with sea-travel through his round-the-world sailing trip; the ambiguity of Sir Owen's attachment to Evelyn, which combines the desire to mould her in his image, revenge on an ex lover, and lust, with some degree of affection and passion; Evelyn's anxieties about what to do centring around obligation to her parents and concern about rebelling against the Church; the heroine's tendency towards visions and dreamlike reveries, which are about Sir Owen, not about her mother as is the case with Joyce's Eveline; the theme of music.

In 'The Window', Biddy McHale is a deformed spinster who donates a stained-glass window to the local church and becomes increasingly obsessed by it, withdrawing further and further from reality into a state of visionary ecstasy. During mass she hears harp music and sees Christ crowning and embracing her. There are two connections with 'Clay', particularly Maria's transportation through Balfe's 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt'. Firstly, the figure of the unmarried woman who yearns for love and romance: in Moore's story, Christ is presented as a gentle, romantic, desexualized lover ("He is coming to take me in His arms!"). Secondly, the music of the harps in her vision carries Biddy into a dreamworld: "she had been borne beyond her usual life [...] her whole being had answered to the music the saint played"; she is "enraptured" and in a "dream". Maria's repetition of the first verse of Balfe's lyric, carries her into a similar otherworldly place. (*The Untilled Field*, p. 123-5).

numbness. As in a dusky glass she saw herself a tender, loving, but unhappy woman; by her side were her querulous husband and kind-minded mother-in-law, and then there was a phantom she could not determine, and behind it something into which she could not see. Was it a distant country? - was it a scene of revelry? Impossible to say, for whenever she attempted to find definite shapes in the glowing colours, they vanished in a blurred confusion.

But amid these fleeting visions there was one shape that particularly interested her, and she pursued it tenaciously, until in a desperate effort to define its features she awoke with a start.⁵⁵

Ghostly imagery of the future (“fire”, “phantom”, “visions”) fits the presentation of the desired mysterious stranger (this will be Dick Lennox), sets up the vaguely naturalistic idea of Katie’s inescapable tragic fate, and teases the reader with the promise of an exciting plot (“a distant country”, “revelry”). Conscious of the censorship problems surrounding his earlier novel, *A Modern Lover*, Moore evokes Katie’s repressed sexual desires (her husband is an invalid) through the symbol of the fire, the potential tension between “tender, loving” and “unhappy”, the suggestion of eroticism in “dim sensuousness”, the ambiguous connotations of “revelry”, and the obsessive determination shown to establish who might be at the centre of her flickering vision (“pursued”, “desperate”). The allusion to 1 Corinthians 13 (“As in a dusky glass” / “As in a glass darkly”) flatters a conversant reader, whilst the implicit comparison of Katie to an etherealised seer or clairvoyant mystically divining the future taps into modish interest in spiritualism.

The writing, however, is rather clumsy: “dozed” prepares us more for snores than mystical vision, “kind-minded” is redundant and awkward, the authorial question and answer flourish is heavy-handed. More objectionable is the patronising gaze which coyly evokes her latent sexual passion and suggests its superiority to the simple-minded female figure attempting

⁵⁵ George Moore, *A Mummer's Wife*, p. 29

and failing to read meaning into the flickering flames (of course the narrator knows what they mean). This latent attitude configures in Moore's description of his heroine as "a soul made up two thirds of sentiment, and one third of superstition." Since she is "dreamy not imaginative", she cannot maintain the spiritual intensity of a later reverie in which she identifies with the heroine of her favourite romance: "this was the last flight of her dream. The frail wings of her imagination could sustain her no longer, and too weary to care for or even to think of anything, she went upstairs."⁵⁶ This type of imaginative failure slides easily for Moore into the moral failure (of will) involved in her degeneration into mistress, then alcoholic, then prostitute. Woman as weak, superstitious, sexually available: cultural stereotype and shallow naturalistic determinism seem well suited in Moore's novel.

In Katie's reverie, Moore seems as concerned to create a sophisticated, elegant, European authorial voice as he is to explore how a woman in her position might feel. When we read Katie's vision we are supposed to think Flaubert, *À Rebours*, pre-Raphaelite painting, a pale langourous aesthetic sensibility. The heartlessness of Moore's closing description of the wretched Katie as "like a worn-out machine, from which all rivets and screws had fallen"⁵⁷ implies a more pervasive detachment from his heroine: she is there to show how the author can write an English *L'Assommoir*. Ironically, Katie's lack of imaginative power is matched by Moore's own. Moore claimed he was treating marginalized figures such as Katie with a new sympathy, but in fact his imaginative reach is stymied by conventional stereotyping and would-be Decadent posturing. He attempts to give us an early version of Gerty MacDowell but merely reformulates a certain kind of male, socially superior, literary sentimentality, which makes slightly absurd his hope that in presenting *A Mummer's Wife* to the world he will be "digging a dagger into the heart of the sentimental school."⁵⁸

This contrasts with Joyce's presentation of Polly Mooney in 'The Boarding House', who is here waiting in Doran's bedroom as her mother forces his hand towards marriage:

⁵⁶ *A Mummer's Wife*, p. 49, 50, 59

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 432

⁵⁸ Nejdefors-Frisk, *George Moore's Naturalistic Prose*, p. 83

Then she went back to the bed again and sat at the foot. She regarded the pillows for a long time and the sight of them awakened in her mind secret amiable memories. She rested the nape of her neck against the cool iron bed-rail and fell into a reverie. There was no longer any perturbation visible on her face. She waited on patiently, almost cheerfully, without alarm, her memories gradually giving place to hopes and visions of the future. Her hopes and visions were so intricate that she no longer saw the white pillows on which her gaze was fixed or remembered that she was waiting for anything. (63)

There are comic ironies here such as the contrast between Polly's calm state of mind and Bob Doran's anguish as he, at that moment, squirms in front of the all-powerful Mrs Mooney, and the sense that Doran has *already* been sidelined from her romantic imaginings in favour of more general and grandiloquent marital hopes. The contrast with Moore lies in how Joyce's delineation of Polly's attitude is both comic *and* respectful towards the privacy of such a happy, hopeful moment in Polly's life. The slightly refined and formal register of "regarded", "awakened", "amiable", "nape", "reverie", "perturbation", "intricate" pays attention to the seriousness with which Polly contemplates her affection for Doran and the delicacy of her romantic aspirations. Joyce's evocation of her erotic sensibilities is careful and restrained: looking at her lover's pillows suggests "*amiable* memories". Polly is an attractive young woman gazing at her lover's bed, yet there are no fevered palpitations or coy sexual images as in the Moore passage. The tone of the writing is, rather, as "cool" as the iron bed-rail on which she rests her neck.

By not spelling out Polly's thought-processes and maintaining such distance Joyce both creates space in which the comic ironies and the gestures towards romance and spirituality can play off each other. He creates the sense of mystery at the heart of any definition of 'spiritual'. Like the elliptical technique elsewhere in *Dubliners*, such moments leave us intrigued as to what

is happening: what *is* Polly thinking about? Something similar seems to be occurring in ‘Ithaca’ where, on a much grander scale, the detached tone allows Stephen and Bloom shared intimacy and makes the reader doubly curious as to what might be passing through their minds:

I am writing ‘Ithaca’ in the form of a mathematical catechism. All events are resolved into their cosmic, physical, psychical etc. equivalents [...] so that the reader will know everything and know it in the baldest, coldest way, but Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze.⁵⁹

The naturalist writer in Joyce ironises such rarefied moments as Polly’s vision so that we are aware of the selfish human drives and cultural conditions which partly create these seemingly spiritual moments. Polly’s “hopes and visions”, we imagine, might centre around the material comfort and social status she will enjoy as the wife of a man who “had a good screw” and has “a bit of stuff put by” (60). Her lack of “perturbation” is both the calm of a semi-transcendental meditative state and the consciousness that she no longer has to worry about finding a husband who will give her independence and take her away from the potentially stifling presence of the boarding-house and her mother. In this respect, Joyce is similar to Moore (though twice as sophisticated) who points rather crudely to the sexual (animalistic in naturalistic terminology) underpinning of Katie Edie’s reverie in front of the fire.

Joyce knew, however, as he thought Moore did not, that the drama of reverie depended as much upon the exact recreation of the everyday world being momentarily escaped from as it did upon the actual presentation of the dream moment. This is why he gets irritated by imprecision in a story in *The Untilled Field*:

A lady who has been living for three years on the line between Bray and Dublin

⁵⁹ Frank Budgen, *The Making of Ulysses* (Oxford: OUP, 1972), p. 257

is told by her husband that there is a meeting in Dublin at which he must be present. She looks up the table to see the hours of the trains. This on DW and WR where the trains go regularly: this after three years. Isn't it rather stupid of Moore?⁶⁰

Polly's daily existence is drab (a daily round of breakfast tables "covered with plates on which lay yellow streaks of eggs with morsels of bacon-fat and bacon-rind" [58]), and framed at the edges by incipient violence (her cleaver-wielding father and aggressive brother). Joyce's evocation of this bleak world makes the more poignant her youthful imaginings of romantic escape. Joyce's sense, however, of the mystery of human personality, of the difficulty of approximating words to complex states of feeling, of the magical power of language, makes him go beyond the narrow constraints of the naturalistic outlook. That people would not recognise this worried him, as a laconic remark in a letter to Grant Richards suggests: "The worst that will happen, I suppose, is that some critic will allude to me as the 'Irish Zola'!" (May, 1906)⁶¹

Writing to Stanislaus in September 1905, Joyce expressed his contempt for Moore's *The Untilled Field* in the context of his hopes for the *Dubliners* stories:

When you remember that Dublin has been a capital for thousands of years, that it is the 'second' city of the British Empire, that it is nearly three times as big as Venice it seems strange that no artist has given it to the world. I read that silly, wretched book of Moore's 'The Untilled Field' which the Americans found so remarkable for its 'craftmanship'. O, dear me! It is very dull and flat, indeed: and ill written.⁶²

Joyce vents his implicit frustration that Moore should be successful commercially and the

⁶⁰ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, November 19th, 1904. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 44

⁶¹ Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, May 31st, 1906. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p.86

⁶² Joyce's letter to Stanislaus, September 24th, 1905. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p.78

subject of universal praise when he himself is struggling to have *Dubliners* published. Joyce's subtext in the connection of Dublin and Moore seems to be that his collection of stories will show Ireland as it really is, not as Moore has presented it. *Dubliners* will constitute proper naturalist fiction, sceptical about heroism, meticulously researched, written in a style of "scrupulous meanness" as befits the artist-documentarist, and, in line with Zola's original project, urban. The idea of giving Dublin to the world means, among other things, exploring the stifling effect of the Celtic 'phantasy' perpetuated by writers such as Moore, and suggesting how such cultural and political "dreamy dreams" infuse the personal spiritual states of individual Dubliners. The idea of giving Dublin to the world rings with a certain pride and affection too. Joyce will take his city's characters seriously and tread softly, if fearlessly, around their dreams.

(6) Irish Maladies

‘Two Gallants’, ‘Clay’, ‘A Mother’

Musicality has traditionally been close to notions of spirituality in Irish culture. Medieval Celts lived in a world occupied by fairy harpers, songs of mermaids, the power of the saint’s bell, the singing of angels in heaven, and musical trees. Karen Ralls, in *Music and the Celtic Otherworld*, explains how the Otherworld dimension was believed by the early Irish to be present in and around their everyday world, and to intersect it in a dynamic way. Supernatural musical performers were often portrayed as special intermediaries between this world, the world of mortals, and the Otherworld, the world of the immortals. Hermit poetry presented natural elements themselves as ‘instruments’ of God as part of everyday life experience, chief of which were forests which created music through the movement of wind through pine trees, and waterfalls with their avalanche of noise. Festival-time, particularly Samhain (November 1st), saw the association between music and the gods at its most powerful.¹

Celtic Revival writers naturally drew upon such ideas. The following poem by A.E., for example, evokes the ancient Celtic connection between music and the Irish soil:

We will hear the strange old song
That the earth croons in her breast.
Echoed by the feathered throng
Joyous from each leafy nest.

¹ Probably the most notorious event at Samhain every year was the annual destruction of Tara, the centre of kingship, by the fairy musician Aillen of the Tuatha de Danaan. It took the resolve of the hero Finn mac Cumhaill to solve the problem by the ingenious technique of putting the point of his sword on his forehead to stay awake during Aillen’s beguiling music: in this way he saved Tara from annual Samhain destruction by Aillen’s deadly melodies. Karen Ralls, *Music and the Celtic Otherworld* (Edinburgh: Polygon at Edinburgh, 2000), p. 1, 25, 73, 152

Earth, whose dreams are we and they,
With her heart's deep gladness fills
All our human lips can say,
Or the dawn-fired singer trills.²

Homeward Songs by the Way (1894)

Nature here is a mysterious source of music at a deeper level than its obvious representatives, the birds of dawn. The word “old” links to the Ireland of pagan times and “strange” alerts us to the song’s otherworldly origins, which combine pagan ideas of Mother Earth and theosophical imagery of the Mighty Mother. The twilight setting (“dawn-fired singer”) emphasizes this mystic element since this time of day was in Celtic lore traditionally associated with spiritual possibility. Earth, being both the literal Irish soil (with all its historical and political connotations) and a divine spiritual realm of existence (“whose dreams are we”), inspires the poet to imitate the free and ecstatic dawn-chorus and create a similar kind of divine music, which is the lyrical outpouring of the poem itself (“fills / All our human lips”). The poem’s rhyming and rhythmical elements symbolize divine harmony in both musical and emotional senses of the word. The mystical music of Earth, a fertile mother, thus creates an invisible bond of Celtic communion which connects the Otherworld, the literal earth, the singing birds of dawn, the rhapsodic medium poet, and the reader of the poem (“We will hear [...] whose dreams are we [...] our human lips”). The cloyingly sentimental and inept nature of the poem (for example the convoluted syntax of the second stanza) indicates, however, the nature of the ‘malady’ Joyce identifies in Celtic Twilight writing.

Some Celtic revivalists seemed to hear a magical musicality in the Irish language itself, as though the sounds and rhythms of Irish words possessed innate beauty and spirituality. Lionel Johnson, an Englishman converted to the cause, writes in *Celtic Speech* (1904):

² A.E., *Homeward Songs by the Way* (London and New York; London: John Lane Co., 1910), p. 47

Never forgetful silence fall on thee,
Nor younger voices overtake thee,
Nor echoes from thine ancient hills forsake thee;
Old music heard by Mona of the sea:
And where with moving melodies there break thee
Pastoral Conway, venerable Dee.

Like music lives, nor may that music die,
Still in the far, fair Gaelic places:
The speech, so wistful in its kindly graces,
Holy Croagh Patrick knows, and holy Hy:
The speech, that wakes the soul in withered faces,
And wakes remembrance of great things gone by.³

Johnson presents the Irish language as possessing a semi-miraculous ability to express, in coded form, heroic Irish history. There is also a hint of magic in the image of language resurrecting the dead and defying natural processes (“wakes the soul in withered faces”). The phrase “wistful in its kindly graces” suggests soulful yearning, and evocation of remote parts of Ireland hints at the idea of an occult form of knowledge being preserved in secret.

Inspired by Hyde’s *Love Songs of Connacht* (1895), Synge discovered a musical otherworldliness in the speech of female Aran islanders. Two little girls “spoke with a delicate exotic intonation that was full of charm [...] a sort of chant”; a young woman has “exquisite intonation [...] brooding and cooing over every syllable she uttered”.⁴ In his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), his desire to evoke “rich joy [...] what is superb and wild

³ Lionel Johnson, *Twenty One Poems* (Dun Emer Press, Dundrum, 1904), p. 14. I cannot find a “Mona” in Ireland, but it could be a poetic name for the Isle of Man (cf. William Kennish’s poem “Mona’s Isle”, 1844). Similarly, I can find no reference to “Conway” in Ireland. “Dee” is near Dundalk Bay. “Holy Croagh” is a holy mountain in Clew Bay, above West Port, at the base of which St. Patrick baptized the first Irish converts. “holy Hy” is a possible reference to one of the oldest and largest kingdoms in Connacht.

⁴ J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands* (Oxford: OUP, 1979), p. 8, 121

in reality” takes shape in the musicality of the play’s language (“superb” here meaning ‘exalted’ with connotations of an intense spiritual level). Pegeen, “*moved by his tone*”, agrees to marry Christy feeling transported by his lyricism as he, “*with rapture*”, creates a vision of their future romantic life.⁵

Yeats’s plays emphasize the power of music magically to transport poetic souls to the world of fairyland. In *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), the pagan poet, Aleel, plays “a stringed instrument” whilst “wandering and singing like a wave of the sea [...] wrapped up in dreams”. He also possesses a lute which expresses magical folk memory, such as reminiscence of the joy of Queen Maeve’s fairies:

This hollow box remembers every foot
That danced upon the level grass of the world,
And will tell secrets if I whisper to it.⁶

In Celtic mythology, musical instruments were sometimes thought to be alive in a mystical way. Karen Ralls tells how in one early cycle there is reference to a harp which has the ability to ‘hear’, and which listens to the specific chants from its owner, the Dagda, a sidhe god: the god had previously ‘bound’ melodies into this particular harp with a certain charm so it could only respond to his call and no other.⁷ Aleel’s personification of the lute may, then, have a deeper mystical aspect than is first apparent. *The Land of Heart’s Desire* (1894) shows Mary Bruin increasingly entranced by a voice in the nearby wood which turns out to be a fairy tempting her to come to ‘The Land of the Young’: “a strange song for a child, but she sings sweetly”. At the climax, drawn by the magic of the Otherworld and leaving her family behind, she says “I can hear songs and dancing”.⁸ Fairies’ siren-like spirituality is spelt out in Yeats’s *Fairy and Folk*

⁵ Synge, *The Complete Plays*, p. 175, 218

⁶ *The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 18

⁷ Ralls, *Music and the Celtic Otherworld*, p. 63

⁸ *The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 62, 71

Tales of Ireland (1888):

Their chief occupations are feasting, fighting, and making love, and playing the most beautiful music [...] When they are gay they sing. Many a poor girl has heard them, and pined away and died, for love of that singing [...] Plenty of the old beautiful tunes of Ireland are only their music, caught up by eavesdroppers.⁹

Music forms part of the allure of romantic nationalism for Michael Gillane in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902). The otherworldly old woman, who transforms into a queen as she leads away Michael to join rebel forces at Killala, sings three songs: the first, “half to herself”, commemorates heroic self-sacrifice for the Irish cause, the second anticipates the young men who in the future will die for their country, and the third affirms how martyrs will be remembered by later generations. Michael intuitively responds to the music’s glamour, his spirit in sudden thrall to a mysterious calling: “I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.”¹⁰ Similarly, Edward Martyn’s *Maeve* and *The Heather Field* present music as a force which lures the spiritually intense towards the otherworld. In the former, the heroine’s journey to fairyland is preceded by a vision of the goddess which includes “a soft music of harps”, and in the latter, the hero’s idealistic obsession is encouraged by the hearing of “celestial song” from a nearby mountain, “choristers singing of youth in an eternal sunrise!”¹¹ The youth of Michael and Maeve, with the obvious implications of political sacrifice, perhaps works as a coded suggestion for the fresh, vigorous and independent ‘Young’ Ireland before English arrival.

Dubliners engages with such Celtic Twilight scenarios by exploring how some of its characters are transported into other worlds by music. The immediate catalyst of Eveline’s ghostly vision of her mother is her hearing “a melancholy air of Italy” (33) in the street outside

⁹ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*, p. 12

¹⁰ *The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p. 82 - 88

¹¹ Martyn, ‘The Heather Field’ and ‘Maeve’, p. 119, 49

which takes her back to her dying mother's bedside. In 'The Dead', Mary Jane's playing of "her Academy piece" (186) makes Gabriel drift into reflection over his mother, whilst Gretta's listening to Bartell D'Arcy's rendition of 'The Lass of Aughrim' leads her into a prolonged reverie over Michael Furey. In 'Clay', Maria appears so entranced by the yearning lyricism of Balfe's aria from *The Bohemian Girl*, 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt', that she repeats the first verse, temporarily losing hold of the immediate social and material reality which surrounds her in her brother's parlour. Lenehan's abstraction in 'Two Gallants' as he sits in *The Refreshment Bar*, imagining Corley's happiness with his girl and reflecting on his own contrasting loneliness, begins with his response to a harpist's singing Thomas Moore's 'Silent, O Moyle' as he wanders Dublin's streets waiting for Corley's return.

This reverie begins as Lenehan and Corley are about to encounter the young woman who will later steal from her employers for Corley on Lenehan's behalf:

They walked along Nassau Street and then turned into Kildare Street. Not far from the porch of the club a harpist stood in the roadway, playing to a little ring of listeners. He plucked at the wires heedlessly, glancing quickly from time to time at the face of each new-comer and from time to time, wearily also, at the sky. His harp too, heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees, seemed weary alike of the eyes of strangers and of her masters' hands. One hand played in the bass the melody of *Silent, O Moyle*, while the other hand careered in the treble after each group of notes. The notes of the air throbbed deep and full.

The two young men walked up the street without speaking, the mournful music following them [Corley meets the girl and leaves Lenehan] Now that he was alone his face looked older. His gaiety seemed to forsake him and, as he came by the railings of the Duke's Lawn, he allowed his hand to run along them. The air which the harpist had played began to control

his movements. His softly padded feet played the melody while his fingers swept a scale of variations idly along the railings after each group of notes.

(48-50)

Moore's poem is based on a Celtic legend. Lir was the ancient Irish god of the sea, whose daughter was maliciously transformed into a swan and condemned to lonely wandering until the sound of the bell at the elevation of the Host in the first Mass to be celebrated in Ireland; then the spell would be broken.¹² It is two verses long:

Silent, O Moyle, be the roar of thy waters,
Break not, ye breezes, your chain of repose,
While, murmuring mournfully, Lir's lonely daughter
Tells to the night-star her tale of woes.
When shall the swan, her death-note singing,
Sleep, with wings in darkness furled?
When will heaven, its sweet bells ringing,
Call my spirit from this stormy world?

Sadly, O Moyle, to thy winter-wave weeping,
Fate bids me languish long ages away;
Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping,
Still doth the pure light its dawning delay.
When will that day-star, mildly springing,
Warm our isle with peace and love?
When will heaven, its sweet bells ringing,

¹² Gifford, *Joyce Annotated, Notes for 'Dubliners' and 'The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'*, p. 58-9

Call my spirit to the fields above?¹³

The swan of Moore's poem is a fairytale embodiment of Catholic Ireland. She is the victim of unjust and inexplicable aggression, is dispossessed of her rightful status and inheritance, and, powerless, and though seemingly trapped in an eternal limbo of despair, she must endure her sufferings silently. She has only her religious hope to sustain her. In 1906, in the context of Parnell's fall and the ensuing "delay" of Home Rule, such an evocation of desultory anguish would have been all the more pointed.

Joyce wittily presents Lenehan as a version of the wandering swan, drifting around Dublin with his "air of gentility" (51). He moves "stepping lightly in his white shoes" (50), which are "rubber" (43) suggestive of buoyancy, and, when he hears the harpist, "his softly padded feet played the melody" (50). His sea-faring "yachting cap" and his twice mentioned "waterproof" (43, 54) add the finishing touches. That his "figure fell into rotundity at the waist" may even imply the way a swan's long neck tapers into its round body. The language of Moore's poem is carefully echoed in the story. The still calm of the Moyle's waves and the yearning reverie of the swan correspond to Lenehan's silent contemplation as he visualizes Corley seducing the young woman and then ponders his own life. Like the swan, Lenehan wants peace and security ("Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own?" – the questions mirroring the questions of Moore's poem), and he feels the desire for sleep and rest ("he was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues [...] weary of life"). He feels the pressure of time passing and his own mortality ("he would be thirty-one in November"), but he has not given up hope even though circumstances suggest that he has every reason to ("but all hope had not left him"). The swan's concern for the repose of its "spirit" matches Lenehan's consciousness of his "poverty of purse and spirit". Lenehan pensively recalls Corley's girl's "contented leer" (49) in these moments ("saw again the leer of the young woman's mouth"), which echoes "Lir's lonely daughter". Moore's phrase "chain of repose" is

¹³ Ibid, p. 58

picked up on in the earlier phrase just after they have heard the song: “Corley had already thrown one leg over the chains when Lenehan called out” (49). The setting for both the swan’s and Lenehan’s complaint is similar: it is late in the evening (the story concludes shortly after ten-thirty); there is the evocation of storm and falling water (“some drops of light rain fell” [54]); there is the hovering presence of Catholicism (“the streets, shuttered for the repose of Sunday” [43]). The “day-star”, Corley, delays his messianic return (Lenehan is a “disciple” [55]), but bears in his palm a less metaphoric “day-star” of “pure light” which gleams through the night’s darkness: “a small gold coin shone in the palm” (55).

The harpist, too, parallels Lenehan as an image of Catholic Ireland wistfully dreaming of peaceful, companionable rest. Lenehan’s mood loses its gaiety as it adapts to the harp’s “mournful music” (an echo of Moore’s “murmuring mournfully”) and, with a suggestion of the Celtic supernatural, the music “began to control his movements” (50), possessing his body so that his feet “played the melody” and his fingers caress the railings which he passes in imitation of the harpist’s playing. The harpist’s mood of fatigued distraction matches Lenehan’s “tired” tongue from telling endless stories (44), which is Lenehan’s attempt to survive through entertainment; just as the harpist’s hand “careered” in the treble strings (48), so Lenehan has spent all day wandering “listlessly”. As the harpist exploits his dispirited and neglected mistress for financial gain (“heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees”), so Lenehan, through Corley, the “base betrayer” will manipulate pliable femininity for the sake of money (47). This description of the personified harp echoes Corley’s girl’s flirtatiously dishevelled appearance (her “ragged boa” and “carefully disordered collarette ends” [49]), and anticipates the repeated description of the waitress at Lenehan’s bar as “slatternly” (51).

From the seventeenth century the harp has been identified with Irish Catholic defiance. Two years after the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 a proclamation was issued by the Lord President of Munster for the extermination by martial law of “all manner of bards, harpers etc”, and through the century harpists were routinely proscribed and persecuted. Cromwell set up a system whereby

they had to possess a form of passport in order to travel around the country.¹⁴ The process by which the harp came to signify Catholic Ireland is summarized by Fintan Vallely:

Bunting's publications arising out of the Belfast Harp Festival (1792), a brief revival of interest in harp playing (although not of the Irish harp) in the early nineteenth century, antiquarian interest in the early Irish harp, and its symbolic use by the United Irishmen, which was echoed in Moore's *Irish Melodies*, combined to make the harp one of the major symbols of romantic nationalism.¹⁵

According to Terence de Vere White, a biographer of Moore, "the harp became a symbol for [the Celtic past] because the traditional harper was becoming an extinct species, and he was the last living link with the pre-Norman society of the tribe".¹⁶ Three of the four poems from *Irish Melodies* based on the harp seem relevant to this moment in 'Two Gallants'. 'The Origin of the Harp' tells the story of how the instrument was once "a siren of old" who was deserted by her lover and transformed by pitying heaven into an instrument "known / To mingle love's language with sorrow's sad tone". Such romantic desolation fits Lenchan's yearning desire for a companion and the implicit expectation that Corley's girl will soon be abandoned by him (as he deserted the young woman who is now "on the turf", a prostitute [47]). The description of the harpist's music, "the notes of the air throbbed deep and full" (48), recalls the last words of 'The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls':

Thus freedom now so seldom wakes,
The only throb she gives
Is when some heart indignant breaks,
To show that she still lives.

¹⁴ Sean O'Boyle, *The Irish Song Tradition* (Dublin: Gilbert Dalton, 1976), p. 9-10

¹⁵ Fintan Vallely, *The Companion to Traditional Irish Music* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), p. 182

¹⁶ Terence de Vere White, *Tom Moore* (London: Hamilton, 1977), p. 80

This image connects both to Lenehan's 'throb' of emotional energy as he contemplates his existence and refuses to buckle under life's strains ("all hope had not left him"). It also links to the harpist's playing a song expressive of the desire for freedom close to Nassau Street and "not far from the porch" of The Kildare Street Club (48), since both names symbolize the protestant Ascendancy.¹⁷ The description of the harp as "heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees" echoes 'Dear Harp of My Country':

If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,
Have throbb'd at our lay, tis thy glory alone;
I was but as the wind, passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thy own.¹⁸

As characters in Yeats's plays are transported into political and spiritual otherworlds by music, so Lenehan appears temporarily carried away by 'Silent, O Moyle'. The "mournful music" is "following" the two friends as they walk away from the harpist, and, as Lenehan leaves Corley, he feels once more under its spell, his mood adapting to its sombre air and his body replicating the movement of the harpist and the song's rhythm: "The air which the harpist had played began to control his movements". After his meal, Lenehan, still seemingly influenced by the plaintive yearning of the song, has a "vision" of Corley with his girl which leads into the reverie about his unfulfilled life.

Thomas Moore, a Dubliner himself, becomes a Dublin cultural myth equivalent to Celtic Twilight Otherworld myths, a ghostly presence who both configures and fosters the thoughts of everyman types such as Lenehan in 1906. Moore hovers over the pages of *Dubliners*.¹⁹ Seamus

¹⁷ Henry Nassau fought for the victors at the Boyne in 1690, and the club, according to Terence Brown, was "an exclusive gentleman's club...a byword for caste superiority and reactionary attitudes" (262)

¹⁸ *Irish Melodies and Songs by Thomas Moore*, ed. by Stephen Gwynn (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1908), p. 21-2 and 170

¹⁹ Moore is a favourite of the "queer old josser" in 'An Encounter' ("he asked us whether we had read the poetry of

Deane says Moore created “an idiom of limp, even simpering, nostalgia”,²⁰ and this malign influence appears in the figure of the “queer old jossler” who is mesmerized by visions of youth, in the political canvassers in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ who idealize their responses to Parnell’s memory, and in the friends in *Grace* who, around Tom Kernan’s bed, indulge in patriotic affection for their national church. Although Moore is not directly evoked, his spirit infuses the drunken effusions of the uncle in ‘Araby’ who recites the celebrated ‘The Arab’s Farewell to his Steed’, and to the similarly inebriated yearning of Little Chandler as he wallows in Byron’s lachrymose ‘On the Death of a Young Lady, Cousin of the Author, and Very dear to Him’. Joyce seems to hold Moore partly responsible for a dominating sentimentality in Dublin consciousness, a luxuriating in emotion which is thought to be, of itself, a refined and soulful experience, a tendency towards solipsistic introspection, a complacent self-pity which justifies victimhood and concomitant inertia. Stephen Gwynn remarks that his verse is “flooded by the exuberance of sentiment, which was Moore’s besetting weakness.”²¹

‘Silent, O Moyle’ seems slightly hysterical in the heavy symbolism of the dying swan’s complaint as the last gasp of Irish Catholic suffering, which is, self-consciously, a metaphor for Moore’s poem itself. Similarly, the phrase “Fate bids me languish long ages away” suggests the self-pity implicit in seeing *all* of Ireland’s problems in terms of irresistible English oppression. In terms of Lenihan’s response to Moore’s song, we might wonder how much of Lenihan’s dream of domestic bliss is genuine desire and how much it is self-indulgent parading to himself of his own emotional sensibilities. Terence Brown observes that “the *Melodies* treat of Irish history as if its true significance was to provide a drawing-room audience with metaphors of its own indulgent sense of personal mutability.”²² The bathetic punchline of Lenihan’s reverie is his hope to “come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready” (52), which implies his

Thomas Moore” [17]); ‘Eveleen’s Bower’, a story of betrayal and romantic disappointment, seems to be an influence on ‘Eveline’; the patriotic elegies ‘Erin, O Erin!’ and ‘The Dirge of Edward the Bruce’ are the models for Hynes’ elegy for Parnell in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’; and the title and subject-matter of ‘The Dead’ links closely to ‘Oh, Ye Dead!’.

²⁰ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 65

²¹ Stephen Gwynn, *Thomas Moore* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), p. 189

²² Terence Brown, *Ireland’s Literature* (Mullingar: Lilliput, 1988), p. 19

furtive, idle, exploitative role as a “leech” (44) and his unwillingness to do anything, other than to trust fortune, to place himself in a position in which his dreams can become real. “Experience had embittered his heart against the world”: fate bids him languish in *The Refreshment Bar* raking over life’s disappointments.

A certain romantic sentimentality, reminiscent of “the Tommy Moore touch” (*Ulysses*, [395]) is evident, too, in Lenehan’s envisaging of Corley with the “slavey”:

When he had eaten all his peas he sipped his ginger beer and sat for some time thinking of Corley’s adventure. In his imagination he beheld a pair of lovers walking along some dark road; he heard Corley’s deep voice in energetic gallantries and saw again the leer of the young woman’s mouth. This vision made him feel keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit. (51)

In Lenehan’s picture of Corley’s “adventure”, the register of “peas”, “ginger beer”, “leer” questions the gesturing of the poetic “vision”, the courtly diction of “beheld”, and the grand syntactical promise of “in his imagination”. Similarly, “vision” contrasts with Lenehan’s earlier desire to “have a squint at her” (48). As L.M. O’Toole observes, the word “adventure” both develops the parody of a chivalric quest, and serves as another euphemism for the act of seduction, which is never referred to in a direct way.²³ Up “some dark road”, the girl’s “leer” seems caused by more than Corley’s “deep energetic” verbal attentions. Lenehan appears to be tantalizing himself with opposing sexual moods, neither of which he can achieve: the refined and chivalric, and the raw and semi pornographic (“the leer of the young woman’s mouth”).

Such a mood connects Moore to Celtic Twilight philosophy, as personified by the figure of Little Chandler in ‘a Little Cloud’: “a gentle melancholy took possession of him. He felt how useless it was to struggle against fortune, this being the burden of wisdom which the ages had

²³ L.M. O’Toole, ‘Narrative Structure and Living Texture, Joyce’s *Two Gallants*’ in *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory* 1.3 (October, 1976), p. 447 (p.441-58)

bequeathed to him [...] The English critics, perhaps, would recognize him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems.” (66, 68) Little Chandler’s “Celtic note” sensibility (69) is permeated by a defeated sleepiness which fits the Moore/Lenchan model of self-regarding languor. His melancholy is “tempered by recurrences of faith and resignation” (68). His poetic dreaminess about Dublin’s houses is described as a “revery” (69), a word with connotations of being half asleep, and this vision itself is of “stupefied houses”. He enjoys a Byron poem, taken from *Hours of Idleness*, which is set in “*the evening gloom*”, is about submission to God, and presents the deceased lover as “*Within this narrow cell reclines her clay*”; part of his pleasure in reading the poem probably comes from his identification of the “*narrow cell*” and “*evening gloom*” with his own claustrophobic entrapment in his own room late in the evening (79).

Politically, Moore typifies the inconsistency and insincerity shown by the characters in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ who pledge faithful allegiance to the fallen hero but are prepared to welcome Edward VII on his proposed state visit to Ireland. Moore rattled his harp at the English, suggesting sedition beneath an ornamental façade, but also wrote ‘The Prince’s Day’ for a fête in honour of the Prince of Wales’s birthday. Such cunning appeal to mutually opposing audiences explains the reference to “Tommy Moore’s roguish finger” gesticulating in statue form in *Ulysses* (205). The figure of the harpist in ‘Two Gallants’ suggests, in fact, the figure of Moore who creates a mood of elegaic suffering but appears unaware of, or unconcerned by, the true nature of that suffering because he is preoccupied with commercial success:

Not far from the porch of the club a harpist stood in the roadway
playing to a little ring of listeners. He plucked at the wires heedlessly,
glancing quickly from time to time at the face of each new-comer and
from time to time, wearily also, at the sky.

The last action described here is ambiguous: this might be the natural reaction of someone

playing outdoors late at night, or it could be the arch theatricality of a practiced performer who wants crudely to emphasize the yearning dimensions of the music (especially since ‘Silent, O Moyle’ presents the swan as addressing its lament to the skies: “Tells to the night-star her tale of woes”). The suspicion is that Moore can only offer, like Lenchan, “a tragic gesture” to a story of misery and betrayal (47). Hazlitt offered this scornful view of Moore:

If these national airs do indeed express the soul of impassioned feeling in his countrymen, the case of Ireland is hopeless. If these prettinesses pass for patriotism, if a country can hear from its heart’s core only these vapid, varnished sentiments, lip-deep, and let its tears of blood evaporate in an empty conceit, let it be governed as it has been. There are here no tones to awaken Liberty, to console Humanity. Mr Moore converts the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box.²⁴

Joyce’s sense of Moore’s influence on Irish culture, as evident in Lenchan’s reverie, seems, however, more complex than this. Writing his biography of Moore in 1904, Stephen Gwynn makes a case for the poet’s iconic status:

Deprived of a parliament, it found a poet of its own. It heard for the first time in the *Irish Melodies* a song that came from the heart of Ireland, uttered in a language which nine out of every ten Irishmen could understand [...] He had given a voice to Ireland; he had put into her mouth a song of her own.²⁵

Seamus Deane echoes this verdict:

²⁴ de Vere White, *Tom Moore*, p. 74

²⁵ Gwynn, *Thomas Moore*, p. 189-90

Moore put Ireland in the sentimental limelight in an unprecedented manner. After 1798 and the Union, this was an amazing achievement [...] all of Moore's best lyrics are haunted by one refrain – that of loyalty to the betrayed. The treachery of time, which steals beauty, friends, hopes, is overborne by the fidelity of the tender heart, which retains the pristine force of the first, youthful commitment. It is, indeed, a sentimental theme, but in Moore's Ireland of the nineteenth century, it is also a political theme. The fidelity is given not only to Robert Emmet, but also to Ireland and its long litany of lost causes, from Kinsale to Vinegar Hill, from the parliament of James II to that of Grattan.²⁶

The tension here between Deane's "sentimental" and "but", and the successful risk in his final sentence between lyricism and rhetoric is apparent, too, in Joyce's ambivalent appraisal of Moore's influence. Both the yearning of the swan in 'Silent, O Moyle' in the face of apparent hopelessness and Lenehan's resilient desire to find romance and domestic security possess something of this "fidelity of the tender heart". Moore's words and music combine with his meal to make him feel "less weary of his life, less vanquished in spirit". In Gwynn's terms, Moore has given Lenehan a lyrical, accessible song of his own. The Catholic Ireland which Lenehan represents is an economically marginalized mass group and his difficulties in finding "a little of the ready" may not be entirely a consequence of his own shiftlessness. The swan of *Silent, O Moyle* has reason to "murmur [...] mournfully" and "languish" since the world it inhabits is a "stormy" one, and fate seems strangely to have decreed that few should care about the suffering of "Lir's lonely daughter". Whilst not directly evoking the Famine, Joyce emphasizes Lenehan's "hungry" desperation in the Refreshment Bar. He has had virtually to beg for some biscuits in a pub that morning, which is the only food he has eaten since breakfast, and he feels tantalized by the "cut ham" and "very light plum pudding", which he cannot afford but eyes "earnestly for

²⁶ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p. 65

some time". His meal of "hot grocer's peas" and "ginger beer" Terence Brown describes as "one of the most dismal in all of literature."²⁷ As Gwynn remarks of Moore, "it is no small title to fame for a poet that he was in his own country for at least three generations the delight and consolation of the poor."²⁸

William Balfe's aria from *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt', provides similar escape for Maria in 'Clay':

I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs at my side
And of all who assembled within those walls
That I was the hope and pride.
I had riches too great to count, could boast
Of a high ancestral name,
But I also dreamt, which pleased me most,
That you loved me still the same. (102)

The glamour and romance of the opera is a far cry from her day-to-day surroundings at the laundry where the women had to wear "clothes designed to be as asexual as possible",²⁹ and the fairy-tale language of Maria's song ("marble halls", "riches too great to count", "a high ancestral name") articulates a hidden yearning for romance and a more refined way of life. (We recall Maria's liking of her present of the purse with "silver clasps", [95], her judgment of Ginger Mooney as "common" [97], her pleasure in the attentions of the "gentleman" on the tram [99]). Margot Norris places this desire in the context of Freud's theory of the infantile fantasy which he calls 'family romance', in which children hope that their supposed parents are false and that their

²⁷ Brown, *Dubliners*, p. 264

²⁸ Gwynn, *Thomas Moore*, p. 190

²⁹ McCarthy, *Priests and People in Ireland*: McCarthy criticized such charitable institutions as a cover for lucrative business. Quoted in *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, Diarmaid Ferriter, p. 48

real parents are rich aristocrats.³⁰ This, in fact, is exactly what happens in Balfe's opera.

The evocation of very grand domestic security in the lyric represents the opposite of Maria's present state since she has no home, only a room at the laundry (where she is a Catholic surrounded by Protestant employers), and, as Mrs Donnelly jokingly but perhaps prophetically points out on Maria's choosing of the prayer-book, will possibly end her days in a convent once she has outlived her usefulness at work (unless Joe and his wife take pity on her). Assuming Joe is in his mid to late thirties (he has young children as distinct from the "big girls" from next door [99]), and knowing that Maria "nursed" him (96), Maria would seem to be about 45 to 50 years old. Joseph Kelly points out both the high number of spinsters in Dublin at this time and the fact that because more women were doing their own laundry at home, the number of laundresses declined by one fifth between 1891 and 1911. He concludes that "in 10, or, perhaps, 15 years, Maria would have nothing."³¹

The pathos of the Balfe lyric lies in the contrast between the suggestion of Maria's identification with the fictional voice and the unlikelihood of her ever experiencing such tenderness. Katie Wales suggests how we can faintly hear Maria's voice through Balfe's words through the "and / but" structure of the lyric, which echoes the repetition of this formulation in the Maria-voiced free indirect style of the narrative.³² The charm of the verse resides partly in its valentine balancing of confidence in the beloved's affections, and vulnerability as to dependence on that confidence. Maria is doubly removed from such a world since she has no beloved in the first place. Since this was such a popular Dublin song (a historian of the city refers to "the cult of *The Bohemian Girl*"),³³ it is probable that, like Eveline, she went to see *The Bohemian Girl* as a young woman and has nurtured the words in her memory for the past twenty or thirty years or so. 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' could be a symbol of Larkin's vivid phrase, "that much mentioned brilliance, love", which has haunted her, like the songs for the ageing woman in 'Love Songs in

³⁰ Margot Norris, 'Narration under a Blindfold: Reading Joyce's *Clay*' in *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 102.2 (1987), p. 213 (p.206-16)

³¹ Kelly, 'Joyce's Marriage Cycle' p. 376

³² Katie Wales, *The Language of James Joyce* (London: Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1992), p. 61

³³ O'Brien, *Dear, Dirty Dublin, a City in Distress, 1899-1916*, p. 45

Age', through her disappointed life.³⁴

Maria's romantic fantasy perhaps extends into expression of a repressed hope for greater esteem on a more general level. Although Joe's wife kindly pays attention to her, and Joe protests his gratitude for her past care of him, Maria might be being fussed over partly out of pity since she is otherwise denied the social status which marriage brings.³⁵ Both at work and in her surrogate family, that is, Joe's, her essential status is the peacemaker, which, for all its value, suggests that she is not a central figure in the social drama in either context (she seems like the old maid, Miss Bates in *Emma*). This helps explain why she is so upset at the loss of the cake as not only does she feel confused and disappointed to have wasted her money, but the cake exists as an inchoate symbol of her financial independence: dependent as she knows she is, she has something of value to contribute to the family party.

There is a feeling of gentle stage-management about Maria's engagement in the Donnelly's party. This implicitly recognises the emotional neediness beneath Maria's shyness and the importance of successfully covering up her essentially marginal social status in the family group: "*Everybody said: O, here's Maria!* when she came to Joe's house" (99). A fuss is made over finding the nutcracker causing her to protest that "they weren't to bother about her" (100). Joe twice insists that she has a drink. She is made to take part, disastrously, in the Hallow Eve games. Joe, supported enthusiastically by his wife ("*Do, please, Maria!*" [102]), presses Maria to sing the Balfe song, which resembles Ginger Mooney's toast earlier in the evening, validating and centralizing Maria within the social group of the laundry. Maria's dream, as expressed through the aria, is an impossible one for a spinster and an aged sister as it involves social empowerment ("With vassals and serfs at my side") and social status ("That I was the hope and pride"). Since Maria's three set-piece contributions to the Donnellys' party involve failure (the plumcake is lost, the Hallow Eve game is an embarrassment, the song is wrongly performed), her implicit desire to be someone's "hope and pride" seems cruelly forlorn.

³⁴ Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* (London: The Marvell Press, 1988), p. 113

³⁵ This might explain the repeated reference to Joe's wife as "Mrs Donnelly", though this could be Maria's way of keeping her sister-in-law at arm's length emotionally.

Joyce artfully links details of 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' to aspects of Maria's own life. Maria does have "vassals and serfs" at her side in the sense that the women at the *Dublin By Lamplight* laundry are not paid employees but workers in a Protestant Charitable Institution which rehabilitates "occasional prostitutes", drunkards, and vagrants.³⁶ The phrase "And of all who *assembled* within those walls" echoes the formal gathering together of the laundry women to have tea. This takes place at six o'clock, which is presumably the regular time and Maria can only leave for the party once it over; Maria pulls a "big bell" to summon the women and there is a ritualistic orderliness (a combination of Maria's temperament and Protestant method) suggested in "Maria superintended the distribution of the barmbrack"; on this festive night, Ginger Mooney's toasting of Maria gestures towards communal protocol. Maria's disliking of "the tracts on the walls" (96) echoes "within those walls" in Balfe's song. The idea "I dreamt [...] That I was the hope and pride" is reflected in the affection and respect implied in "everyone was so fond of Maria" [95], for example, the matron's compliment about her being a peace-maker, Lizzie Fleming's teasing, Ginger Mooney's toast. The image "I had riches too great to count" matches Maria's examining of her purse (with "silver clasps"), her delight that she "would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare" (she literally counts "two half crowns and some coppers"), and her thinking how nice it is to "have your own money in your pocket" (98). Maria, symbolically, has "a high ancestral name" given its closeness to Mary, the most venerated name in Irish Catholic culture. The gallant, flirtatious "colonel-looking gentleman", who is "very nice with her" and makes her feel "confused", provides a flicker of romance which corresponds to the idea of eternal romantic attachment.

Joyce suggests two ideas through these parallels. Firstly, he implies how dreams, for all their strangeness, are often based on what is familiar and what has occurred during the day which precedes the dream. Secondly, and most tellingly, he hints at how ultimately futile and inadequate are the things which Maria *thinks* make her happy when compared to the vision of

³⁶ Some of the inmates' residence would be non-voluntary as they had their sentences commuted or shortened if they agreed to enter such an establishment.

what she thinks really will make her happy, that is, a loving marriage (which her kind brother and his charming wife seem to have found).

Bonnie Kime Scott, in *Joyce and Feminism*, is wrong, I think, to assert that “unlike some of the men of *Dubliners*, who detect the paralysis of their positions through an epiphany, often touched off by a woman, the women of *Dubliners* are denied such illumination”³⁷. If “illumination” overstates it, Maria, in performing ‘I Dreamt That I Dwelt’, seems to have a glimpse of fundamental unhappiness which she mostly hides in the rest of the story. As with her blushing when thinking back to how the colonel-looking gentleman tricked her on the tram, so her singing is “coloured with shame and vexation and disappointment”. Unwilling (she claims “how much better it was to be independent” [98]) and perhaps unable to articulate how her life has not turned out as she hoped, Maria’s choice of song expresses, nevertheless, the same “disappointed shyness” she reveals earlier when laughingly claiming, in response to Lizzie Fleming’s teasing, that “she didn’t want any ring or man either” (97). Joe is “very much moved” (102) at the close of the song because he senses the pathos of his sister’s hidden romantic aspirations (though also clearly because he is moved by the song and his own memories as much by Maria’s pathetic situation). Being tactful, Joe would not want to show Maria how he has sensed her identification with Balfe’s words and, unlike his wife addressing the girl from next door whose life stretches ahead of her full of hope, he cannot shake his finger at the blushing singer “as much to say: *O, I know all about it!*” [101].

Maria’s fantasy appears the more poignant when contrasted with the song’s context in *The Bohemian Girl*, since Arline, the heroine, is, in fact, glimpsing her previous aristocratic existence in her father’s court in Austria, a life she will return to at the end of the opera with Thaddeus, her beloved, whom she addresses in the last line of the song. In romantic fiction such dreams can come true. Further, whereas fate ensures an improbably happy ending for the lovers of *The Bohemian Girl*, Maria, already unlucky in so many aspects of her evening out, unwittingly chooses to sing a lyric (at a mini musical show) which, according to G. Ralph Smith, was, among

³⁷ Bonnie Kime Scott, *Joyce and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 16

musicians, a notoriously ill-omened piece of music to perform outside of the opera for which it was written: "Joyce wanted the song episode to bear the suggestion of a curse given [...] by Maria to the Donnelly's."³⁸ Maria's "tiny quavering voice" (102) would have contrasted, too, with that of a trained soprano in a Dublin performance of *The Bohemian Girl*, a comparison highlighted by the operatic connotations of "quavering".

That Maria repeats the first verse does not merely or only suggest to me that she is repressing emotional yearnings in a self-delusory way by refusing to evoke the second verse which speaks of endless marriage proposals. In addition, her imagination has abstracted her like Lenehan, transported by a "vision" which exists "in his imagination". In the act of singing about dreaming, she herself enters a semi-dreamlike state, so that she becomes rapt like Polly Mooney in her "revery" in 'The Boarding House': Polly initially cannot hear her mother calling to her from downstairs ("at last she heard her mother calling" [64]). This state of consciousness is similar to Hynes' at the close of his Parnell recitation, who "flushed [...] did not seem to have heard the invitation" of the bottle of beer uncorking (132), and Little Chandler's when his fantasy of poetic fame takes him momentarily out of everyday reality: "he pursued his revery so ardently that he passed his street and had to turn back" (69).

Maria's mistake in repeating the first verse instead of moving into the second verse is all the more marked by her careful orderliness elsewhere. She cleans the kitchen so that it is "spick and span" (95); the barmbracks have been cut into "even slices" (95); the journey to Joe's is planned in three twenty minute stages; she remembers the exact date five years previously when Joe bought the purse for her; she counts her money so that she knows what she will have spare after the tram fare; she ensures that at the tea each woman receives four slices of barmbrack; she remembers to change the alarm clock for the next morning's mass; on the tram she "arranged in her mind all she was going to do" (98). Significantly, the other moment in the story when she makes a mistake has a romantic aspect in that she loses the cake because she feels "confused" by the colonel-looking gentleman's attentions (99).

³⁸ G. Ralph Smith, 'A Superstition in Joyce's *Clay*' in *James Joyce Quarterly* 2.2 (Winter, 1965), p. 133-4

In presenting Maria's reverie, Joyce balances a suggestion of Celtic mystery with a sense of physiological causes for her drifting into a waking dreamworld. Firstly, she is tired so there is a hint of literal as well as romantic swooning. She has woken up at seven o'clock and has worked during the day, travelled an hour across Dublin, arrived at the party at eight o'clock, sat talking by the fire with Joe, and she must sing the song quite late since the children have grown "tired and sleepy" (101). Secondly, she has had at least two drinks. Joe "insisted" that she had either "a bottle of stout" or "port wine" with the effect that Maria "let him have his way" (100), and, as a response to the embarrassment of the Hallow Eve trick, "Joe made Maria take a glass of wine" (101). We assume this is an unusual amount for Maria to drink since both times she is coerced in a friendly manner into drinking, and because elsewhere she looks askance at others who drink. She hopes Joe "wouldn't come in drunk" (96), her perception of Ginger Mooney as "common" seems linked to her offering a toast and feeling "sorry she hadn't a sup of porter to drink in it" (97), and she reflects on the ease of talking to a charming male stranger "even when he has a drop taken" (99).

Maria seems to be mesmerising herself with a vision of happiness, the repeated words acting like the backwards and forwards swing of a watch in front of her eyes. Such rapt dwelling on the words is evident in the operatic performance of the lyric in which the singer repeats the climactic line of verse one, "That you loved me still the same", three times, which occupies half of the time it takes to sing the whole of the first verse.³⁹ Joyce may here be tapping into a Celtic Otherworld tradition, which suits the Samhain setting of the story: "the literature of early medieval Ireland includes numerous references to the power of music to put the listener into a trance-like sleep state, which is portrayed as a natural effect. There is a distinct impression that the listener cannot help himself, in spite of his efforts to remain in the state of normal, waking consciousness."⁴⁰

Presented as a witch elsewhere in the story, Maria might here be casting a spell, as it

³⁹ Radio Telefis Eireann Philharmonic Choir and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland

⁴⁰ Ralls, *Music and the Celtic Otherworld*, p. 82

were, upon herself. She seems temporarily trapped within a magic circle of fantastic escape which she has drawn around her consciousness. Maria's transportation through listening to Balfe's aria, like Lenihan's transformed mood through 'Silent, O Moyle', is a petit-bourgeois, popular culture version of fin-de siècle, Paterian escape through Art. Instead of being carried away by the fairies to 'The Land of Heart's Desire', Maria and Lenihan are moved by the magical artistry of Balfe's and Moore's music. In 'On Music', Moore declares that song, more than words or friendship, answers to the deepest human yearning in a magical way:

When through life unblest we rove,
Losing all that made life dear,
Should some notes we used to love,
In days of boyhood, meet our ear,
Oh! how welcome breathes the strain!
Wakening thoughts that long have slept!
Kindling former smiles again
In faded eyes that long have wept.

Like the gale that sighs along
Beds of oriental flowers,
Is the graceful breath of song
That once was heard in happier hours;
Fill'd with balm, the gale sighs on,
Though the flowers have sunk in death;
So, when pleasure's dream is gone,
Its memory lives in music's breath.

Music! Oh, how faint, how weak,

Language fades before thy spell!
 Why should Feeling ever speak,
 When thou can'st breathe her soul so well?
 Friendship's balmy words may feign,
 Love's are even more false than they;
 Oh! Tis only Music's strain
 Can sweetly soothe, and not betray!⁴¹

Since loyalty and fear of betrayal constitute the theme of both 'Silent, O Moyle' and 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt', it is curious how, with Moore and Balfe in these important moments in his stories, Joyce seems to be bringing back to centre stage two once famous but now marginalized Dubliners and national musical heroes. Writing in 1904, Gwynn remarks of Moore that "with the younger generation, even in Ireland, he has lost his hold",⁴² and Joseph Ryan, in 'Nationalism in Irish Music' comments on how Moore was "vilified after his passing."⁴³ This was because of the increasingly intense nature of post Famine Irish nationalism which emphasized Moore's compromised political position, and because of the perceived contrast at the turn of the century between the direct Gaelic passion of Hyde's *Love Songs of Connacht* (1893) and Moore's faded drawing-room gentility. Yeats, for example, in his *A Book of Irish Verse* (1900) gave more space to Hyde, Allingham and Ferguson than to the old favourites of patriotic Irishmen, Davis and Moore; A.E has eight poems, Lionel Johnson has six, but Moore has only two ('The Light of Other Days' and 'At the Mid Hour of Night'). In his preface, Yeats says he has endeavoured to "separate what has literary value from what has only a patriotic and political value, no matter how sacred it has become to us".⁴⁴ In 'Clay', Joe's affection for "poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say" (102), highlights the decline in his reputation.⁴⁵ Maria sings 'I Dreamt that I

⁴¹ *Irish Melodies*, ed. Gwynn, p. 83-4

⁴² Gwynn, *Thomas Moore*, p. 189

⁴³ Joseph Ryan, 'Nationalism in Irish Music', in *Irish Musical Studies 3: Music and Irish Cultural History*, ed. by Gerard Gillen and Harry White (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), p.108 (p.101-16)

⁴⁴ *A Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by W.B. Yeats (London: Methuen & Co., 1900), p.15

⁴⁵ Terence Brown notes "since his death his name had suffered an eclipse" (281)

Dwelt' in response to Joe's nostalgic desire to hear "some little song [...] one of the old songs", and Joyce seems to have a soft spot, too, for such music: his father used to play Moore's *Melodies* on the piano after evening meals when he was a young boy, 'The Last Rose of Summer' being a favourite, and he later advised Giorgio when he was training to be a singer to learn Moore's songs, describing *Silent, O Moyle* as "a lovely air".⁴⁶

Maria's rendition of 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' constitutes a lament for generations of Irish women after the Famine who had found romance and domestic security elusive. Jenny Beale, in *Women in Ireland*, explains how the famine "weakened women's economic position" and "emphasised the importance of dowry in marriage",⁴⁷ so that many women were forced to marry men much older than themselves and a high proportion of women remained spinsters until their death. Florence L. Walzl observes that Ireland "had the highest rate of unmarried men and women in the world [...] throughout the first third of the twentieth century, the marriage rate in Ireland ran less than half that of England and Wales and of Denmark, a country of comparable size and type on the continent."⁴⁸ The mythic dimension of Maria's situation in this respect is outlined by James Fairhall:

If Maria exaggerates her contentment at the laundry, it seems less likely that she does so to hide the lowliness of her post there than to compensate for the sex and romantic love and family of her own that are absent from her life. Like thousands of actual women in turn-of-the-century Dublin, she embodies the unhappy consequences of the hagridden history of the Irish countryside – a history whose chief terror, famine, was caused not only by a canker of the potato blossom, but also by colonialism, *laissez-faire* capitalism, and racism. This history, which made unfulfilled desire the

⁴⁶ Letter of February, 1935, quoted in *Tom Moore*, Terence de Vere White, p. 75

⁴⁷ Jenny Beale, *Women in Ireland* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986), p. 24-5

⁴⁸ Florence L. Walzl, 'Dubliners: Women in Irish Society', in *Women in Joyce*, ed. by Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), p. 34 (p.31-57)

theme of so many unmarried Irishwomen's lives, is the true ghost or specter in 'Clay'.⁴⁹

Yeats objected to "scientific dramatists, our naturalists of the stage" because of their "impersonal language that has come, not out of individual life, nor out of life at all, but out of necessities of commerce, of Parliament, of Board School, of hurried journeys by rail."⁵⁰ In his use of Balfe's popular lyric, Joyce foregoes the limited and sentimental appeal of an 'individual' voice and discovers the poignancy of "impersonal language" which allows the shy and emotionally repressed Maria to express her own feelings *and* those of a half century of silent, now ghostly, unmarried Irishwomen. Balfe's lyric becomes a folk song for a whole city.

'A Mother', based on Joyce's own experience,⁵¹ similarly explores the urban aspects of 'Mother Ireland'. The story sardonically observes how an idealistic Revivalist venture has turned into a farcically run business, which neither retains any of its early spiritual / political energy, nor runs itself as a viable commercial enterprise.⁵² You do not get the sense that the imaginary founders of the *Eire Abu Society* (Joyce's invention) intended that showpiece concerts would feature pieces like Balfe's 'Killarney', which Terence Brown describes as "a popular song of great sentimentality" (294) and implies the simony of art selling out to commercial and popular taste. Meaning 'Ireland to Victory', the society's adventurous, forward-looking name, now, ironically, seems enveloped by maudlin nostalgia.

Mrs Kearney's character has been stereotyped by a succession of critics: "gratuitous

⁴⁹ James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, p. 79

⁵⁰ Quoted from 'Dublin in Twentieth Century Writing' by Terence Brown, *Irish University Review* 8.1 (Spring 1978), p. 7-8 (p.7-21)

⁵¹ Michael J.O'Neill, 'Joyce's Use of Memory in *A Mother*', *Modern Languages Notes* 74.3 (March, 1959), p. 228 (p.226-31); Robert Welch notes of the concert Joyce was involved in that "Miss Eileen Reedy was withdrawn by her mother on Joyce's being heard to ask for a whiskey." *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 379

⁵² Joyce evokes a Celtic Twilight context through: the similarity of Mr Holohan's and Kathleen Kearney's name to the titles of Yeats's plays *Kathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Countess Cathleen* ("when the Irish Revival began to be appreciable Mrs Kearney determined to take advantage of her daughter's name"); reference to "Irish picture postcards," and the Kearneys' "musical friends or Nationalist friends" saying "goodbye to one another in Irish" (135); and reference to the "Feis Coil" (141), an annual festival of music which, inaugurated in 1897, sought to popularize the Irish musical tradition.

pride” (Hugh Kenner);⁵³ “avarice had contended with maternal ambition” (Florence Walzl);⁵⁴ “our view of her is plain: the hag of death” (Donald T. Torchiana);⁵⁵ “monstrous” (Sherill E. Grace);⁵⁶ “what, most assuredly, must be the inner repulsiveness of Mrs Kearney’s character” (Linda Rohrer Paige).⁵⁷ Margot Norris, however, brilliantly argues that the “prejudiced or misogynistic narrator” fosters such hostility towards Mrs Kearney and that the story is actually “a performative allegory of gender injustice in the artistic and cultural marketplace.”⁵⁸ Given the spiritual associations of music for Celtic Revivalists, the satire which unpicks such primitive male aggression has an extra edge. There is an irony, too, in the way Celtic Revivalists, as represented by the Eire Abu committee, react against a modern incarnation of the celebrated strong woman of Celtic myth. As Lorna Reynolds explains, Irish heroic history is full of women who spiritedly stand up to male power: St. Bridget, the White Goddess, Queen Maeve of Connacht, Deirdre, Liadan. “The stereotype of an older Irish woman – the benign, silver-haired lady, framed in an archway of roses – is as false and misleading as that of the colleen. The truth is that Irish women of legend, literature and life are women of formidable character and tenacious will, if not always of distinguished ancestry.”⁵⁹

The force which drives Mrs Kearney and which causes her so much anger at the story’s conclusion seems to me to be a sublimated romantic idealism, an evened-out, levelled and domestically filtered version of Lenchan’s and Maria’s dramatic Paterian moment. As a young woman she found a novel way of coping with disappointment:

But the young men whom she met were ordinary and she gave them no

⁵³ Hugh Kenner, *Dublin’s Joyce* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 61

⁵⁴ Florence L. Walzl, ‘Dubliners’, in *A Companion to Joyce Studies*, ed. by Bowen and Carens, p.185

⁵⁵ Donald T. Torchiana, *Backgrounds for ‘Dubliners’* (Boston; London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 199

⁵⁶ Sherill E. Grace, ‘Rediscovering Mrs Kearney: An Other Reading of *A Mother*’, in *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, ed. Benstock, p. 274 (p.273-82).

⁵⁷ Linda Rohrer Paige, ‘James Joyce’s Darkly Colored Portraits of “Mother” in *Dubliners*’, *Studies in Short Fiction* 32.3 (Summer, 1995), p. 332 (p.329-40).

⁵⁸ Margot Norris, ‘Critical Judgment and Gender Prejudice in Joyce’s *A Mother*’, *Cultural Studies of James Joyce: European Joyce Studies 15*, ed. by R.B. Kershner (Amsterdam; NY: Rodolpi, 2003), p. 82, 88 (p.77-91)

⁵⁹ Lorna Reynolds, ‘Irish Women in Legend, Literature and Life’, in *Woman in Irish Legend, Life and Literature*, ed. by S. F. Gallagher (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), p.12 (p.11-26)

encouragement, trying to console her romantic desires by eating a great deal of Turkish Delight in secret. (134)

That she eats “a great deal” of chocolate suggests both the frequency and the intensity of her depression and frustration, and that it is eastern and exotic implies her glamorous and sensual nature. Why, though, does she eat this chocolate “in secret”? It could be because she eats it at night, alone in her bedroom, as an immediate response to the dashing of her hopes that evening; or because she is proud and doesn’t want her family or servants to see any recurring sign of disappointment, which would be seen as weakness; or because in her social circle there is something deemed unladylike about consuming, repeatedly, such sweet food; or because there is a hint of obsessiveness about such ritualistic eating, almost as if there is a hint of a disorder here which she wants to conceal. All these could be true, but the central reason is, I think, because she loves fiction and here she both creates a narrative structure in which she acts (hope, disappointment, ritual consolation) and uses the exotic associations of “Turkish delight” to let her imagination run free in a world of eastern enchantment, which feels doubly pleasurable because of the self-imposed taboo nature of the activity.

Her psychological impulses in the story, I suggest, constitute a version of this Turkish Delight cameo writ large. Pragmatic as her choice of husband is, she has had to make an adjustment to not living with “a romantic person” and has “never put her own romantic ideas away” (134). She has not found the emotional intensity she hoped to find in her married life, and religion, as it seems to for her husband, cannot fulfil her spiritual needs. The prelude to the story suggests how Mrs Kearney tries to fulfil the aspirations of her heart “in secret” through her daughter’s musical career. The “romantic ideas” which have not been “put away” are being channelled privately into a vicarious youthful existence. The phrasing of Mrs Kearney’s emotional investment in the concert, “she entered heart and soul into the details of the enterprise” (136), appears deceptively colloquial as there is a gesturing here towards the latent, visceral needs exemplified in Lenehan and Maria’s experiences. The “details” of the concert arrangement

show the “romantic ideas” which are still latent in Mrs Kearney, so that the buying of “some lovely blush-pink charmeuse” (trimming for Kathleen’s dress [136]) from an expensive and fashionable shop represents part of a deep-seated longing for an intangible romantic meaning. There is pathos in such an acquisition since, through the Mrs Kearney-voiced “lovely”, it hints at a certain nostalgia for her own youth coupled with a sense that she herself is beyond the wearing of such striking ornamentation. Kathleen’s entry into Dublin life, ritualistically, the first step of her journey towards finding a husband, becomes, then, a re-run of Mrs Kearney’s own debut: “when she came to the age of marriage she was sent out to many houses where her playing and ivory manners were much admired.” (134) The success of the concert is less bound up with launching Kathleen’s musical career and attractions as a debutante, or the desire to make money, than it is to do with an obscure and inchoate attempted retrieval of disappointed romantic aspirations. Mrs Kearney still yearns for a taste of “the brilliant life” (134) she wanted but never found.

John Paul Riquelme has observed of the story: “although we hear occasionally what Mrs Kearney ‘perceived’ or ‘determined’, ‘wondered’ or ‘noticed’, ‘knew’ or ‘thought’, her attitudes are always presented fleetingly, often as clichés. The psycho-narration providing the character’s attitude never approaches the teller’s perspective.”⁶⁰ This detachment is echoed in the deictics of “Mrs Kearney” as the way of referring to her. Joyce suggests that Mrs Kearney is something of a closed book to herself emotionally. She has, perhaps, adopted a determined position of never reflecting on the motivations of her behaviour because she cannot afford to admit to herself the nature and scale of her disappointment with the course her life has taken. Acknowledging the forceful presence of the “romantic ideas” which she has not “put [...] away” will only cause her to feel the humiliation she is so keen to avoid at the start of the story (her marrying so as to avoid mockery as an old maid) and at the end of the story (being taken advantage of by the Eire Abu

⁶⁰ John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce’s Fiction* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p.121

committee), since she will recognize their absurdity as a late middle-aged woman.⁶¹ From one perspective she is similar to the boy narrator of 'Araby': the imaginative delight in eastern exoticism; the pleasure in style and beauty; the idea of a quest or campaign culminating in a public event; the frustration with feckless men who destroy happiness; the concluding anger which comes from disappointed romantic idealism. But she is different in that in her anger she does not allow herself a glimpse of herself as "a creature driven and derided by vanity" (28), where "vanity" refers both to self-regard and the essential hollowness of the quest.

Her anger is so intense at the close of the story that it suggests passions obliquely implied in the story and causes bound up with, but deeper than, the gender rights issues Margot Norris has explored: "her face was inundated with an angry colour and she looked as if she would attack someone with her hands", "haggard with rage", "she stood still for an instant like an angry stone image." (147) Men provide the possibility of romantic happiness but cruelly never make good this promise. No "suitor" offers her "a brilliant life", she has to make do with a dull husband because there is no alternative within a society dominated by male rules. The men of the Eire Abu Society set up her hopes for successful, elegant concerts but fail to deliver, disgracefully devaluing her role in their organization. She is impossibly dependent on a world of people she knows to be repeatedly undependable.

Mrs Kearney's angry frustration comes from her mature knowledge of how the dice are loaded against her as a woman, but her simultaneous consciousness that, as a woman, she can not give up her romantic ideals which might, somehow, triumph in such a restrictive world. As a young woman, she has been treated like an object in a commercial venture, being "sent out to many houses" (134) to attract a husband with her musical talent. Her unusual marriage to a dull bootmaker seems the only meaningful form of power she has been able exercise, an act of self-defeating revenge on her middle-class background ("Miss Devlin had become Mrs Kearney out of spite." [134]). She is judged by feeble men whose value-judgments are so embedded in

⁶¹ How old is Mrs Kearney? She married when "she drew near the limit" (134), which I estimate at about 30 years old, and she has a grown-up daughter, who I imagine is close to "the age of twenty-four" (135) when she can receive her dowry. So, I estimate she is in her early fifties.

cultural norms that, however banal and self-serving, are impossible to fight against: “that’s a nice lady! He said. O, she’s a nice lady!” (148) She knows the world in which she lives is one where middle-aged women’s waning sexual attraction is cruelly observed. For example, Madam Glynn is mocked by both Kathleen Kearney and the audience, and is subject to the harsh gaze of the narrator: “the shadow took her faded dress into the shelter but fell revengefully into the little cup behind her collar-bone.” (141) However, this same world tolerates the leering gallantry of middle-aged men towards younger women: the “grey-haired” Freeman reporter feels pleasure in freely gazing at Miss Healy’s “bosom which he saw rise and fall slowly beneath him” (143), and Mr Holohan is spotted absurdly “limping out quickly with a glass of lemonade for a young lady” (138).

With her dull husband and romantic aspirations, Mrs Kearney is a version of Madame Bovary. Like Emma, Mrs Kearney attempts to romanticize her unpromising domestic environment through buying glamorous domestic items, such as her “silver biscuit barrel” (136), and she becomes furious when seemingly reasonable aspirations are quashed by men. ‘A Mother’ seems to be written with an eye on recent Irish feminist writing such as Emily Lawless and George Egerton,⁶² and in the context of New Woman achievements in the capital city around this time.⁶³ Ibsen’s sense of female suffocation behind bourgeois respectability is also an influence: “Oh, the way we suffer here from the tyranny of convention, always conforming!” (*Pillars of Society*, 1877); “I have other duties equally sacred [...] Duties to myself” (*A Doll’s House*, 1879); “the most unbearable thing of all – [...] To be everlastingly together with – with one and the same person” (*Hedda Gabler*, 1890).⁶⁴ Joyce’s interest in mothers in *Dubliners* carries this European influence in reaction to Celtic Twilight writing which ignores the marital problems he

⁶² Lawless’s *Grania* (1892) is an account of a young Aran woman’s doomed search for love and independence. Egerton presented four volumes of short stories concerned with female desire and disappointment in the 1890s: *Keynotes* (1893), *Discords* (1894), *Symphonies* (1897), *Fantasias* (1898).

⁶³ This involved the formation of the Dublin Women’s Suffragette Association in 1896, the right to sit and vote at district council level in 1898, Maud Gonne’s creation of the Daughters of Erin in 1900, and the setting up of the Irish Association of Women Graduates in 1902.

⁶⁴ Henrik Ibsen, *The Complete Major Prose Plays*, trans. by R. Fjelde (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), p. 98, 193, 724. Joyce’s interest in Ibsen’s sympathy for married women seems apparent in *Stephen Hero* where Stephen’s mother thinks Ibsen is “magnificent”. *Stephen Hero*, p. 81

explores. Eveline's mother has been driven to final "craziness" by "a life of commonplace sacrifices" (33). Mrs Mooney is making a secure life for herself having survived her husband's drinking, debts and meat-cleaver. Little Chandler's wife seems to be switching her affections from her husband to her baby. Mrs Farrington is engaged in a bullying power-play with her husband. Mrs Sinico, unable to find love, has sought refuge in drink. Mrs Kernan, married to an alcoholic, is struggling to maintain financial stability. Gretta Conroy seems to have married a rather joyless and detached husband who cannot match her spirited engagement with life.

The figure of "a mother" features most prominently in Celtic Twilight literature as a symbol for Ireland (Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and *Kathleen ni Houlihan* and Maud Gonne's *Dawn* [1904]), or as mystical Theosophist presence, A.E.'s "Mighty Mother". The mother elsewhere appears in stereotypical form. There is the hard-headed realist in both Martyn's *The Heather Field*, where Grace Tyrrell is unsympathetic towards her husband's spiritual idealism, and George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin*, where Mrs Barton cynically supervises her daughters' forays into the marriage-market. And there is the fussy gossip, which we see in Moore's 'The Wedding Feast' (*The Untilled Field*) where we encounter Mrs McShane "waddling slowly, a little overcome by the thought of the happiness that awaited her son".⁶⁵ The mother figure seems edited out of some Celtic school stories: in Martyn's *Maeve*, only the father is around to worry about his daughter's strange behaviour, and in Colum's *The Land* (1905), there is no mother in either of the two families at the centre of the drama. Synge, in brief passages in *The Aran Islands* and in *Riders to the Sea*, is the only writer who seems to share Joyce's interest in patterns of maternal psychology and how they connect with cultural conventions. Spiritual experience, for the Celtic Twilight, is generally the preserve of the young, beautiful, and star-crossed. Joyce, in his presentation of Mrs Kearney, evokes the sometimes greater pathos of doomed romantic aspiration which is felt closer to the end of "this short day of frost and sun".⁶⁶

⁶⁵ George Moore, *The Untilled Field* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 2000), p. 57

⁶⁶ Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, p. 211. For a detailed discussion of Joyce's sympathetic attitude towards maternal troubles see Florence L. Walzl's 'Dubliners: Women in Irish Society', in *Women in Joyce*, ed. Henke and Unkeless, p. 31-56.

In his exploration of the responses of Lenehan to Moore's 'Silent, O Moyle' and Maria to Balfe's 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt', Joyce goes against the grain of revivalist thought that 'spiritual' experience takes shape within the realms of high culture or Celtic mysticism. These two songs are decided examples of Dublin petit-bourgeois popular culture and their old-fashioned appeal at the turn of the century complements the prevailing mood in *Dubliners* of nostalgia and yearning for the dear dead days beyond recall. In their promiscuous, evanescent haunting of a Dublin street or parlour, the songs constitute part of a domesticated Otherworld culture in which the real and the fictional / supernatural cohabit as they did in original Celtic mythology. As the developing aesthete narrator of 'Araby' senses, listening as "a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness" (22), fairy music hangs in the mist even in cities.

For Revivalists, the songs of peasants possessed a peculiar spiritual and political force, as George Moore states in *The Untilled Field* (1903): "only music can express their yearning, and they have written it themselves in their folk tunes."⁶⁷ Maria's rendition of 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt' represents urban, Catholic, petit-bourgeois aspirations towards political freedom and economic security through its alignment with the traditional genre of the *aislinge*, a dream poem. Declan Kiberd describes this genre: "the authors of the eighteenth century Aislinge poems evoked in luscious detail the image of a passive, blonde *speirbhean* (skywoman), filled with vague longing and half-articulated desire, awaiting her deliverer."⁶⁸ Moore's 'Silent, O Moyle' is also a form of *aislinge*: "When will that day-star, mildly springing, / Warm our isle with peace and love?" Mrs Kearney and Maria are not like the Shan Van Vocht of Yeats's *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) who transforms into a beautiful young queen and inspires intense romantic ardour: "he died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me."⁶⁹ The sparkling, sunny arrival of the "day-star" seems a forlorn prospect. A street harpist's clichéd patriotic lyric, the hidden sadness of a popular

⁶⁷ Moore, *The Untilled Field*, p. 202

⁶⁸ Declan Kiberd, 'Irish Literature and Irish History' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. Foster, p. 286 (p.275-337)

⁶⁹ *The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p.82

parlour song, and an unperformed musical item at a failed Revivalist concert, are Joyce's strange and obscure elegies for a Mother Ireland for whom there is no hope and whose youth has irrevocably passed.

(7) “Sha,’s nothing.” Piety, Patriotism, and Porter in ‘Grace’.

‘Grace’

In his *Autobiographies* (1926), Yeats wrote that he had formed his Irish Literary Society of 1892 in reaction against:

middle-aged men kept by some family tradition to the school of thought before it arose, to the Ireland of Daniel O’Connell and of Lever and of Thomas Moore, convivial Ireland with the traditional tear and smile. They sang Moore’s *Melodies*, admitted no poetry but his, and resented Young Ireland’s political objections to it as much as my generation’s objection to its artificial and easy rhythm. (‘Ireland after Parnell’)¹

This is the terrain of ‘Grace’. Joyce shares Yeats’s sense of the limitations of such a sentimental world in its self-indulgent blurring of whisky, nationalism, and Catholic piety, but he states a case for the essential Irishness of “the traditional tear and smile” which Yeats dismisses with sanguine irony. On his wedding-day, Tom Kernan appears as a “well-fed man who was dressed smartly in a frock-coat and lavender trousers and carried a silk hat gracefully balanced upon his other arm.” (155) As ‘Grace’ unpicks the selfishness, aggression and absurdity behind “convivial Ireland” and captures the comedy of a Dublin drinking farce in the face of Celtic Twilight coyness and Temperance League po-facedness, the story’s mood seems equally finely “balanced”.

Kernan is in a state of denial about the severity of his drink problem. At around 9.00 p.m. he is found collapsed, face downwards, on the lavatory floor of a Dublin pub. That a small crowd has gathered suggests this is a serious and worrying event. Unconscious, blood trickling from his

¹ W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ‘Ireland After Parnell’, p.255-6

mouth, his tongue slightly mutilated, his complexion drained of colour, he is in such a precarious physical state that the manager, whom we presume is experienced at helping men in such situations, feels “alarmed” enough to call for support. Described as “quite helpless” (149), he seems to have been lucky both in the presence of two other men in the lavatory when he fell who have been able to help him, and in the unexpected proximity and thoughtfulness of a medical student who is able to put him in the correct recovery position and follow a procedure which I presume is designed to free up his breathing passageway and / or kickstart his physiological mechanisms. As a middle-aged man who has been on an extended drinking binge (“he’s been drinking since Friday” his wife remarks [154]), he is perhaps fortunate not to have died in a fatal accident. Not having seen the actual crisis, Mrs Kernan might be closer to the truth than she realises when she remarks, “O, he’ll do for himself one day and that’s the holy alls of it.” (153)

In recovery, Kernan shows no sense of the seriousness of his accident, imagining his bedroom to be the equivalent of a military hospital tent which his comrades-in-arms visit in order to pay homage to the war wounds sustained in the heat of battle. Absurdly, he refuses to acknowledge that the “sickening” sensation he feels is in any way connected to the poisonous effect the excess alcohol is having on his ageing body. He tries but fails to cover up his abandonment by Harford, who might have disappeared partly because he did not want to get caught up in a serious case of public disorder. He wilfully ignores how close he came to being locked up in jail for a week (“a case of seven days without the option of a fine” [159]), which almost certainly would have caused him to lose his job as a salesman given the importance of one’s reputation in this line of work in a relatively small city. On hearing the story of his near-fatal accident repeated, Kernan, instead of anxiously sensing why the constable might have been as concerned as he was to discover what was happening, launches into an “indignant” attack on an innocent man who was merely doing his job and considers writing a letter to the newspapers to complain about the “affront” to his reputation. Anticipating his confession at the retreat, he judges himself indulgently and deprecates the failings in his life (“my little tale of woe” [170]).

Kernan’s thrice repeated response to all of this, “Sha,’s nothing”, is symptomatic of his

more general self-deception about how problematic his relationship towards alcohol is. It is the injured man, not the suspicious constable, who is “the victim of some delusion” (150).

Kernan’s wife is the victim of this alcohol-related selfishness and recklessness, the vivid contrast between the elegantly dressed man of her wedding day (“a frock-coat and lavender trousers” and “a silk hat” [155]) and the “deplorable figure” (151) returning home with Mr Power measuring the brutal rupture of her reasonable hopes for a happy marital existence. Publicly a hard-drinking man’s man, her husband, privately, has become a sixth child whom she is obliged to look after; the care for him after his “frequent intemperance” follows a tiresome routine which she performs “dutifully” (155), though, we imagine, with little respect or affection. She will not enjoy cleaning his urine-soaked jacket and trousers from the accident. Alone at home with three young children (who seem to need firmer parental control of their behaviour), and alone often at night because of his drinking, her life seems defined by menial chores such as ironing and by conflicts with her errant husband. When hung-over, she “scolded him roundly” (155), at other times they have “domestic quarrels” (154); in the past he has been physically abusive towards her, and there is always the possibility that now her two eldest sons are away from home this might start again.

Kernan’s drinking is, of course, disastrous for his family’s finances, as his wife frustratedly suggests when pinpointing the fragility of male drinking codes of honour: “they’re all right so long as he has money in his pocket to keep him from his wife and family.” (154) Since he has been out “since Friday” (154), it is possible that his spree has been funded by a wild plundering of his wage for that week or month, and it seems certain that having “emptied her husband’s pockets” (154) she will find little to contribute towards the domestic upkeep. Embarrassed, she confesses to Mr Power, whom she would like to thank with hospitality, “I’ve nothing in the house to offer you.” (154) Ironically, money needed elsewhere has to be spent on porter for Kernan’s friends as hospitality during their bed-side vigil. Mrs Kernan relies partly on financial help from Mr Power and from her two grown-up sons in order to check the feckless irresponsibility of her husband.

Her husband's profession as seller of tea holds little promise, too, since he is "in decline" (153) and in a job dependent on sensitive tastebuds but where his endless consumption of whisky and porter must surely affect his ability to judge the quality of the tea he is tasting. Further, his advancing years, silk hat and blarney aside, must make it all the more difficult to summon the requisite reserves of physical and emotional energy to "walk to the end of Thomas Street and back again to book even a small order" (155). What might happen if Kernan's employers tired of receiving sick letters? How will the family survive when Kernan retires? Mrs Kernan might well "if she was put to it [...] believe also in the banshee" (157) since, if she listens carefully, she might hear a muted wailing which warns of the demise of her husband's immediate career prospects and more general future financial health.

Mrs Kernan's survival mechanism is, however, to cope stoically, to try to find a wider perspective which places her own unhappiness in a more cosmic context, to use denial as a way of living with the potentially unbearable : "she accepted his frequent intemperance as part of the climate [...] There were worse husbands." (155) As her husband "made light of his accident" (151), so she does her best to gloss an unpleasant reality. "Sha,'s nothing," she says of her husband's alcoholism.

Joyce counterpoints the seriousness of Kernan's drink problem with the feeble, facile attempt by his friends to remedy the situation. They are a version of Job's comforters who try to help but get it very wrong, as F.X. Newman has explained.² Jean Kane argues that "though they [the friends] seek to restore Kernan to a supposed agency, they actually want to coerce him back into a metaphoric, rather than somatic, expression of silence, a respectable state of paralysis that resembles their own."³ They seem worried more by the injury to his reputation than the damage he is doing to his health and family, and think that placing a "battered silk hat [...] on the man's head" (150), even though he is manifestly still under the influence of alcohol, will do the trick in

² F.X. Newman, 'The Land of Ooze: Joyce's 'Grace' and the Book of Job', *Studies in Short Fiction* 4.1 (Fall, 1966), p. 70-9

³ Jean Kane, 'Imperial Pathologies: Medical Discourse and Drink in *Dubliners*' 'Grace'', *Literature and Medicine* 14. 2 (Fall, 1995), p. 204 (p.191-210)

terms of his rehabilitation.

The friends appear to be trapped in a state of *mauvaise foi* in which their solution for the problem merely indicates how in thrall they are *to* the problem. That is to say, they have little sense that Kernan is, at some level, an alcoholic and that he needs to recognise this and to change, fundamentally, his attitude towards and behaviour around drink. Like Kernan's wife, the friends have "accepted his frequent intemperance as part of the climate", presupposing that it is a relatively natural state of affairs that a man should drink so much at risk to his own health and be so negligent in regard to his familial responsibility. As Weathers, the English acrobat, in 'Counterparts' remarks, generous buying of rounds long into the night is "too Irish" (90). Kernan's freewheeling, story-creating existence, which is predicated by his drinking exploits, is inextricably part of his appeal for his friends: "Mr Kernan's decline was mitigated by the fact that certain of those friends who had known him at his highest point of success still esteemed him as a character." (153) Terence Brown remarks of the word "character" that "in Dublin the last expedient of the defeated is to aspire to an eccentricity or excess of personality which endows the individual with a degree of social acceptability and some small measure of not-entirely-spurious dignity." (295) Thinking of Kernan as a "character", as opposed to someone with a problem which is spinning wildly and publicly out of control, allows the friends simultaneously to enjoy the entertaining drama he creates and to excuse themselves from accepting personal responsibility for dealing with the problems his rambunctious behaviour creates. Who wants to be the fussy, unmanly bore who quietly advises Kernan to stop drinking and go home to his wife and children? For all their apparent concern for their friend's welfare and for his family's predicament, the friends seem, ultimately, to side with Kernan himself and implicitly say, "Sha,'s nothing."

The friends' concern is, in turn, counterpointed by the apparent indifference to the alcoholism of Martin Cunningham's wife, a contrast made the more obvious by Martin Cunningham being the prime mover in the plan to help his friend. Tracey Teets Schwarze, in *Joyce and the Victorians*, remarks:

By their intervention, Kernan's friends recognize and legitimate his condition, a fact accentuated by the eminent Dubliners also in attendance at the service. No such assistance is considered for, much less proffered with such careful foresight to Martin's wife: the only reaction anyone registers to her intemperance is moralistic sympathy – not for her but for “poor Martin”. [...] That a male priest offers to male penitents the ‘manly’ grace of a masculine god as the story ends ironically underscores Mrs. Cunningham's complete inability to communicate her desperate protest in this male-dominated culture – “grace” is granted here by the authority of men and received by them; it is emphatically reserved to those, who, in the words of Father Purdon, “live in the world” and not to those who exist shut up inside their own houses.⁴

“Sha,’s nothing”, say Dublin men of Dublin women's drink problems.⁵

Evidence of such a *laissez-faire* approach to the serious problem of Kernan's drinking is the tacit agreement that a soft, benign approach is required. Martin Cunningham, the originator of the plan, represents well-meaning petit-bourgeois respectability which is wary of seeming ‘vulgar’ in addressing a fellow gentleman too directly about a weakness (the terminology seems significant here: “the *gentlemen* began to talk of the accident.” [157]) The closest anyone comes to this is “- It happened that you were peloothered, Tom, said Mr Cunningham gravely.” (159) There is an urbanity and witty lightness of touch here at odds with the images of Kernan face down in urine and his teeth and gums “covered with clotted blood”. The phrase “it happened” faintly implies both that the accident was a rarity and an event somehow beyond Kernan's

⁴ Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians*, p. 151

⁵ Mrs Sinico, in ‘A Painful Case’, is the most dramatic example of this. The title perhaps carries an irony in this context since the word ‘case’ suggests societal recognition of the typicality of Mrs Sinico's lonely abandonment but no-one is really interested in or has knowledge about the problem of female alcoholism. Her death is quietly brushed under the carpet: “no blame attached to anyone” says the Deputy Coroner (111).

control. “Peloothered”, according to Terence Brown, is slang for comprehensively drunk: “more usually the term is phlooterred, so perhaps this is a comic mispronunciation of ‘polluted’ which in Dublin also denotes a state of thorough-going inebriation.” (298) Its equivalent in modern English is probably ‘sozzled’. Said “gravely” it gestures towards disapproval and censoriousness, but its unavoidably informal register and funny sound allows equal space for quick notification that such a mood will not be sustained. Social grace is what counts here.

The reassurance to Kernan that the priest leading the retreat will not challenge his dependence on alcohol and manner of life confirms the impression that the friends do not take his problem seriously but merely want to tame his belligerence. “He won’t be too hard on us”, says Power. “He’s a man of the world like ourselves [...] It’s just a kind of friendly talk, you know, in a common sense way”, chimes in Cunningham. This signals that Purdon will, metaphorically, talk “gravely” about being “peloothered”, his suave discretion ensuring that, unlike the unpolished, “country bumpkin” (160) at the accident, he will not be overly direct in his enquiry about the implicitly recognised disastrous effects of alcoholism and so not cause an “affront” to Kernan’s pride. ‘Men of the world’ are too sophisticated and impressively jaded in their experience of life to get unattractively hot under the collar about other men’s misdemeanours; friends soothe and gently encourage, they do not confront you with the awkward, ugly truth. Purdon is concerned with the social, not the theological, aspects of ‘grace’.

The joke about Purdon being the men’s “spiritual accountant” (174), who will sit beside them in a reassuring and unthreatening way as they figure out their own credits and debits with God, works on at least four levels. (1) The word “spirit” is an obvious pun on whisky: put simply, the men will be allowed the easy task of asking themselves how much they drink in any given week, which might turn out to be a source of pride as much as shame. (2) The arithmetical metaphor (“tallied”, “discrepancies”) simplifies, in a seductive manner for the congregation, the essentially mysterious nature of what a “spiritual” existence might be. (3) The business metaphor indicates Purdon’s own state of *mauvaise foi* in that he does not recognise how bound up he is himself in the worldliness - the deals in pubs and restaurants, the camaraderie of Dublin’s

business community, the network of debts and loans which permeate the story – which he purports to change into something more pure.⁶ (4) On the surface, the image, which appears in Luke 16 as the prelude to the passage which Purdon explicates, innocently recalls the idea of Christ as the Good Steward who ensures that God’s household is looked after with due diligence and care. Ironically, however, the metaphor offers a clue as to the Church’s motivation in inviting men to such retreats, which is to tally accurately the number of followers over whom they have control, to remind wayward sons such as Kernan that they are always being watched and checked for irregularities, and to establish that it is the Church who possesses power in the capital. As the friends seek to clip Kernan’s wings for social purposes, so the Church subtly reasserts its political sway over Dubliners such as Kernan, McCoy, Power and Cunningham.

There is a trade-off here, which, in theological terms, is simony. Men such as Kernan ritualistically appease their wives and perform a kind of public penitence without having actually to change anything. The Church, in turn, accepts that Kernan’s wrong-doing is no more than a “little tale of woe” and that his outrageous familial neglect is inevitable given “the weakness of our poor fallen nature” (174). This links to the “speck of red light [...] suspended before the high altar” (172) and Purdon’s name since, as Terence Brown observes, “the red-light district of a city is of course the brothel area, like Purdon Street in Dublin.” (305) Despite the impact of its temperance wing, the Church generally seems to have shared the Dublin state authority’s tolerant attitude towards alcohol: “drunkards were indulged. In any case, at a political level, nationalists, particularly those in the Irish Parliamentary Party, were not prone to much analysis of the social ills induced by excessive drinking because of the importance of the alcohol trade in the commercial life of Ireland.”⁷ As Kernan “made light” of his accident, so, with differing motivations, his friends and wife and the Church make light of his alcoholism. “Sha,’s nothing,” says Purdon.

⁶ The satire here connects to Michael McCarthy’s *Priests and People in Ireland* in which McCarthy attacks Jesuit cynical flexibility and willingness to curry favour: “They have bon vivants to please those who are fond of wine, good living and good stories.” p. 275

⁷ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 57

At the heart of the story's evocation of middle-aged, male, Dublin *mauvaise foi* as regards the dangers of alcohol is the irony that in persuading Kernan to curb his excesses the friends recreate the very conditions which make drinking so attractive to him in the first place. For all intents and purposes, Kernan's bedroom becomes a snug in which the friends while away an evening as they drink porter and whisky and enjoy each other's company. Mrs Kernan operates as the curate who brings the porter at the start of proceedings and then Fogarty, who once managed "a licensed house in the city", provides "a half-pint of special whisky" so creating a stylish final *coup de grace*: "glasses were rinsed and five small measures of whisky were poured out [...] The light music of whisky falling into glasses made an agreeable interlude." (166-8)

This homely scene is, in Yeats's phrase, "the Ireland of Daniel O'Connell and of Lever and of Thomas Moore, convivial Ireland with the traditional tear and smile." All the ingredients of the *craic* for middle-aged, Catholic, socially conscious Dubliners at the turn of the century are here. Laughter, when Kernan defiantly plans to "bar the candles", acts as a form of homage to the evening's celebrated figure and generous host: "everybody laughed heartily" (171). We sense the same fuzzy, sentimental, porter-induced clubbability which Kernan displays in his memory of a cultural embrace with the Protestant Crofton, also in a pub: "we went into Butler's in Moore Street [...] *Kernan*, he said, *we worship at different altars*, he said, *but our belief is the same*. Struck me as very well put." (165) Clichéd discussion of theology and popes and church history piques the men's curiosity (it seems a form of highbrow, pious gossip) and validates the sense of their own educated petit-bourgeois status (translation from Latin, a Dryden quotation, obscure-sounding knowledge about Pope Leo XIII writing a poem about photography).

With stirring patriotism the men celebrate the integrity and passion of Irish Catholicism. Irish Jesuits beat their European rivals hands down and, more generally, "the Irish priesthood is honoured all the world over" (163). The popular preacher, Father Tom Burke, famous for his "unabashed xenophobic Irish nationalism", is celebrated. John MacHale, the Archbishop of Tuam in Connacht, "a vigorous nationalist", is revered for his piety (in contrast to a stubborn German) in submitting to the will of the Pope over the doctrine of papal infallibility at the

Vatican council of 1870 (a historical inaccuracy).⁸

Evocation of Father Burke and Archbishop MacHale, dominating figures up to their deaths in 1883 and 1881 respectively, carry the friends (with the exception of the younger Power) nostalgically back to a time when they were young men making their way in the world. Kernan recalls feeling “genuinely moved” (165) because of the force of one of Father Burke’s sermons, and he has a vivid memory of witnessing Archbishop MacHale’s spiritual intensity at first-hand as he glowers with righteous anger at Edmund Dwyer Gray, who is unveiling a statue of his father, recollections which seem to stir up in him flickers of a youthful religious idealism. Kernan, too, waxes lyrical about his schooldays at the “penny-a-week school” (“the old system was best: plain honest education. None of your modern trumpery” [167]), sentiments echoed by Power and Fogarty, with a suggestion of complacency as to how well they have all done coming from such a humble background.

Enemies are identified in order to emphasise petit-bourgeois Dublin Catholic tribal allegiance. Rural unsophisticates, represented by the constable, are dismissed as “ignorant bostoons”. Harford is tacitly dismissed as a conversational topic because, as “an Irish Jew and an illiterate” (159), he is not one of the gang and Kernan has transgressed a social code in embarrassing himself in front of a social inferior through his accident at the pub. Sir John Gray, a famous journalist and public figure, and his son, Edmund Dwyer, despite their patriotic credentials, are dismissed because they are Protestants.⁹

Similarly, the actual retreat itself seems to be a convivial social occasion. The friends arrange to meet in advance at a bar, allowing themselves ample time for a couple of glasses of porter before the sermon. There is the strong suggestion, too, that the retreat will be a fine opportunity for Kernan to catch up with some of his old drinking acquaintances. Harford is present, together with an aspiring local politician, a businessman, a journalist, and an old friend

⁸ Brown, *Dubliners* (300-3)

⁹ Terence Brown tells us that Sir John Gray supported O’Connell and was an effective member of Dublin City council, instrumental in bringing clean drinking water into the city; his son supported Parnell and supported disestablishment of the Protestant Church. (303)

of Mr Kernan's: "gradually, as he recognised familiar faces, Mr Kernan began to feel more at home." (172) The figure of Father Purdon adds to this carnival mood as he is clearly a heavy drinker himself, as Cunningham's description suggests: "fine jolly fellow! He's a man of the world like ourselves" (164). He has "a massive red face", which strongly implies that he has his own alcoholic problems (174). We imagine that he does not find it too onerous to be "forced to live in the world", and that his sense of being "manly" as much involves possessing a strong stomach for drink as it does being frank about his failings with his Creator (174). With absurd irony, this apparently sober temperance meeting has transformed into a temporary interruption to an evening's drinking, or, rather, it becomes, given a typical Dubliner's predilection for a fine sermon, part of the evening's *entertainment*. As Cunningham originally presents it, the retreat will be "a four-handed reel" (162), a light, pleasurable way to pass the time. Stanislaus Joyce describes in his diary how, in the real story upon which 'Grace' is based, his father "came home very drunk for two nights after each sermon".¹⁰

Stanislaus summarizes his father's brief conversion as "the farce in the Jesuit Church".¹¹ The 'action' of 'Grace' is essentially dialogue whose central comic force is that of pantomime dramatic irony as everyone is in-the-know as to what is happening with the exception of Kernan. The plot of the story is, in fact, a "plot" (156). All the friends act parts as they involve the innocent Kernan in a staged trick. Cunningham pretends that the idea has come to him spontaneously as he suggests the friends should all go to the retreat together, and the friends fall into line with a comically quick acknowledgement of their moral failing.

The play-like nature of 'Grace' connects to the number of theatrical images and moments in the story. Cunningham has a "face like Shakespeare's" (156), and the title of one of Shakespeare's works is twice mentioned ("ah, well, all's well that ends well" [158], "Mr Power said again: All's well that ends well." [159]) Mrs Kernan has found that "the part of mother

¹⁰ Stanislaus Joyce, *Dublin Diary*, p. 77. The entry is for 29th September 1904 and Stanislaus says the retreat involving his father happened "about two years ago": it took place at Gardiner St. and John Joyce's fellow penitents were Mr Kane, Mr Boyd and Mr Chance. Stanislaus drily observes that "it was certainly the shortest conversion on record." (77-9)

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 78-9

presented to her no insuperable difficulties" (155). Kernan mistakes "the body" of a church for "the pit" when recounting his Father Burke story, an easy slip to make given the declamatory nature of the priest's sermon ("the style of the oratory. And his voice!"). The sound of whisky being poured mid discussion creates "an agreeable interlude" (168); the discussion about papal infallibility "was the greatest scene in the whole history of the Church" (168); Power comes to Kernan's help in the bar having seen "the spectacle" of his recovery (151); at the church the men are "directed" to their seats by a lay-brother (171).

Actorly body language is evident as Mr Power makes a grand flourishing gesture as the triumphal accompaniment to a declaration of the success of his scheme:

He swept his arm around the company inclusively.

- We're all going to make a retreat together and confess our sins – and God knows we want it badly" (170).

Father Purdon, too, shows his awareness of the rhetorical power of an impressive expansive movement: "the preacher turned back each wide sleeve of his surplice with an elaborate large gesture and slowly surveyed the array of faces." (173)¹²

Characters in the story take on the guise of actors. Cunningham mimics a rural policeman: "he assumed a thick provincial accent and said in a tone of command: - 65, catch your cabbage!", "he illustrated the story by grotesque gestures [...] 65, *catch your cabbage*" (160). Kernan plays the part of the downtrodden husband of a shrew when he is refused a bottle of stout: "her husband called after her: - Nothing for poor little hubby! He assumed such a comical face and voice that the distribution of the bottles of stout took place amid general merriment." (161) Kernan performs a second impression, this time of Archbishop MacHale: "Mr Kernan knitted his brows and, lowering his head like an angry bull, glared at his wife." (170) His

¹² Stanislaus refers to the theatricality of Father Bernard Vaughan, the model for Father Purdon: "Besides preaching from his legitimate stage, the pulpit, he used to deliver short breezy talks from inappropriate places, such as the boxing ring before a championship match". *My Brother's Keeper*, p.225

third and final role is that of the put-upon penitent who plays up and exaggerates his last act of hopeless defiance:

He shook his head with farcical gravity [...]

- I bar the candles, said Mr Kernan, conscious of having created an effect on his audience and continuing to shake his head to and fro. (171)¹³

The phrase describing Mrs Kernan's anger with her husband, "scolded him roundly" (155) suggests, too, a music-hall / pantomime stereotype.

The idea of life as a play with characters assuming roles suggests an air of unreality. The longest section of the story, the discussion around Kernan's bedside designed to encourage him to attend the retreat, is spurious since no-one seriously intends to "wash the pot" (162). The "scheme" is a game which seeks to rehabilitate Kernan for no discernible purpose other than to shepherd a lost sheep temporarily back into the fold for appearance's sake. Power says "all's well that ends well", twice, but this is farcically inaccurate as the story ends with Kernan implicitly about to carry on drinking, which takes us back to where the story *started*. 'Grace', as a narrative, says of itself, "Sha,'s nothing."

Mrs Kernan's scepticism about the power of friendship and "spiritual agencies" (162) is well founded. She, not Martin Cunningham, possesses meaningful "natural astuteness" (156), and knows that a much tougher approach is required to make the prodigal come to his senses: "but that she did not wish to seem bloody-minded, she would have told the gentlemen that Mr Kernan's tongue would not suffer by being shortened [...]- O, you! The back of my hand to you! said Mrs Kernan tartly." [157, 161]) Casting an acerbic eye over the weakness of male loyalty and care, she exclaims "nice friends!" (154) Anticipating the shallowness of her husband's involvement in this "spiritual matter" (162), she pithily observes, "there's a nice Catholic for you!" (171) She seems on one level blind to the way religion makes her a natural victim through

¹³ Joyce takes this line directly from Stanislaus's diary. *Dublin Diary*, p.77

its trapping her in subservient roles to men (her own *mauvaise foi*), but on another she seems to have an instinctive sense of how religious structures can provide some degree of order and protection in a potentially wild and brutal world: “religion for her was a habit [...] She believed steadily in the Sacred Heart as the most generally useful of all Catholic devotions and approved of the sacraments.” (156-7) Whatever the complications here, she is sharp enough to glimpse how, in terms of her own familial situation, the supposed corrective power of the Church, as evident in the proposed retreat, is a sham.

Kernan’s comic declaration “I bar the candles [...] I bar the magic-lantern business” (171) possibly alludes to a recent story in which an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary together with St. Joseph and what was taken to be St. John the Evangelist was believed to have taken place in 1879 in Knock, County Mayo. The village and shrine there became a popular pilgrimage destination. At the time, it was suggested by the irreverent and sceptical that the apparitions had been contrived by magic-lantern images and this became a common enough explanation of the matter among sectarian Protestants who suspected Catholics of primitive superstition.¹⁴ This suggestion of a Catholic trick works as a witty metaphor for the retreat scheme as a whole, especially since Kernan confidently declares that he will have nothing to do with jiggy-pokery at the very moment when he has been successfully hoodwinked. Having “few illusions left [...] if she was put to it” (156-7), Mrs Kernan might well say of the efficacy of the Jesuits, the Pope, Father Burke, Archbishop MacHale, Father Purdon, and the candles and “the lamps of the church” (171), “Sha,’s nothing.”

Joyce accentuates the farcical nature of ‘Grace’ through four areas of parody: the story of the conversion of the founder of the Jesuits; primitive mythic ritual which one might encounter in *The Golden Bough*; mystic Catholic vision; and the stereotype of the stage Irishman.

The parallel between Kernan’s ‘conversion’ and St. Ignatius de Loyola’s, the founder of the Jesuits, feels appropriate given the discussion of the Jesuits and the location of the retreat in Gardiner Street. Born the son of a Spanish nobleman in 1491, St. Ignatius followed a soldier’s

¹⁴ Brown, *Dubliners* (304)

career, gambling and womanizing, until a wound received at Pampeluna in 1521 forced him into extended convalescence. Recuperating at a monastery, St. Ignatius had only religious books to read, which made him reassess the value of his life up to that point and resolve to spend the rest of his days in service to God. In 1540 he obtained the sanction of Pope Paul III for his Society of Jesus, and the following year he was chosen as its first general.¹⁵

Kernan, too, receives wounds (“the injured man” [150], “a minute piece of the tongue seemed to have been bitten off [152]”), which forces him into a convalescence in which he is providentially guided into reconsidering his need for a more sober and pious way of life. Power promises to Mrs Kernan to “make him turn over a new leaf [...] make a new man of him” (154); he will “wash the pot” [and] “renounce the devil [...] not forgetting his works and pomps” in Cunningham’s words (162, 171).

Joyce plays with the tradition of mystical visions when at the climax of Cunningham’s stirring story about the Archbishop of Tuam’s obedience to the Pope, the friends drift off into some form of communal reverie:

Mr Cunningham’s words had built up the vast image of the Church in the minds of his hearers. His deep raucous voice had thrilled them as it uttered the word of belief and submission. When Mrs Kernan came into the room drying her hands she came into a solemn company. She did not disturb the silence, but leaned over the rail at the foot of the bed. (169)

The word “image” suggests the idea of a vision, though what the men actually see remains obscure and private. Their mental state appears to combine a certain wild excitement, rapture almost (“raucous”, “thrilled”), with calm contemplation (“a solemn company”, “silence”). The intensity of the men’s nervous and moral reaction is comparable with Jimmy Doyle’s elation and excitement in ‘After the Race’ as he flies at high speed in his car around the streets of Dublin:

¹⁵ *Everyman’s Encyclopaedia* vol. 8 (London: Dent, 1949-50; 12 vols, 3rd edition), p.584

“the journey laid a magical finger on the genuine pulse of life.” (38) The epic dimension of these moments is implied by the grandeur of “vast”, the intensity and profundity of “deep”, and by the Biblical, portentous nature of “uttered”. It is as though the Archbishop’s sudden and passionate expression of faith (“stood up and shouted out with the voice of a lion: *Credo!*”) has inspired in the friends a similar degree of awe at the power of the Church, so that they are momentarily abstracted away from the dingy surroundings of a convalescent’s bedroom in a northern suburb of Dublin into a mental landscape resonant with intellectual mystery, complex historical processes, and a vague sense of national identity. Archbishop MacHale’s “*Credo!*” becomes *their* silent “word of belief and submission”.

The “silence” makes the friends’ reverie all the more dramatic. There have been silences before, but these have been controlled manipulations of the ebb and flow of talk, for example, the tactful avoidance of discussion about Harford, or the encouragement of Kernan to feel intrigued about the unexplained meeting on Thursday night at McAuley’s. This is the first occasion on which there has been involuntary, instinctive quietness, and it must appear all the more impressive for Mrs Kernan since on the previous two occasions she entered the bedroom she heard McCoy spiritedly exclaiming his opinion about country-bumpkin policemen, and then her husband warmly welcoming Fogarty’s arrival. Joyce structures this semi-visionary climax to ‘Grace’ in much the same way as the one in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’: at the end of lengthy, rambling conversation, Hynes’s poem about Parnell causes the listeners to sit in quiet contemplation of their lost leader in a similar way to Cunningham’s fictional story, his “words”, create a brief reflective space for the friends.

Joyce, however, ironizes this communal gesturing towards a rarefied mental state. The fictional story which rouses the men’s ardour contains details which question the apparent straightforward heroism of Archbishop MacHale. For Cunningham, the Archbishop is an Irish hero who proves an invaluable ally for Pope Pius IX in his Holiness’s hour of need. Embattled politically because of the aggression of King Victor Emmanuel II, and struggling to assert his authority in his own Church, the Pope is at least able to count on the obedience of the Irish,

famed for their devotion and integrity since their conversion by St. Patrick in the fifth century. As soon as the Pope stands up and declares his position, the Irishman, unlike the German (“Dolling ... or Dowling ... or –”), from a country famous for its inability to accept the Pope’s authority, immediately shows his obedience.

However, one might see the archbishop’s behaviour as unprincipled and cynical since he realizes that it would be futile to maintain his opposition to the idea of papal infallibility once the Pope himself has spoken authoritatively in its support. If he has been “fighting dog and devil” and “arguing and arguing against it”, why exactly does he perform a sudden volte-face? Cunningham seems confusedly to imply that the Pope is speaking *ex cathedra* in his declaration of papal infallibility since the archbishop accepts his statement so quickly, but this is an absurdity, and there must have been grounds for the archbishop and his sole fellow supporter to have disagreed with the doctrine of papal infallibility in the first place. Perhaps his dramatic turn is more to do with currying favour with authority than a semi-miraculous expression of “faith”, a suggestion which carries weight in the light of the ominous-sounding fall-out of the story for the archbishop’s supporter who refused to change his view:

- And what about Dowling? asked Mr McCoy.

-The German cardinal wouldn’t submit. He left the Church.

Johann Dollinger (neither a cardinal nor present at this Vatican Council) was, in fact, excommunicated in 1871. The Archbishop’s initial rejection of the idea of papal infallibility must have been something of a subsequent embarrassment, an idea which would have appealed to Joyce’s sense of mischief in having his characters discuss the episode. In two major biographies of Archbishop MacHale only one refers to his role at the 1870 Vatican Council, and that is in one bland sentence: “at the Vatican Council, he was a remarkable representative; he delivered his views publicly, but bowed his head in obedience to the dogma of Infallibility as soon as defined.”

Further, the friends' gradual tipping as they discuss the glories of the Church is represented as the more likely cause of their emotionally intense state at this point. The arrival of Fogarty's "special whisky" certainly has something of this effect: "this new influence enlivened the conversation." As with Maria's song at the close of 'Clay', the light drinking might be nudging the men into a more relaxed and emotionally susceptible frame of mind which is conducive towards thoughts straying away from an immediate sense of the here and now.

At such a moment perhaps Joyce has in mind the visions and reveries of Flaubert's two friends, Bouvard et Pécuchet, who are repeatedly carried away by their enthusiasm for "les aperçus philosophiques" and "des choses à la fois confuses et merveilleuses".¹⁷ In Flaubert's novel, the sound of certain names from history conjures up visions of mysterious lands; working on the land makes Pécuchet dream of his fantasy farm of the future; studying astronomy creates in them religious awe for the majesty of creation; medieval cathedrals cause a ripple of religious emotion; the utopia of sexual freedom elaborated in Fourierism makes Bouvard lose himself in a dreamworld; the inklings of first love prompt Pécuchet to dream of love's delights. Bouvard, like Kernan, even finds himself converting back to Catholicism and experiencing a mystical vision of the Virgin Mary:

Il la rêva comme on la figure dans les tableaux d'église, sur un amoncellement de nuages, des chérubins à ses pieds, l'Enfant-Dieu à sa poitrine - mère des tendresses que réclament toutes les afflications de la terre, - idéal de la Femme transportée dans le ciel; car sorti de ses entrailles l'Homme exalte son amour et n'aspire qu'à reposer sur son coeur.¹⁸

¹⁶ Rev. Ulick J. Canon Bourke, *Life of John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam* (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1883), p. 201.

¹⁷ Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 54, 61

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 335. "He dreamed of her as she appears in pictures in church, on a pile of clouds, cherubim at her feet, the God-Child at her breast, mother of the tenderness demanded by all earthly afflictions, ideal of womanhood transported to Heaven; for, fruit of her womb, man exalts her love and his only aspiration is to rest on her heart." Trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p.128

The recovery of Kernan possesses tongue-in-cheek mythical dimensions, as if the communal summoning up of the man from his lifeless state is a Dublin version of a sacred primitive ritual you might encounter in Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890). A mysterious authority figure in semi other-worldly clothing (a newly fashionable and strange "cycling-suit" [150]) performs, in front of rapt tribal representatives (all adult males), a resurrection from the dead through use of purifying water and a semi-magical substance, brandy: he kneels, washes blood away, and restores the man's vital spirits. Youth, in the form of the constable and the cyclist, (both are styled "a young man") reinvigorates Age through the archetypal power of transferred authority and knowledge / magic (the cyclist is almost certainly a medical student). The restored man is anonymous ("who is the man? What's his name and address?" [150]) making him an everyman figure symbolic of the lone individual's dependence on his tribe. Acolytes, (one of whom is called by a traditional religious name in the community, a "curate"), have solemnly borne the body aloft for the ceremony to take place, and one stands by, guarding the mystic symbol of reintegration into civilization: "one of the gentlemen who had carried him upstairs held a dinged silk hat in his hand [...] he was helped to his feet [...] the battered silk hat was placed on the man's head".

This sounds similar to the ceremony surrounding the Babylonian god, Tammuz, whose absence interrupts fertility cycles and threatens all life with extinction:

The dirges were seemingly chanted over an effigy of the dead god, which was washed with pure water, anointed with oil, and clad in a red robe, while the fumes of incense rose into the air, as if to stir his dormant senses by their pungent fragrance and wake him from the sleep of death.¹⁹

Another example, in the section 'The Ritual of Death and Resurrection', details ceremonies of

¹⁹ *The New Golden Bough: a new abridgement of the classic work by Sir James George Frazer*, ed. Theodor H. Gaster (New York: Criterion Books, 1959), p.285

usually young males in rites-of-passage celebrations pretending to be dead but then being mystically revived through magical powers.²⁰ Whereas Kernan's age contrasts with the youthful vigour of these figures, there is a sense that as a Dublin "character" he does possess a certain kingly, mythic status, and his physical 'resurrection' is supposed to be the prelude to his spiritual revival ("we'll make a new man of him" Power tells Mrs Kernan [154]).

The scene in the church at the story's close is obviously ceremonial, too, and parallels the descriptions in Frazer of the care surrounding the temples and holy sites where the magical tribal rites are performed. The adepts are dressed in the same way to show respect and tribal allegiance ("an assembly of black clothes and white collars"). The imposing structure and decor of the communal centre of worship ("dark mottled pillars", "lugubrious canvasses", "high altar") possesses a magical effect for those present ("even he [McCoy] was sensible of the decorous atmosphere and even he began to respond to the religious stimulus"). There is a mystic significance in seeming inconsequential arrangements: "the party [...] settled down in the form of a quincunx".²¹ The druid figure, a conduit to divine power, is treated with ceremonial reverence in order to appease the distant deity ("simultaneously the congregation unsettled, produced handkerchiefs and knelt upon them with care." [172-3])

A final area of parody is the presentation of Kernan as the stage Irishman, an incorrigible drinker and blustering, patriotic rogue whose faults are intermingled with his innocence, vitality and good-humour. Robert Welch summarizes the stereotype as "generally garrulous, boastful, unreliable, hard-drinking, belligerent (though cowardly), and chronically impecunious. His chief identifying marks were disorderly manners and insalubrious habits, together with the Hiberno-English dialect or brogue and a concomitant propensity for illogical utterance [...] To these ludicrous features was added an intense and seemingly inapposite pride in his native country".²² Such depiction of Kernan fits the many theatrical allusions in the story, and there is even an

²⁰ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1922; abridged edition), p.691-701

²¹ Terence Brown tells us that a quincunx is "a set of objects arranged so that four occupy the corners and the fifth is the center of the square or rectangle. In ecclesiastical practice such an arrangement is reckoned to symbolize the five sacrificial wounds of Christ and to encourage reflection on His suffering undertaken for the redemption of human sin." (305)

²² Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p. 533

elaborate stage gesture: “the man, without answering, began to twirl the ends of his moustache.” (150)

Kernan seems to fit the broad outline of this description, though he is differentiated by his concern for social elegance. His talkativeness is evident in his opinionated remarks and set-piece disquisitions or stories (Father Tom Burke’s sermon, Archbishop MacHale at Sir John Gray’s statue, “I bar the candles”). His tendency towards self-aggrandizement is emphasized through pride in the progress he has made from humble origins, including his penny-a-week school, and through his consciousness of being at the centre of attention for his bout of drinking. That he had disappeared from home for days on his drinking session is testimony enough to his feckless disregard for his family, as is the image of his wife having to empty his pockets of money in order to maintain some vestige of control over his declining financial capacities. Joyce presents Kernan’s predilection for drink with an edge of absurdity which fits his slightly eccentric manner as a “character”. Having recovered from near fatal alcoholic collapse, he twice asks the medical student if he’d like to go for a quick drink. His epic drinking bout has probably included a pilgrimage out of the centre of Dublin and a comic dodge in order to keep the party going: “Mr Harford [who he has been with] sometimes formed one of a little detachment which left the city shortly after noon on Sunday with the purpose of arriving as soon as possible at some public-house on the outskirts of the city where its members duly qualified themselves as bona fide travelers.” (158) (Small details such as Cunningham’s wife pawning the furniture *six* times for drink contribute towards the semi-pantomime mood of the story). Kernan’s belligerence is a dynamic of the bedside conversation as he objects violently to certain types of policemen and priests, listens with “calm enmity” (163) to discussion of the Jesuits, questions papal authority, delights in Archbishop MacHale’s unexplained aggression towards Edmund Dwyer Gray, and puts his foot down about how much can be expected of him on the retreat (a terse confession, an “obdurately” asserted refusal to hold a candle [171]).

Welch’s “a propensity for illogical utterance” is the ‘bull’ as defined by the OED: “a ludicrous jest” or “a self-contradictory proposition; an expression containing a manifest

contradiction in terms or involving a ludicrous inconsistency unperceived by the speaker.” For example, Sheridan’s Captain O’Blunder in *The Brave Irishman* (1743) replies to the question “What brought you to London?” by saying “the stage coach from Chester.”²³ More generally, the stage Irishman is characterized by childlike buffoonery. Samuel Lover’s *Handy Andy* (1842) shows the central character as having “the most singularly ingenious knack of doing everything the wrong way; disappointment waited on all affairs in which he had a part, and destruction was at his fingers’ ends”.²⁴ Charles Lever’s hero in *Tony Butler* (1864) displays “scatterbrained forgetfulness [...] whenever his intellect was called on for a great effort he was sure to be vanquished.”²⁵

Kernan’s ‘bulls’ are not as knockabout as Captain O’Blunder’s, but they have a facile quality which Joyce makes striking through his deadpan delivery, and they suggest the innocence which renders him a gullible victim of his friends’ trick:

Mr Kernan seemed to be troubled in mind. He made an effort to recall the Protestant theology on some thorny points and in the end addressed Martin Cunningham.

- Tell me, Martin, he said. Weren’t some of the Popes – of course, not our present man, or his predecessor, but some of the old Popes – not exactly...you know...up to the knocker?

There was a silence. (168)

Mr Cunningham continued.

- Pope Leo, you know, was a great scholar and a poet.
- He had a strong face, said Mr Kernan. (167)

²³ Richard Sheridan, *The Brave Irishman* (Belfast: Wm. Magee, 1791), p. 9

²⁴ Samuel Lover, *Handy Andy* (London: John Dicks, 1863), p. 7

²⁵ Charles Lever, *Tony Butler* (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1865), p. 4

This last remark is both a non-sequitur in the traditional manner of a ‘bull’ and a conventional cliché in the manner of Flaubert’s *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (1881): it goes without saying (though Kernan says it) that serious religious men have grave countenances and imposing facial features. Kernan makes himself appear absurd since his slightly gossipy contribution merely suggests how little he knows about this rather grand subject of discussion.

Kernan as the stage Irishman connects to Joyce’s presentation of ‘Grace’ as an urban, prose version of the fashionable Celtic Twilight peasant play whose plot revolves around harmless trickery. The plot of Hyde’s *Twisting of the Rope* (1901), for example, is as follows: when a young peasant woman is wooed by a poet at a dance in her house, her intended husband wants to throw him out but is afraid of the poet’s curse; so they trick him into going outside by getting him to twist a hay rope as he walks backwards out of the door, which they then shut against him. In Yeats’s *The Pot of Broth* (1902), the first comedy of the Revival in Hiberno-English, a tramp cozens a peasant and his wife into giving him a chicken, a ham-bone, and a bottle of whiskey in exchange for an allegedly magical stone. Joyce’s presentation of the rural constable appears stereotypical in terms of this genre:

He moved his head slowly to left and right and from the manager to the person on the floor, as if he feared to be the victim of some delusion. Then he drew off his glove, produced a small book from his waist, licked the lead of his pencil and made ready to indite. (150)

As McGinley and Jackson note, “this action, universal among fictional policemen of a certain calibre, is very rarely done in real life.”²⁶ Compare, for example, the slow laboriousness and sullen suspiciousness of the countryside policeman who appears at the start of Lady Gregory’s *Spreading the News* (1904) and plans to crack down on drink-related trickery:

²⁶ Jackson and McGinley, *James Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’*, p.136

MAGISTRATE: So that is the Fair Green. Cattle and sheep and mud.

No system. What a repulsive sight! [...] I suppose there is a good deal of disorder in this place? [...] What has that woman on her stall?

POLICEMAN: Apples mostly – and sweets.

MAGISTRATE: Just see if there are any unlicensed goods underneath – spirits or the like [...]

POLICEMAN: (*sniffing cautiously and upsetting a heap of apples*). I see no spirits here.²⁷

In Celtic Twilight literature there seems to be two types of drinking. The first, as suggested by the *Spreading the News* passage, involves hale and hearty peasant fun where dodging the authorities shows native wit, and alcoholic merriness is celebrated as community spirit and the reward for a hard day's labour. In a similar vein, Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) uses alcohol as short-hand for rural hospitality and instinctive patriotic glow:

NORA: *pouring him a glass of whisky*: Maybe that would do you better than the milk of the sweetest cow in County Wicklow.

TRAMP: The Almighty God reward you and may it be to your good health.

*He drinks.*²⁸

In the same play, Synge presents drunkenness as comical and an integral part of the wild vitality of peasant life when the tramp tells Nora that, in response to hearing the voice of a ghost in the glen, "I run and run till I was below in Rathuann. I got drunk that night, I got drunk in the morning, and drunk the day after."²⁹ Fairies, mischievous, bold, and free-spirited, drink extravagantly. The Cluricaun, according to Yeats, "makes himself drunk in gentlemen's

²⁷ Lady Gregory, *Seven Short Plays* (Dublin: Maunsell & Co., 1909), p. 3-4

²⁸ Synge, *The Complete Plays*, p. 83

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 85

cellars”,³⁰ and John O’Hanlon tells us that the leprechaun’s pleasures are “smoking and tippling”.³¹

The second type of drinking carries the mood of patriotism and communality, but rarefies the experience into a Keatsian mood of sensual languid escape and Homeric / Golden Age feasting:

Then in that hall, lit by the dim sea-shine,
We lay on skins of otters, and drank wine,
Brewed by the sea-gods, from huge cups that lay
Upon the lips of sea-gods in their day;
And then on heaped-up skins of otters slept.

The Wanderings of Oisín, ll.187-91 (1889)³²

Such a mood links to Ernest Renan’s sentimental claim that the scale of Irish drinking, compared to other countries, is explained by the Irishman’s dreamy nature: “this invincible need of illusion”.³³

‘Grace’ blows the gaff on such idealization of Irish drinking and blithe celebration of a mythic, pagan, pre-English and pre-Famine Ireland where the wine flowed freely and no-one ever woke up with a hang-over. Such writing, Joyce suggests, is highly *literary* and, what is more, at odds with the rather self-censoring attitudes towards connected types of pagan joy such as sexual pleasure. In the Yeats passage, for example, the image of Oisín, having drunk wine and lying next to two beautiful young women on animal furs, is left coyly erotic. Joyce spells out this awkwardness in ‘The Holy Office’ in his mockery of Synge:

³⁰ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, p. 80

³¹ John O’Hanlon, *Irish Folk Lore: Traditions and Superstitions of the Country with Humorous Tales*, p. 240

³² W.B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Albright, p.17

³³ Renan, *The Poetry of the Celtic Races*, trans. W.G. Hutchison, p. 9

Or him who sober all the day
Mixes a naggin in his play - .

Joyce's presentation of the destructive effects of Kernan's alcoholism on his health, dignity and his family's happiness illustrate the claim in the same poem:

That they may dream their dreamy dreams
I carry off their filthy streams.³⁴

Lady Gregory's letter of 1897 to potential subscribers to the Irish Literary Theatre promised "we will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of ancient idealism."³⁵ 'Grace' suggests that Ireland *is* in many respects "the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment" but that such apparent frivolity can mask domestic brutality. Joyce's amusement and anger in regard to the Celtic Twilight was caused partly, then, by their claim to be telling the truth about Ireland in reaction to a false literary stereotype (the stage Irishman whose drinking makes him reel out of control), when, in fact, they were merely creating a new and equally false stereotype (the romantic dreamer whose drinking adds a dash of local colour to his spiritual yearning).

'Grace', like the pagan Celtic revivalist texts, appears to be a veiled reaction against Catholic temperance movements such as Father James Cullen's elite force of tee-totallers, the Pioneer Branch of the Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart, which was formed in 1901. Joyce was not unaware, however, of Ireland's chronic drinking problem which, rather than Renan's fanciful explanation, was probably caused by high levels of unemployment resulting from economic depression. Emmet Larkin, referring to surveys of 1907, quotes the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded (1908) which concluded that the high

³⁴ James Joyce, *Poems and Exiles*, ed. Mays, p. 104

³⁵ O'Connor, *Celtic Dawn*, p. 188

rate of insanity in Ireland was due to a significant degree to the drinking of methylated spirits and sometimes turpentine.³⁶ Diarmaid Ferriter states that “there were over £13 million being spent annually on drink in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and in 1891-2 an astounding 100,528 arrests for drunkenness.” Dublin authorities, he suggests, were in a state of denial themselves about the seriousness of alcoholism, having “an extraordinarily liberal approach to the granting of licenses”.³⁷ *Dubliners* depicts many examples of the dangerous, complicating consequences of alcohol,³⁸ and given his socialist sympathies at this time, Joyce may also have shared James Connolly’s belief that the drinking of alcohol represented a tool of capitalism which enriched publicans while keeping the workers docile.³⁹

Nevertheless, ‘Grace’ suggests that the Church’s position as regards temperance was compromised and that there was an unpleasant mixture of joylessness, unchristian harshness, authoritarian control and insidious coercion in censorious pronouncements such as this by Father Cullen: “for chronic drunkards and periodic boozers, jovial tipplers, ‘weary wobblers’, or even moderate drinkers, we keep no ordinary or reserved seats. They must travel by other trains – ours is a special.”⁴⁰ The Church’s censorious attitude towards drink linked to a wider drive in the late nineteenth century for cultural and political control. According to Roy Foster, the temperance

³⁶ Larkin, *James Larkin*, p. 42

³⁷ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 57

³⁸ The old man’s “bottle-green eyes” (19) in ‘An Encounter’ might provide a clue to his disordered mental state; the uncle’s inebriated late return in ‘Araby’ scuppers the boy’s romantic ambition; Eveline’s father insults her when he is “fairly bad of a Saturday night” (31); Jimmy Doyle’s drinking leads him into reckless failed gambling in ‘After the Race’ (“he frequently mistook his cards...rested his head between his hands, counting the beats of his temples” [41]); Mr Mooney’s marriage falls apart through drink: “He drank, plundered the till, ran headlong into debt.” (56); disorientated by trying to keep up with the hard-drinking Gallaher and frustrated by the limitations of his narrow existence, Little Chandler, in ‘Two Gallants’, shouts in the face of his young son so causing the child “a spasm of fright” (80); Farrington, in ‘Counterparts’, beats his son after an evening’s drinking; in ‘Clay’, the *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry with its Protestant “tracts on the walls” (96) is, we imagine, populated by several women recovering from alcoholism; Mrs Sinico, lonely and disappointed with life, had “been in the habit of going out at night to buy spirits”, and her death causes Mr Duffy to ponder “the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles to be filled by the barman” (111); the caretaker’s son, in ‘Ivy Day’, is a “drunken bowsy” (117) who attacks his own father; Martin Cunningham’s wife, in ‘Grace’, is an “incurable drunkard” (156) who has, six times, sabotaged her husband’s attempts to settle her domestically by always pawning the furniture for drink; in ‘The Dead’, Freddy Malins’ independence and dignity have been compromised by his alcoholism.

³⁹ Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, p. 99

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p. 317. She records how there were five temperance newspapers in Dublin at this time: the ‘Irish Catholic’, the ‘Irish Messenger of the Sacred Heart’, the ‘Irish Temperance and Literary Gazette’, the ‘Irish Temperance Star’, and the ‘Temperance Visitor’.

movement, which began in 1838 with Father Matthew, was “related to attempts by the church to stamp out traditional and more subversive pastimes, like ‘patterns’ (celebrations of a patron saint’s feast day) and wakes, which brought together great convocations of disorganized (and often disorderly) people.”⁴¹ The (admittedly dyspeptic) narrator of ‘Cyclops’ senses this in his evocation of traditional Irish vitality and fun being quashed:

and a lot of colleen bawns going about with temperance beverages and
selling medals and oranges and lemonade and a few old dry buns, gob,
flahoolagh entertainment, don’t be talking [...] And one or two sky
pilots having an eye around that there was no goings on with the
females, hitting below the belt. (402)

Such attitudes must have been infuriating for an ex Catholic socialist such as Joyce since the Church, on the one hand, adopted a repressive attitude towards personal liberty, yet, on the other, seemed to stand in the way of change (anti Parnell, anti industrialization, anti non-Irish influences) which might have made the lives of Dubliners more bearable without recourse to drink.⁴² Florence L. Walzl states, in this respect:

There is agreement among social commentators that the economic pressures that prevented marriage at normal early ages, combined with the stringent views of the puritanical Irish Church on the moral depravity of sex except for procreative purposes in marriage, led to great male tensions. The high degree of alcoholism among Irishmen is commonly attributed to this repression.⁴³

⁴¹ Foster, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, p. 200

⁴² It was fashionable at the turn of the century to attack the Church for holding Ireland back economically, for example, Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Michael McCarthy’s *Priests and People in Ireland* (1902), P.D. Kenny’s *Economics for Irishmen* (1906).

⁴³ Florence L. Walzl, ‘Dubliners: Women in Irish Society’, in *Women in Joyce*, ed. Henke and Unkeless, p. 34

According to Elizabeth Malcolm in *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free*, the zealously anti-drinking figure of Father Cullen was moved in 1904 to the Jesuit Church in Gardiner Street, and he would, presumably, have been the priest at this church when Joyce wrote the story in 1905. Had the story been published at this time, Dublin readers would have been amused to see Father Cullen replaced by Father Purdon who is not only indulgent of such weakness, but also a seemingly heavy drinker himself.⁴⁴ Father Purdon's temporizing, simoniacal aspects link, however, to the Irish Church's conflation of political and spiritual liberation, a position Father Cullen makes explicit: "the demoralization of Ireland has been brought about slowly, but with deadly certainty, and its cure must be, at least comparatively, slow if it is to make Ireland permanently sober and permanently free!"⁴⁵

My sense of Joyce's complex and contradictory attitude towards Dublin's drinking culture as evident in 'Grace' contrasts with most critical views of 'Grace' which tend to emphasize Joyce's hostility and underplay his amusement and sympathy. Willard Potts claims the story is "thoroughly satirical".⁴⁶ Hélène Cixous says that "Joyce denounces both the devaluation of belief and the impure motives of Dublin Catholics".⁴⁷ Elaine M. Kauvar declares that the characters are more interested in outward appearances than the state of their souls.⁴⁸ Car Niemeyer thinks that "the characters are in search of grace, but their pursuit is so ignorant and vulgar that they find no revelation and are not even aware of their own failure."⁴⁹ Virginia Moseley asserts that "this tale [...] matches the bitter invectiveness of Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*."⁵⁰

The ambivalence I detect in the story seems partly an aspect of Joyce taking pleasure in

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland Sober, Ireland Free*, p. 318

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 317

⁴⁶ Willard Potts, *Joyce and the Two Irelands* (Austin: University of Texas, 2000), p. 81

⁴⁷ Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce*, p.40

⁴⁸ Elaine M. Kauvar, 'Swift's Clothing Philosophy in *A Tale of a Tub* and Joyce's *Grace*', *James Joyce Quarterly* 5.2 (Winter, 1968), p.162-5 (162-8).

⁴⁹ Car Niemeyer, 'Grace and Joyce's Method of Parody', *College English* 27.3 (December, 1965), p. 198 (p.196-201).

⁵⁰ Virginia Moseley, "The 'Coincidence' of 'Contraries' in *Grace*", *James Joyce Quarterly* 6.1 (Fall, 1968), p.17 (p.3-22).

drinking and bar culture and being the kind of writer Father Butler attacks in 'An Encounter': "the man who wrote it, I suppose, was some wretched scribbler that writes these things for a drink." (12) It seems also an aspect of his sneaking admiration for the ingenuity, audacity and determination of the Harfords of this world who pass themselves off as "*bona-fide* travellers" on holy days in order to get a drink "on the outskirts of the city", a comical form of modern-day pilgrimage. Successful evasion of authority figures such as the policeman at the start of the story and Harford's trickery link 'Grace' to traditional Irish drinking tales, like Carleton's, which celebrate native independence and wit.⁵¹

The sharpness of the satire in conjunction with the amused indulgence makes sense at a psychic level both in terms of Joyce's detachment from and nostalgia for his home city, and in terms of the story's origin in his father's buccaneering but selfish drinking which was so problematic for his family to deal with.⁵² Like Kernan carefully tasting his different varieties of tea as he gazes out of the window, Joyce is aware of the complex texture of the world he describes and is wary of simplifying its delicate nuances:

He took a mouthful, drew it up, saturated his palate with it and then spat it forth into the grate. Then he paused to judge. (153)

Joyce appears like a literary curator who wants to preserve the Moore-soaked, silk-hatted world which Yeats dismisses and which will soon disappear from Dublin. Celtic Twilight writing fostered a version of Irishness which excluded a figure such as Kernan, a Catholic petit-bourgeois commercial figure who loudly mocks rural simplicity and is proud of his English-style respectability. "Dapperness" was the mask of the city slicker and the unheroic style of the

⁵¹ For example Carleton's 'Bob Pentland' and 'Condy Cullen' in which peasants outwit 'gaugers' whose role is to clamp down on private distilleries (Carleton, *Tales and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, 1846).

⁵² "My home was simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits which I have inherited. My mother was slowly killed, I think, by my father's ill-treatment, by years of trouble, and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked on her face as she lay in her coffin – a face grey and wasted with cancer – I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim and I cursed the system which had made her a victim." Joyce's letter to Nora, August 28th, 1904. *Selected Letters*, ed. Ellmann, p. 25

cockneyfied urban dweller of the English world; locally he was the Dublin cockney or jackeen, proletarian cousin of the *seoinin* so hated by the Irish-Irelanders.”⁵³ As Thomas Kinsella remarks of Joyce, “his stomach, unlike Yeats’s, is not turned by what he sees shaping the new Ireland: the shamrock lumpenproletariat, the eloquent and conniving and mean-spirited tribe of Dan [...] He is the first major Irish voice to speak for Irish reality since the death of the Irish language.”⁵⁴

Joyce reclaims Dubliners such as Tom Kernan as Irish and, as exemplified in the friends’ vision of the Church, suggests that they too are capable of some kind of spiritual experience. The men are “thrilled” and mesmerized by “the vast image of the Church” because they are momentarily transported into an Otherworld which meant little to Protestant Ascendancy Celtic Twilight writers. This world of Irish Catholicism is one in which, at a defining moment in history and on a world stage, an Irishman such as John MacHale can vanquish his enemies and glory in passionate triumph. “The vast image of the Church” includes powerful tribal memories. These include an impressively dignified asceticism: in ‘The Dead’ Mr Browne “was astonished to hear that the monks never spoke, got up at two in the morning and slept in their coffins” (202); and intellectual richness: in ‘The Sisters’ the boy narrator is fascinated to hear of a priest’s duties that “the fathers of the Church had written books as thick as the *Post Office Directory* and as closely printed as the law notices in the newspaper, elucidating all these intricate questions.” (5) Given the position of “the tribe of Dan” in Dublin in 1905, it is natural that such victories as MacHale’s and a sense of the dignified grandeur of the Church should be nurtured nostalgically.

Quickening escape from the real world and encouraging communal bonhomie, drink, ritualistically, short-circuits the friends into a psychic tribal space. For a few moments in their vision, the men share a domesticated version of Yeats’s ideal “nation-wide multiform reverie”.⁵⁵ Limited, in some ways absurd, and occasionally dangerous as such tribal bonding is, it is at least authentically *Irish*. “Sha,’s nothing”, says Joyce to Celtic Twilight Ascendancy elitism which

⁵³ Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928*, p. 105

⁵⁴ W.B. Yeats and Thomas Kinsella, *Davis, Mangan, Ferguson? Tradition and the Irish Writer* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1970), p. 65

⁵⁵ Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ‘Hodos Chameliontos’, p. 325

would deny the claims of Kernan and his like to such experience.

(8) Ghosts

‘Eveline’, ‘The Dead’

Gazing out of her window, Eveline recalls one of her father’s acts of kindness in happier times:

Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for the day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. (32)

This is not as cosy an image as it seems, since Eveline’s father might be enjoying, at some level, the experience of frightening his rather timid daughter. The phrasing “read her out” could point to the father’s pleasure in the performance of reading as he places himself at the centre of this bedside show, an idea supported by the subsequent picture of him comically but slightly sinisterly “putting on her mother’s bonnet to make the children laugh” at a picnic in her youth. That he “sometimes” is kind towards his daughter alerts us to other times when he appears to delight in terrifying her. Years ago, when his children were out playing, he, inexplicably, “used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick”, an act of apparent gratuitous menace. He unjustly berates Eveline on Saturday evenings for cavalier housekeeping expenses when he, absurdly, is the profligate curse of the family’s financial security. The artlessness of Eveline’s “very nice” in the opening quotation is mirrored by the tactful understatement of her description of him in these weekly confrontations: “he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night” (31). One of the reasons why Eveline wants to elope with Frank is that she

“sometimes felt herself in danger of her father’s violence. She knew it was that that had given her palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly

he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her." (30)

The cheery domestic warmth connoted by "toast" does not fit quite so snugly with the ambivalences of "ghost" in the context of this particular reader of the story. She will feel "palpitations", too, as she listens to this ghost story. Trying to decide whether to leave with Frank or stay with her father, Eveline feels both hunted and haunted by memories of familial obligation, her recalling of the ghost story episode finding a corollary in the actual "vision" (33) of her mother's ghostly existence.

Critics have pointed to the different elements of *story* in 'Eveline'. Hugh Kenner observes that 'Eveline' illustrates Joyce's "earliest and most constant insight, that people live in stories that structure their lives".¹ Margot Norris lists these stories as the ghost story, Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl*, Frank's "tales of distant countries", and Frank's "siren song" about "the lass that loves a sailor".² Katherine Mullin, in 'Don't cry for me, Argentina: 'Eveline' and the seductions of emigration propaganda', argues that Eveline is trapped in a complex web of fictional propaganda which present conflicting versions of what kind of life to expect outside of Ireland.³ A further aspect of Joyce's interest in *story* here lies in the way 'Eveline' seems to be a response to Celtic Twilight story-telling and, in particular, tales of young women possessing visionary insight, or sacrificing themselves for a patriotic cause, or being lured away to the Otherworld by the fairies.

That Eveline is able to have a "vision" of her mother's life places her in the company of the young dreamy heroines of Revivalist fiction: Martyn's Maeve, A.E.'s Deirdre, Yeats's Countess Cathleen and Mary Bruin of *The Land of Heart's Desire*, Synge's Aran peasant,

¹ Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (London: Faber, 1975), p.39

² Margot Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Dubliners* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p.58

³ "Eveline, a woman paralyzed by her susceptibility to didactic fiction, chooses to experience city life from behind glass, in an atmosphere so saturated with propaganda that she must breathe it in along with the odor of dusty cretonne. Eveline is a victim, not of the nebulous perils of 'abroad' described in *The Irish Homestead*, nor of a white slave trader disguised as Frank. Instead, she is a very private woman who succumbs to very public fictions of her proper place: home." Katherine Mullin, 'Don't cry for me, Argentina: "Eveline" and the seductions of emigration propaganda', in *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. Attridge and Howes, p.198 (p.172-200).

William Sharp's Lora MacLean (*Pharais*), Emily Lawless's Grania and Moore and Yeats's Grania, and George Egerton's visionary in 'A Cross Line' (*Keynotes*). The vision takes place in a form of twilight, the time of day when, according to Celtic mythology, contact with the Otherworld was most strong: "she sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue [...] The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct." (29, 32) As a metaphor, the twilight imagery elegantly suggests how Eveline is trapped between two temporal worlds, her past and her family, and her possible future with Frank.

The source, however, of such visionary capacity is not the Celtic mysticism invented by the Revivalists, rather it is a different mythic cultural inheritance, the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Mary Alacoque. (30) St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90) was a French nun who after a series of visions introduced devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; she was beatified in 1864. According to Terence Brown, many Irish Catholic homes in the time of this story would have contained a print of the Sacred Heart with a list of promises of domestic security and blessing in life for those who maintain devotion to it and are regular in attendance at Mass.⁴ Eveline's "vision" represents these promises actualized in the form of her dead mother, as though the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque is a nightmarish earth mother ventriloquist, an angered goddess of the Catholic hearth:

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being – that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

- Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! (33)

We sense a faintly supernatural presence in Eveline's awareness of the uncanny nature of

⁴ Brown ed., *Dubliners* (254)

her hearing, on the very night she plans to leave with Frank, the same “melancholy air of Italy” as she heard the night her mother died: “strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she should.” (32) The plangency of the music, the unexpected nature of its appearance, and the visceral recall of her mother’s death (“she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall”), destroy her balanced poise (“she tried to weigh each side of the question” [30], “as she mused”) and plunge her into panicked crisis. At the story’s close, Eveline seems frozen into immobility by the gorgon stare of Catholic piety and responsibility, a virgin-white, marble statue commemorating the triumph of the visionary power of the saint: “she felt her cheek pale and cold [...] She set her face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.” (34) Frank has no chance, fighting as he is to extricate Eveline from a world in which such powerful tribal imperatives are hard-wired into “the very quick of her being”, as the references to Catholic ritual emphasise: “black mass”, “she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty”, “she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer”, “a bell clanged upon her heart”.⁵

Eveline’s mother, appearing in this semi-supernatural way, resembles two popular figures of the folk tales valued by the Revivalists. Firstly, the idea that the vision “laid its spell on the very quick of her being” calls to mind a witch, with the suggestion that the Gaelic exclamations repeated “constantly with foolish insistence” constitute a curse if the promises to the mother are broken. The cry, “Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!” is enigmatic beyond the linguistic uncertainty as to its meaning (Gaelic for ‘the end of pleasure is pain’ / ‘the end of song is raving madness’ / ‘worms are the only end’, or perhaps mere nonsense).⁶ Is she warning Eveline of the danger of abandoning her family and her promise? Or is she, conversely, opening her eyes to a fate of a “life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” if she stays in Dublin and

⁵ According to Diarmaid Ferriter, “The Catholic Hierarchy in 1902 issued a resolution on the matter [of emigration] which was [...] concerned with the supposed female delusion that there was ‘some bright vision beyond the Atlantic.’” *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, p. 45

⁶ Brown ed., *Dubliners* (255)

replicates her own doomed existence? Eveline's behaviour at the Liffey's North Wall symbolically suggests that she has already begun to replicate her mother's life in this respect. The images of her "moving her lips in silent fervent prayer" and her "cry of anguish!" echo her mother's repeated, passionate expression of "Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!", and because her emotional turbulence ("maze of distress", "her distress awoke a nausea in her body", "all the seas of the world tumbled about her heart") carries flickers of her mother's dramatic death-bed "craziness". In letting go of Frank, she is making the first of the "sacrifices" which might characterize her own "pitiful life".⁷ Tracey Teets Schwarze remarks, "her own descent into madness in fact begins here as she makes her final 'escape' according to the only model available to her – her mother's lunacy."

Secondly, Eveline's mother resembles a banshee, a once beautiful woman now transformed into a withered hag characterized by brushing her tousled hair with a broken comb and uttering warnings in the form of long, wailing, heart-broken cries. A banshee was assumed to be a certain harbinger of death to those who heard her cries, though strictly she only followed Irish families of the purest blood (in Irish mythology of Catholic aristocratic dispossession over the centuries this, presumably, could mean anyone to the naked eye). Belief in banshees existed in Dublin as late as the 1920s: persistent reports of the appearance of a banshee in the suburban village of Coolock had received extensive coverage in the newspapers.⁸ The strident banshee cry of ancient Ireland, "Derevaun Seraun!", and the subtle, gentle sound of modern, changing Ireland, a street organist's "melancholy air of Italy", combine to produce a lyrical elegy for Eveline's doomed existence before she has passed the age of nineteen. At the stores, Miss Gavan might encourage Eveline to "look lively" (30), and, indeed, Eveline herself, thinking of her future with Frank, "wanted to live" (33), but the struggle for life for young working-class Catholic women who stayed in Dublin in 1904 seemed a vain one. "She will drown me with her, eyes and

⁷ Schwarze, *Joyce and the Victorians*, p.156

⁸ John J. Dunne, *Haunted Ireland: Her Romantic and Mysterious Ghosts* (Belfast: The Appletree Press: 1977), p.11

hair. Lank coils of seaweed hair around me, my heart, my soul. Salt green death.” (*Ulysses*, 313)⁹

‘Eveline’ also engages with Celtic Twilight fiction in terms of the essential plot dynamic of personal desire in opposition to familial or societal duty: “she had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question.” (30) Yeats’s *Countess Cathleen* (1899) dramatizes the heroine’s patriotic self-sacrifice as she sells her soul in order to save her country. His *The Land of Heart’s Desire* (1894) explores the struggle in a newly-wed’s soul as she is tempted away from her family and husband into the Otherworld. Yeats’ and Moore’s *Diarmuid and Grania* (1900) is based on the heroine’s passion for Diarmuid even though she is already married. A.E.’s *Deirdre* (1902) similarly presents the heroine’s passion for Naisi in terms of its transgression of the command of Conchobar. Martyn’s *Maeve* (1900) shows the heroine torn between marrying a wealthy Englishman in order to save her family and wanting to stay in Ireland, preserving her spiritual integrity. Colum’s *The Land* (1905) presents the heroine as spurning domestic security in the form of marriage and land in order to pursue a new life in America.

Joyce’s story suggests, as Kenner has pointed out, how such fictions as these might romanticize Eveline’s perception of her situation: “Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in her arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.” (33) The truth about what awaits her in Buenos Ayres might be rather different.¹⁰ It is not clear what the best course of action is for Eveline, whereas transgression for Revivalist heroines includes a mystic form of spiritual integrity which makes seem trivial earthly ties such as marriage vows or financial considerations or arbitrary social laws. A.E.’s *Deirdre* never has to ask herself the

⁹‘Eveline’ is partly based on the experiences of Joyce’s younger sister, Margaret Alice, or Poppie (cf. “He used to call her Poppens out of fun” [32]). At the request of Joyce’s mother in August 1903, and as the eldest daughter (aged 20), she became the surrogate mother of the Joyce family, managing the precarious finances and dealing with John Joyce’s aggressive behaviour. Poppie’s dilemma as regards familial duty versus her personal ambitions involved her desire to become a nun, a plan she had to postpone for five years. She claimed to have seen her recently deceased mother in a vision at night, an experience which intrigued Joyce and made him read F.W.H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*. See J.W. Jackson and P. Costello, *John Stanislaus Joyce* (London: Fourth estate Ltd, 1997), p. 254-265, 326, 338; Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 143-4; Stanislaus Joyce, *Dublin Diary*, p.19, 44, 58

¹⁰ Margot Norris summarizes critics’ exploration of such possible complications in *Suspicious Readings of Joyce’s Dubliners*, p. 57-9

question “What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow?” (30). Eveline’s choosing (by default, almost, since hers is a paralysed *indecision*) domestic duty as opposed to romantic love and travel sets her apart from these heroines. Even tragic despair has its consolation for figures such as Deirdre, Maeve, and the Countess Cathleen. Deirdre dies having experienced intense etherealized love, Maeve’s death is a release into fairyland, and the Countess dies knowing that she has saved her country. Happy endings soften the inevitable awkwardness attendant on courageous principled stands: God, after all, saves the Countess’s soul from perdition, and, in *The Land*, the heroine knows she can always return to Ireland to marry her doting farmer whenever she pleases. For Eveline, there is only “nausea”, “a maze of distress”, and a lonely walk back to her father’s house.

The only ‘Otherworld’ Eveline is aware of exists away from Irish shores. Her childhood friends, the Waters, have returned to England; her father’s childhood friend, a priest, has gone to Melbourne; Frank has “tales of distant countries” (32), wants to take her to Buenos Ayres, and has worked on ships taking emigrants to Canada; the romantic opera she enjoys with Frank is set in Bohemia. Her father’s irritable remark, “Damned Italians! Coming over here!” (33), (which is comically intemperate since Italian immigration to Ireland was very slight¹¹), further emphasizes how Eveline is surrounded by examples of tempting escape to exotic-sounding lands. Roy Foster describes the rate of Irish emigration at this time: “the population, 8,200,000 in the early 1840s, would sink to 4,400,000 by 1911 [...]. By 1890 there were 3,000,000 Irish-born people living overseas – 39% of all those alive who had been born in Ireland.”¹² Given that between 44% of all Irish emigrants in 1900 were between the ages of 20 and 24, Eveline’s dilemma dramatises the anxieties of a generation.¹³

Frank’s appeal magically incorporates glamorous foreign travel (Argentina), social status and security (marriage), and a rise in social class (at *The Bohemian Girl* performance she sits “in an unaccustomed part of the theatre” [31], and his claim to have “fallen on his feet in Buenos

¹¹ Brown ed., *Dubliners* (255)

¹² Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1989), p.353

¹³ Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*, p.8

Ayres" [32] is, despite Kenner's scepticism, corroborated by Sidney Feshbach's research into the excellent wages earned by Irish manual labourers in South America).¹⁴ In terms of what a young Dublin girl can dream of, he beats the the Belfast man's "bright brick houses with shining roofs" (29) into a cocked hat. Frank personifies, as it were, the fairy existence which so entices Mary Bruin in *The Land of Heart's Desire*. He courts in the chivalric, aristocratic mode ("when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused [32]"); he fights nobly (he "quarrelled" with Eveline's father [32]); he possesses the gracious qualities of an older, more heroic age ("Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted" [31]); he is beautiful ("his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze" [31]; he is "awfully fond of music and sang a little" (32); he delights in telling stories; he lives in a far-off, fantastical land. He sounds similar, that is to say, to Yeats's description of the inhabitants of The Land of the Young:

Their chief occupations are feasting, fighting, and making love, and playing the most beautiful music [...] When they are gay they sing. Many a poor girl has heard them, and pined away and died, for love of that singing [...] Plenty of the old beautiful tunes of Ireland are only their music, caught up by eavesdroppers.¹⁵

Joyce strengthens the mythic, folk dimensions of 'Eveline' by basing it on the eighteenth century popular legend of Archbishop Narcissus Marsh and his library, now known as Marsh's Library in Dublin. The library was built in 1707 and the ghost story associated with it is as follows. The niece of the Archbishop fell in love with a sea-captain and, faced with her uncle's disapproval, eloped with him. She wrote a letter to her uncle pleading for forgiveness and placed it in one of his books in the library, assuming that he would shortly find it. In fact, the Archbishop never discovered the letter, and as a ghost he now haunts the library desperately trying to find the letter, which explains how books seem to fall from shelves without being

¹⁴ Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Dubliners*, p.62

¹⁵ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1973), p.12

touched.¹⁶ The parallels seem clear: the romantic sailor; paternal disapproval and the plan to elope; the explanatory letter which is never read (Eveline does not send hers since she does not elope: “the white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father” [32]); the ghostly elements.

Joyce may also be alluding to Mallarmé’s ‘Brise marine’ (1865) in *Eveline*. This is the poem Symons selects in his essay on Mallarmé in *The Symbolist Movement in French Literature* (1899), which Joyce had read. Both pieces balance the desire to escape from everyday reality by a sea adventure with the acknowledgement of possible danger and the restraining power of duty. Eveline feels that domestic conflicts have begun to “weary her unspeakably” (31) but is held back by emotional complications towards her family. The persona of Mallarmé’s poem feels “Un ennui, desolé par les cruels espoirs”¹⁷ but is conscious of his work as a writer, his responsibility for wife and baby. He is also aware of “les vieux jardins reflétés par les yeux”, which could refer to his memory-laden surroundings, or to a memory he envisages in his wife’s eyes, or even to the oval shapes of château gardens of a more classical age, suggestive of restraint and dignity in contrast to his present wild, lyrical mood. As with Eveline, the voice of the poem does not choose, as such, to stay rather than leave, but falters into a weary recognition of powerlessness in the hands of fate. Finally there is only yearning: “Mais, ô mon Coeur, entends le chant des matelots!”

The language (as much as is possible in translation), the syntax and the punctuation of the free indirect style sentences, which captures Eveline’s terror: “Escape! She must escape!” (33) echo the sudden impulse of *Brise marine*: “Fuir! Là-bas fuir!”. Eveline fears an inchoate form of drowning, which blurs her worries about the sea voyage and feelings of emotional trauma (“all the seas of the world tumbled about her heart”, “amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish!” [34]) The poet refers to “ce coeur qui dans la mer se trempe”, which is ambiguous. Rees translates the phrase as “this heart which immerses itself in the sea”, implying deliberate, child-like delight,

¹⁶ *Irish Ghost Stories*, ed. by Patrick Byrne (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1965), p.20

¹⁷ *The Penguin Book of French Poetry*, ed. by Jasper Rees (London: Penguin, 1990), p.196

(especially if we think of ‘se tremper’ as ‘to dip into’ or ‘to plunge’) and a gesturing towards the freedom symbolized by the sea, which anticipates the use of “coeur” in the last line. Weinfeld, however, renders the words as “this sea-drenched heart”,¹⁸ which indicates heaviness, lassitude, and echoes “La chair triste, hélas!” of the first line. Both pieces include cognates of the word ‘steam’ in the sense of sea travel: “If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres” (33); “Steamer balancant ta mâture / Lève l’ancre pour une exotique nature!” (and the destinations planned in each case are distant and exotic). Both refer to the song of sailors: “when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused” (32): “Mais, ô mon coeur, entend le chant des matelots!” As the poet regards “la clarté deserte de ma lampe / Sur le vide papier que la blancheur défend”, Eveline stares at her own written expression of feeling which has become symbolically blank and formless: “The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct” (32). As the poet casts a sceptical eye over his initial romantic impulses (“Et, peut-être, les mats, invitant les orages / Sont-ils de ceux qu’un vent penche sur les naufrages / Perdus”), so Eveline’s clenching of the iron railings at the North Wall might contain a wariness of what she will actually find in Buenos Ayres (“I know these sailor chaps”, as Eveline’s father remarks [32]).

Why should Joyce choose to evoke Mallarmé, a famously difficult French poet in the context of the emotional struggles of a modest young Dublin woman? This is a radical, experimental connection, and my feeling here is that Joyce wants to suggest the centrality in human consciousness of the sharpness of the desire to abandon domestic responsibility (“Escape!”) however much this yearning carries with it a recognition of the impossibility of exotic release. Spiritual experience is not the preserve of educated aesthetes: “les cruels espoirs” which exist in Mallarmé’s poem also permeate Eveline’s world of yellowing photographs, dust,

¹⁸ *Stéphane Mallarmé, Collected Poems*, trans. by Henry Weinfeld (California: University of California Press, 1994), p.21. Weinfeld translates the poem thus: ‘Sea breeze’, “The flesh is sad, alas, and there’s nothing but words! / To take flight, far off! I sense that somewhere the birds / Are drunk to be amid strange spray and skies. / Nothing, not the old gardens reflected in the eyes, / Can now restrain this sea-drenched heart, O night, / Nor the lone splendour of my lamp on the white / Paper which the void leaves undefiled, / Nor the young mother suckling her child. / Steamer with gently swaying masts, depart! / Weigh anchor for a landscape of the heart! / Boredom made desolate by hope’s cruel spells / Retains its faith in ultimate farewells! / And maybe the masts are such as are inclined / To shipwreck driven by tempestuous wind. / No fertile isle, no spar on which to cling...But oh, my heart, listen to the sailors sing!”

and broken harmoniums. As Eveline observes, in her engagingly understated way, it is “a hard life” (31).

In ‘The Dead’, so much attention has been paid to Gabriel’s apparent spiritual awakening at the close of the story that Gretta’s own semi-visionary experience seems to have been largely ignored:

Mr D’Arcy came from the pantry, fully swathed and buttoned, and in a repentant tone told them the history of his cold. Everyone gave him advice and said it was a great pity and urged him to be very careful of his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife who did not join in the conversation. She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before. She was in the same attitude and seemed unaware of the talk about her. At last she turned towards them and Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and that her eyes were shining. A sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart. (213)

Gretta appears abstracted here in a similar manner to Hynes at the end of his recitation of the Parnell poem, flushed, and in a world of her own away from the banal exchanges surrounding her. We are told twice that she does not engage in the conversation, a silence which is all the more pointed since she is so spirited in the earlier parts of the story: her teasing of Gabriel about his galoshes in front of the aunts, her whispered gossipy but shrewd appraisal of Bartell D’Arcy as conceited, her excited response to the idea of a trip to Galway, her light raillery with Molly Ivors as Molly leaves the party mysteriously. Her stillness similarly strikes us as a contrast to her previous physical liveliness: her waltzing, her giving “a little jump” (191) when hearing about the proposed Galway trip, her serving of pudding at the end of the meal. The word “attitude” here both suggests physical poise (the composure of a painting or sculpture as Gabriel observed earlier

when watching her) and general demeanour. She has been in this transported state for some moments since “in the same attitude” refers back to Gabriel’s appreciation of her when leaning on the banister listening to ‘The Lass of Aughrim’. (In the meantime she has walked down the staircase to join the rest of the party and there has been a slightly drawn-out conversation about Bartell D’Arcy, the unusual snowy weather, and the story of the singer’s cold and everyone’s expressions of sympathy for him). That Gretta temporarily risks the appearance of impoliteness by not including herself in the social circle in the hallway during this exchange (“at last she turned to them”) indicates how far she is removed mentally from the physical situation she finds herself in.

The focusing on Gretta’s hair and ecstatic facial appearance presents her as similar to the typical spiritualized heroine of Celtic Twilight writing. Her “rich bronze” hair links to her west country origins and sets her up as the epitome of Irish womanhood with “bronze” (as opposed to, say, ‘red’ or ‘copper’ or ‘auburn’,) possessing epic, classical connotations. Lora MacLean, the heroine of Fiona MacLeod’s *Pharais* (1894), for example, has “hair dusky as twilight, but interwrought with threads of bronze that, in the shine of fire or sun, made an evasive golden gleam.”¹⁹ The implied passion of such hair colouring is strengthened by the double association with fire in the description of the intensifying effects of the “flame of the gas” on her hair and Gabriel’s Degas-like memory-image of Gretta recently drying her hair in front of the fire at their home (such a picture of private female intimacy reinforces the feeling here that Gretta is in a world of her own). She has the aura of a pre-Raphaelite portrait in her flame-haired, faraway yearning intensity, yet she is surrounded by self-pitying and fussy conversation about someone’s cold. The detail of Gretta’s “shining” eyes similarly taps into typical Celtic Twilight imagery suggesting a spiritually energized state. Yeats’s idealized peasant, Paddy Flynn, is “bright-eyed,”²⁰ and A.E. used the term ‘shining ones’ for visionary beings whom he identified with the

¹⁹ Fiona MacLeod, *Pharais*, p.4

²⁰ Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight*, p.3

nymphs and dryads of classical mythology.²¹

There is “mystery” in Gretta’s “attitude”, as Gabriel senses earlier (211), since at this point we do not know the hidden reason why Gretta feels so moved by her hearing again of ‘The Lass of Aughrim’. The narrative itself at this moment is charged with hidden significance as we only retrospectively become aware of Michael Furey’s invisible, haunting presence through details which at first seem unimportant. It is appropriate that “the flame of the gas” highlights Gretta’s lustrous bronze hair since we will later discover that the subject of her thoughts once worked at the gasworks in Galway. There is an implicit contrast, too, between Bartell D’Arcy and Michael Furey. Both are fine singers in different degrees of ill health, though whereas the former, “fully swathed and buttoned” (213), is full of self-regarding concern about his voice, the latter shows reckless abandon in his breaking out to see Gretta in the pouring rain when he is so obviously ill. That Bartell D’Arcy might have performed ‘The Lass of Aughrim’ as a romantic overture towards Miss O’Callaghan, the two being alone together at the end of the evening, (“it’s Bartell D’Arcy singing and he wouldn’t sing all the night” [211-2]), adds to the piquancy of the contrast as Michael Furey used to sing the song for Gretta during their courtship.

Gretta’s momentarily transformative experience began as she looked for her hat and coat at what she must have thought was the *end* of the evening’s excitement and drama. The everyday normality of looking for her hat and coat belie the intense nature of what is around the corner for Gretta. As Gabriel tells his story about his grandfather and his horse, and as Freddy Malins leads the pantomime over the cab and the right directions home, what is passing through her thoughts as she stands so still listening to Bartell D’Arcy singing? She might, as Gabriel seems to imagine later, feel regret that she was never able to marry the man she really loved and had to settle for second best in her present husband. Perhaps she feels regret that her own passion never quite

²¹ A.E.’s Dana, who embodies magic and dreams, reveals “I shine afar, till men may not divine / Whether it is the stars or the beloved / They follow with rapt spirit” (‘Dana’, *Collected Poems*, p.37), and the visionary druidess of *Deirdre* can see “the shining life beyond this” (*Deirdre*, p.12).

matched that of Michael's for her. (Should *she* have broken her family's rule that she was not allowed to visit him?) She could be feeling guilty that she was, at some level, responsible for Michael's death. There may be a nostalgia for her youth. Possibly she feels a complex kind of happiness in regard to her own vitality and love for her husband in the face of potentially life-sapping grief. She might feel all these emotions yet feel them, as her radiant appearance implies, superseded by a sense of joy at hearing this plaintive song, performed however uncertainly.

As Bartell D'Arcy's broken, tragic folk song of the west carries Gretta back in time to Michael Furey, so Mary Jane's austere, demanding "Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages" (186), played formally to a "hushed drawing room", moves Gabriel to call to mind his dead mother. Again, the ghostly memory seems to come from nowhere, and Gabriel has, in fact, already expressed his wish not to be in the room. The complexity of Mary Jane's piece and its association with a stringent examination links in Gabriel's mind with his memory of his mother as the "brains carrier" of the family and the guiding hand pushing him successfully through university. Gabriel seems to be his mother's son in his reserved detachment from the festivities since she is described as "serious and matronly" (187), qualities evident in her pious naming her son Constantine and her setting up of her two sons in respectable professions (teaching, the priesthood); she died at her son's house at the grave-sounding "Monkstown".

Gabriel's behaviour at the party suggests his mother's ghostly influence. She was obviously the dominant presence in his youth and her emphasis on academic learning has carried through to his schoolteaching, his literary reviews, his self-regarding allusions to classical writers. Perhaps his rather fussy controlling of his children, which Gretta teases him about, replicates his own upbringing. Mrs Conroy's social snobbery, exemplified in her "sullen opposition" to Gabriel's marrying someone who is "country cute" and the naming of her sons as an indication of her being "sensible of the dignity of family life", filters into her son's attitudes. Gabriel smiles inwardly at Lily's working-class pronunciation of his name, feels culturally superior to the men who are "indelicately clacking" (179), and sees himself as "humiliated" (221) by a rival who worked at the gasworks. This is ironic given that his mother's frosty manner

towards Gretta causes “a shadow” to pass over his face in remembered irritation, an irony made all the more acute since his dark scowl itself recalls her “sullen” refusal to accept Gretta.

One of the ideas of Gabriel’s speech is the need to pass on the tradition of hospitality from one generation to the next, but, ironically, his own lack of warmth and generosity of spirit suggests what his mother has transmitted to himself. As Mrs Alving observes with resignation in Ibsen’s *Ghosts* (1881):

But I’m inclined to think that we are all ghosts, Pastor Manders; it’s not only the things we’ve inherited from our fathers and mothers that live on in us, but all sorts of dead ideas and beliefs, and things of that sort. They’re not actually alive in us, but they’re rooted there all the same, and we can’t rid ourselves of them. I’ve only to pick up a newspaper, and when I read it I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. I should think there must be ghosts all over the country – as countless as grains of sand. And we are, all of us, so pitifully afraid of the light.²²

Most critics seem to me to overstate Gabriel’s apparent failures: “an urban intellectual with cosmopolitan pretensions;”²³ “this paralytically self-conscious man”, “emotional dwarfism”, “pompous, pedantic, patronising”;²⁴ “Gabriel’s persistent emotional dishonesty and emotional ignorance”.²⁵ There is a harshness in such descriptions which does not accord with the affection in which he is held by his aunts and, in particular, his wife. However, Gabriel’s own “sullen opposition” towards the west of Ireland (Molly Ivors, a holiday in Galway, Michael Furey, initially) suggests a characteristic irritable defensiveness, an habitually ironic, controlling mode.

²² Ibsen, *Ghosts*, trans. Watts, p. 61

²³ Vincent J.Cheng, “‘Terrible Queer Creatures’: Joyce, Cosmopolitanism, and the Inauthentic Irishman”, in *James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity: European Joyce Studies 11*, ed. by Michael Patrick Gillespie (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2001), p. 25 (p.11-39)

²⁴ Daniel R. Schwarz, ‘Gabriel Conroy’s Psyche: Character as Concept in Joyce’s *The Dead*’, in *The Dead*, ed. Daniel R. Schwarz (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1994; in the series ‘Case Studies in Contemporary Fiction’), p.105

²⁵ Jackson and McGinley, *James Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’*, p.199

Touching as his closing spontaneous rush of emotion towards Gretta is, it implies in its intensity how isolated an experience it is for his heart. His and Gretta's marriage has been a "dull existence" (215) and from the evidence of the Morkans' party we might think he is the more responsible for this joyless situation. 'Spiritual paralysis' might be a rather grand way of saying that Gabriel needs to be a warmer, more attentive presence in Gretta's life: "'there's a nice husband for you, Mrs Malins'", (191) Gretta observes in reaction to his ungracious refusal to think about the Galway holiday.

Gabriel's deep feelings seem remote, so that with Lily he "coloured *as if* he felt he had made a mistake" (178), and he reacts to Gretta's teasing about his goloshes "*as if* he were slightly angered" (181). The passion which other characters in the story display appear essentially alien to him: Aunt Kate's fierce attack on the Church in defence of her sister and her memory of the tenor, Parkinson; Mary Jane's rapt piano recital; Aunt Julia's spirited rendition of *Arrayed for the Bridal*; Miss Ivors' patriotism; the Italian tenor recalled by Mr Browne who once sang five encores "introducing a high C every time" (200); the monks' devotion to their duties; the stubborn adoration of Pat Morkan's horse for the statue of William III. Gabriel's speech, by contrast, is a set-piece simulacrum of familial and patriotic passion.

Freddy Malins' role in this respect is that of the fool in the tradition of Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* (1509), a figuration hinted at in Gabriel's unkind description of him as "sottish" (218). Joyce sets up the contrast by describing Freddy as "of Gabriel's size and build" (184) and having Aunt Kate ask Gabriel to be Freddy's shadow for the evening. With his "bronchitic laughter" and "pallid face" (186) he pre-empted Michael Furey as the Christmas, Paterian ghost warning Gabriel to burn with a gem-like flame against the grey, creeping shadow of the grave. His leaving of the Morkans' house at dawn "puffing and steaming [...] speechless with laughter" (210) serves as the model for Gabriel's own idealised leave-taking: "better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age." (224)

It seems facile to view Michael Furey as a satiric presence illustrating Gabriel's romantic failures as a husband since no-one could compete with his tragic story. It is also clear that Gabriel

does love his wife: his adoration after seeing her listening to Bartell D'Arcy's singing has been anticipated by his earlier regard for her when watching her laugh over his solicitude: "she broke into a peal of laughter and glanced at her husband, whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair." (180) Rather, Michael Furey acts as a mythic symbol for Gabriel of what love is at its most intense, an Irish Romeo who, against his family's wishes and surrounded by mortal danger, gazes pleadingly up at his beloved who stands at her bedroom window (Shakespeare's story has been evoked through the mention of "the balcony scene" picture on the Morkans' wall [186]). In his chivalric, troubadour-like courtliness Michael Furey's story is an elegy for a romantic past, the "spacious days" of Gabriel's speech (104). The spectre of Michael Furey's refinement, his being "gentle" (222) and representing old-fashioned courtship rituals of singing and walking in the countryside, rebukes, at the collection's close, the pretensions of would-be lovers of contemporary Dublin: Bob Doran's timidity, Corley's swagger and wheedling manipulation, Gabriel's aggressive desire to "overmaster" Gretta. As Lily bitterly remarks, "the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you." (178) This archetypal vision coalesces with Gabriel's tender memories of honeymoon first love and the strength of his erotic desire to create a moment of revelation which conflates the mystical and the domestic: "generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love." (224)

The evocation of Michael Furey terrifies Gabriel partly because it jolts him into a sudden and disorientating re-evaluation of his marriage:

A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. (222-3)

Has Gretta ever really loved him? How authentic were their intimate honeymoon moments when all the time she might have been nurturing her love for Michael Furey secretly in her heart? His

fear derives in some measure from the paradox of how difficult it is to sense, never mind identify and control, the complex, unknown forces which shape one's life, despite their shocking proximity to one's own person. The truth about the 'other' has, uncannily, all the time been lying beneath the apparently familiar surface of his relationship with Gretta. This is a "vague terror" because it is there but not there, a horror glimpsed occasionally but which is always just out of reach, the very identity of "it" ("he shook himself free of it") in itself shifting and elusive. Similarly, the word "impalpable" evokes a sense of nothingness whilst simultaneously suggesting something which *could* be felt. Next to the dynamic formulations "terror", "seized", vindictive", "vague" appears an oxymoron, which implies the contradiction involved in a revelation of something which was always nearly present: in hearing of Michael Furey's romantic sacrifice for Gretta, Gabriel dimly recognizes his own dormant feelings of marital inadequacy. The word "vague" also both fits the sense of Michael's gentleness and his association with the gasworks at Galway since gas is an elegant metaphor for his ghostly, permeating presence through the story.²⁶

The "terror" which Gabriel feels in the presence of Michael Furey is, in part, a rebuke to his perceived sexual inadequacy. Michael represents a mythic ideal of courtship which seamlessly incorporates physical passion and romantic idealism in contrast to Gabriel's wild veering between the sudden and abrupt "clownish lusts" (221) which he feels before entering his room at The Gresham Hotel and the more typical low sex-drive which characterizes his sexual relationship with Gretta ("the years of their dull existence together" [215]). That is to say, for all the romance and glamour of staying in one of Dublin's finest hotels, it is *Gabriel* who seems the more ghostly of the two men who compete for Gretta's heart. Michael Furey represents the vision of lost youth elaborated in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty,
becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous

²⁶ Gabriel notices how Lily looks paler than usual because of "the gas in the pantry" (177); Aunt Kate jokes that Mr Browne "has been laid on here like the gas...all during the Christmas" (207); Gretta's radiance is enhanced by "the flame of the gas" from the fanlight in the hall (213).

puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which were too much
afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to.
Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!²⁷

Michael Furey, as symbol of the more superstitious, pagan and fertile pre Famine Ireland, rebukes, more generally, the modern celibate and demographically moribund Ireland shaped by Cardinal Cullen's evangelical national church of the mid to late nineteenth century ('The Dead' is populated by celibate figures such as the Misses Morkan's, Mary Jane, and Miss Ivors, and the bachelors, Mr Browne and Freddy Malins).²⁸

The ghost of Michael Furey has a political dimension too in that his pitiable story evokes the historical fate of Catholic Ireland. His broken, yearning qualities symbolise a culture which seemed to be dying in 1907, a year in which Joyce often linked old Ireland with ghosts: John O'Leary, returning from exile, is "a figure from a vanished world",²⁹ consumption and insanity are "the two spectres that sit beside every Irish fireplace",³⁰ ancient Ireland, has, like ancient Egypt, disappeared: "its dirge has been sung and the seal set upon its gravestone."³¹ Michael's song, *The Lass of Aughrim*, hints at the crushing defeat of the Jacobite Irish on the 12th of July 1691 at the hands of William of Orange (who appears in the guise of "King Billy's statue" in the story about Pat Morkan's horse).³² Michael Furey's thwarted musical ambition is symptomatic of the political impotence of Irish Catholicism, his emblematic premature waste symbolised by the picture of the two murdered princes on the wall of the aunts' drawing-room. After Aughrim, Catholic Ireland was forced to endure the yoke of aggressive, wilfully uncomprehending Protestant rule, just as the work-horse, Johnny, in Gabriel's story, suffers the abuse of its owner,

²⁷ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891], p.31. D.L.Lawer notes in the Norton edition of the novel that the speech is based on Matthew Arnold's "worship of youth and fear of declining powers" (Norton, 1988), p.24n.

²⁸ "By 1911 over a quarter of 50-year-old women as well as men had never married, a fact which placed Ireland very high in the European celibacy league table." Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland Since 1870', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. Foster, p. 216

²⁹ 'Fenianism: The Last Fenian' (1907) in *James Joyce, Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p.140

³⁰ 'Home Rule Comes of Age' (1907), *ibid*, p.144

³¹ 'Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages' (1907), *ibid*, p.125

³² "The most disastrous battle in Irish history" according to Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, p. 150

“a very pompous old gentleman”, who shouts at “the tragic part” of the story, “*What do you mean, sir? [...] Most extraordinary conduct! Can’t understand the horse!*” (209). Joyce emphasises this connection by having Gabriel tell the story as Gretta stands on the staircase listening to ‘The Lass of Aughrim’ (which seems to be sung “in the old Irish tonality”). Like Michael, the horse is defiant in his attachment to King Billy’s statue and his sobriquet, “never-to-be-forgotten” mirrors how Gretta has “locked in her heart for so many years” (224) the image of Michael Furey’s eyes.

Snow links both Michael’s ghostly presence and that of Daniel O’Connell, who is treated as if he too were somehow in touch with the real world: “Gabriel pointed to the statue on which lay patches of snow. Then he nodded familiarly to it and waved his hand. – Good night, Dan, he said gaily.” (216) Gretta says of Michael’s death, “I think he died for me”, an echo of a line from Yeats’s *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902) in which the heroine gathers Irishmen to join Wolf Tone’s invading French forces at Killala in 1798. This image of romantic sacrifice replicates Kathleen’s memory of “the yellow-haired Donough that was hanged in Galway” who chivalrously gave his life to follow her, the embodiment of Ireland.³³

Such Catholic political symbolism perhaps explains the reference to “the treeless hills” (225) in the final paragraph of the story. The issue of deforestation was a popular concern at this time (Ireland will be “as treeless as Portugal” one of the characters remarks in Barney Kiernan’s pub in *Ulysses* [423]), and Joyce seems to parallel the elegiac movement towards Michael Furey’s gravestone with a coded lament for Irish economic devastation.³⁴

The contrast between the warmth and abundant luxury of the Morkans’ party and the evocation of Michael Furey as consumptive and shivering in winter rain suggests the marginalization and suffering of Catholic Ireland in the Famine of 1845-9. As Michael looks up yearningly at Gretta’s window, so Gabriel imagines people outside the house “in the snow on the

³³ *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*, p.82

³⁴ “The Irish Nationalist press consistently blamed English land policies for the deforestation of Ireland (by 1904 only a little more than one percent of Ireland was woodland).” Don Gifford, ‘Ulysses’ *Annotated, Notes for James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’*, p.352

quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music.” (203) This connects to the dead of Thomas Moore’s song, ‘Oh, Ye Dead!’ (*Irish Melodies*, 1807-34):

It is true, it is true, we are shadows cold and wan;
And the fair and the brave whom we lov’d on earth are gone,
But still thus ev’n in death,
So sweet the living breath
Of the fields and the flow’rs in our youth we wander’d o’er
That ere, condemn’d, we go
To freeze ‘mid Hecla’s snow,
We would taste it awhile, and think we live once more!³⁵

Joyce could have in mind here the idea of Michael Furey as the ‘Fear-Gorta’ (Man of Hunger) of fairy legend, who is, according to Yeats, “an emaciated phantom” who begs alms in famine time and brings good luck to the giver.³⁶ Michael’s west country origins connect to the symbolism here since this part of Ireland was most affected by the famine:

Regions with varied local economies (notably Ulster, and the east coast) escaped lightly; but the densely populated ‘clachan’ villages of cabins in the west lived through nightmares of starvation, fever, and death. By 1849, after repeated harvest failures, an observer described such settlements as resembling ‘the tombs of a departed race’: which, in a sense, they were.³⁷

Subdued allusion to the Famine perhaps makes more pointed the reference to “hot floury potatoes” during the meal (198) and the celebrated still-life portrait of the lavish and abundant

³⁵ Gifford, *Joyce Annotated, Notes for ‘Dubliners’ and ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’*, p.112

³⁶ Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, p.80

³⁷ Foster, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, p. 201

Christmas fare enjoyed by the guests. The references to the statues of O'Connell and Wellington gesture towards this era, as does the severity of the weather (Mary Jane remarks that "we haven't had snow like it for thirty years" [212]) given the famine years were characterized by unusually cold winters. Cecil Woodham-Smith writes in *The Great Hunger* that "the winter in Ireland of 1846-7 was 'the most severe in living memory', and the longest. Snow fell early in November; frost was continuous; icy gales blew 'perfect hurricanes of snow, hail and sleet'."³⁸

Such a context suggests the figure of James Clarence Mangan as one of the shaping forces of Michael Furey's ghost as a symbol of Irish Catholic victimhood. Joyce revised an earlier essay on Mangan in 1907 and the connections with *The Dead*, which he wrote in the same year, seem coherent. In general terms there is the myth of Mangan's life and writing: the feeble health and early tragic death, the Famine and Young Ireland associations, the poems' characteristic mood of doomed romantic yearning, the association with old songs and ballads through translation, the visions and dreams which recur in his poetry, the laments of national despair. "No other Irish song", Joyce writes, "is as full as those of Mangan of nobly suffered misfortunes and such irreparable devastations of the soul." More particularly, Joyce thinks of Mangan in ghostly terms ("this skinny little man with a waxen face and colourless hair [...] a living skeleton towards the end of his life"), outlines his tremulous character ("delicate lines" [of his face], "a sensitive boy", "reserved with men", "shy with women", "diffidence"), points to his idealization of women ("this figure which he adores recalls the spiritual ambitions and the imaginary loves of the Middle Ages"), and focuses on Mangan's eyes as expressive of spiritual intensity ("his eyes, behind which shone rare glimmers", "those light shining eyes").

The closing lines of Mangan's 'Lament for the Princes of Tir-Owen and Tirconnell', into which the poet has, according to Joyce, put "all the desperate energy of his race", parallel the presentation of Michael Furey outside Gretta's garden:

And though frost glaze to-night the clear dew of his eyes,

³⁸ Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger* (London: Penguin, 1962), p.143

And white ice-gauntlets glove his noble fair fingers o'er,
A warm dress is to him that lightning-garb he ever wore,
The lightning of the soul, not skies.

Hugh marched forth to the fight – I grieved to see him so depart;
And lo! To-night he wanders frozen, rain-drenched, sad, betrayed –
But the memory of the lime-white mansions his right hand hath laid
*In ashes warms the hero's heart.*³⁹

The Mangan identification here suggests an ambiguity about Michael Furey, as John Blades suggests: “he does not die out of love but out of something negative and probably obsessive such as infatuation [...] His death is an idle waste and negative.”⁴⁰ This view seems overstated and to ignore Michael’s sense of the inevitability of his consumptive death (although Gretta naively hopes she will see him in the summer), but it does alert us to a strain of self-destructiveness and reckless youthfulness in the Michael Furey myth which is significant in political-symbolic terms.

It is natural that as the symbol of old Ireland Michael Furey should, coming from Galway, possess traditional Celtic aspects. He is, for Gretta, the subject of vision (which links to her earlier rapt, abstracted state when listening to ‘The Lass of Aughrim’):

- I can see him so plainly, she said after a moment. Such eyes as he had: big dark eyes! And such an expression in them – an expression! [...] I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree. (220, 223)

He appears to Gabriel as a ghost: “in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young

³⁹ James Joyce, *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, ed. Barry, p.129-35

⁴⁰ John Blades, *How To Study James Joyce* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1996), p.36

man standing under a dripping tree.” (224)

There is also evocation here of the tradition of the fairies carrying off a child who is too exceptional or beautiful to live in the mortal world and replacing him or her with a changeling, an idea which Yeats explored in poems such as *The Host of the Air* (1899), *The Unappasable Host* (1899), and *The Stolen Child* (1889):

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
*For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.*⁴¹

Although he is old enough to work at the gasworks and to constitute a rival to Gabriel for Gretta's affections, Michael is referred to as a boy four times (as well as a “man” [223] and a “young man” [224]): “‘It was a young boy I used to know’”, “this delicate boy” (220), “a boy in the gasworks”, “such a gentle boy” (222)”. (Jackson and McGinley note that the phrase “was such a gentle boy” originally read “had such a gentle manner”).⁴² The suggestion is strengthened by Robert Welch's observation that “fairies were often said to abduct a talented singer, dancer, or musician”, since Michael had been planning to study music and “had a very good voice” (222).⁴³

That Michael Furey is seventeen appears significant in a context of Celtic magic. Peter Beresford Ellis, in *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology*, tells us:

Seventeen is mystic: seventeen kings accept gifts at Cashel; several events are listed as taking place after periods of seventeen days or seventeen years; there are said to be seventeen petty kingdoms in Meath; a youth becomes a man at the age of seventeen years; a druid suggests Mael Duin takes

⁴¹ *W.B. Yeats, The Poems*, ed. Albright, p. 44

⁴² Jackson and McGinley, *James Joyce's 'Dubliners'*, p.195

⁴³ Welch, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*, p.524

seventeen men with him on his voyage; and on the fabulous Island of Women they are greeted by seventeen maidens.⁴⁴

This might explain why Joyce changed Michael Furey's age from nineteen to seventeen.⁴⁵

Michael Furey's first name links to Michael Feeney and Michael Bodkin, Nora Barnacle's youthful loves who served as Joyce's models for the story,⁴⁶ and to the biblical archangel, but it also has another possible connection. John Sharkey, in *Celtic Mysteries*, explains that

St. Michael [...] who is shown holding the scales and weighing the souls on some Irish stone crosses, becomes a reincarnation of Thoth, Egyptian god of the Underworld [...] as a solar entity is the primal force that holds the angelic and earthly elements of his own nature in balance.⁴⁷

At the close of *The Dead*, Michael Furey's presence pre-empts Gabriel's awareness of such an underworld, "where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" (224).

Gabriel's sexual anxiety combines with his inchoate sense of himself as an inadequate Irishman when compared to Michael Furey. It is as though he sees himself as an old, tired Thomas Moore poem ("a well-meaning sentimentalist" [221]) whose fading power is cruelly exposed by the raw lyricism of *Hyde's Love Songs of Connacht* (1892).⁴⁸ That the ghostly

⁴⁴ Peter Beresford Ellis, *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p.184

⁴⁵ Jackson and McGinley, *James Joyce's 'Dubliners'*, p.194

⁴⁶ Brenda Maddox, *Nora* (London: Minerva, 1988), p.26-8

⁴⁷ John Sharkey, *Celtic Mysteries* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p.10-11

⁴⁸ Gretta may have read the poems when they were published 14 years previously. Mary Colum attests to the explosive power of Hyde's collection for young women in the early 1890s: "These anonymous West-of-Ireland songs were mostly women's love songs, and they were unlike any love poetry we read in other languages. They had a directness of communication, an intensity of emotion which, I think, is the special Celtic gift to literature. [...] They moved me because they were in the voices of youthful yearning [...] love was an aspiration of the heart and spirit to be expressed in beautiful words by people who had never handled a book except a prayer book." (Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p.306) The most popular poem in the collection was 'Ringleted Youth of My Love', a poem of loss and abandonment with a reference to snow: "And I thought after that you were snow, / The cold snow on top of the mountain" (*Irish Classics*, p.308)

presence which menaces him is “vindictive” recalls his perception of Molly Ivors’ cruelty in publicly questioning his patriotism: “she had tried to make him ridiculous before people, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit’s eyes.” (191) Now he experiences again the charge of being a “West Briton” (190) as he is assailed by guilty fears that he has betrayed tribal impulses through his continental holidays and fashions, his writing for ‘The Daily Express’, his confession that he is “sick” of Ireland (190), and his longing to be outside and close to Wellington’s statue rather than being at the supper-table, an image of identification with a celebrated betrayer of his Irish roots. That his goloshes are “guttapercha things” (181) suggests, too, a link to the British Empire through the association of Indian rubber. In denying his wife the pleasure of a trip to Galway, her home-town and the story’s image of the west of Ireland, Gabriel symbolically demonstrates the fusion of his betrayal of what should be most close to him. “Gabriel has established his autonomous manhood by marrying a woman to whom his mother objects, but the ‘objectional’ aspects of Gretta’s identity have subsequently been denied and suppressed in order to protect Gabriel’s own fragile equilibrium.”⁴⁹

The ghost of Michael Furey wages war, as it were, with the ghost of Gabriel’s mother for possession of Gabriel’s soul. The resolution of this conflict is evident at the story’s close in Gabriel’s emotional outpouring as he envisions Michael Furey at the end of Gretta’s garden. His crying, “tears gathered more thickly in his eyes” (224), mystically identifies him with Gretta, who saw Michael through the thick blur of rain pouring down her window-pane, and with Michael himself since in Gabriel’s vision he is standing under a “dripping” tree. Gabriel’s tears conflate the physical, the psychological and the semi-supernatural in terms of the conditions which produce the vision of Michael Furey, since the liquid gathering “thickly” and the “partial darkness” literally blur Gabriel’s eyesight and render vague and shifting his visual perceptions.

Gabriel’s reverie and ghostly vision take place at dawn of the day after the party:

⁴⁹ Margot Backus, ‘Sexual Figures and Historical Repression in *The Dead*’, in *James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity: European Joyce Studies* 11, ed. Gillespie, p.128 (p.111-131)

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the houses
and the river [...] the murky morning sky [...]

- We don't want any light. We have light enough from the street.

[...] the partial darkness (214-24)

This is literally a Celtic Twilight moment of spiritual illumination, though the setting is the worldly and sophisticated Gresham Hotel in the modern, urban, Anglicised Dublin (the hotel was founded by an Englishman).⁵⁰ As John Sharkey notes, “the Celtic Mysteries took shape in the flux of in-between states, such as the twilight between light and dark or night and day, or in the dew that was neither rain nor sea-water, nor river nor well-water; and used the sacred mistletoe that was neither a plant nor a tree.”⁵¹ Yeats, in a review of Lady Wilde's *Ancient Curses, Charms and Usages of Ireland* called ‘Tales from the Twilight’, explains how this time of day (an hour before dawn) is creative and transformative, the temporal flux in which druids would practise their rituals and witches would work magic:

The grey of the morning is the Irish Witches' hour, when they gather in the shades of large houses and suck the cattle dry, and the grey morning melancholy runs through the legends of my people. Then it is that this world and the other draw near, and not at midnight upon Brockens amidst the foul revelry of evil souls and in the light of the torches of hell.⁵²

Gabriel's semi-conscious state of mind at this point (his dream-like vision of Michael Furey, his watching the snowflakes “sleepily”, the manner in which “his soul swooned slowly”), mirrors this morning twilight setting. Again, in Celtic mythology, dreamworld is associated with spiritual revelation. In Yeats's short story, *Rosa Alchemica* (1897), for example, the narrator is

⁵⁰ Ulick O'Connor, *The Gresham Hotel* (Cork: Guy & Co., 1964), p.1

⁵¹ Sharkey, *Celtic Mysteries*, p.11

⁵² Mary Flannery, *Yeats and Magic* (London: Gerrards Cross, Colin Smythe), p.67

made to fall into “a dream” as part of an initiation ceremony in which he has a vision of Eros and comes to understand what love is.⁵³ William Sharp / Fiona MacLeod’s poem, ‘The Bugles of Dreamland’ (1896), similarly suggests the idea of the dream as a mystical journey towards occult reality:

Swiftly the dews of of the gloaming are falling:
Faintly the bugles of Dreamland are calling.
O hearken, my darling, the elf flutes are blowing
The shining-eyed folk from the hillside are flowing,
I’ the moonshine the wild apple blossoms are snowing,
And louder and louder where the white dews are falling
The fairy bugles of Dreamland are calling.⁵⁴

According to J.W. Foster, soft tapping on the window pane was an omen of death in the culture of the Aran Islanders (“a few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window” (225), and travelling westwards was a symbol of death in Celtic mythology.⁵⁵ Gabriel’s planned “journey westward” (225) both metaphorically suggests a mythic, dream-world pilgrimage towards acceptance of his Celtic origins and a literal acquiescence towards Gretta’s desire to join Molly Ivors’ party travelling to Galway in the summer.

The second verse of ‘The Bugles of Dreamland’ indicates how entering the dream state is also a mystical metaphor for leaving the mortal world and entering “that other world [...] a grey impalpable world” (224-5) which Gabriel associates with Michael Furey:

O what are the bugles of Dreamland calling

⁵³ W.B. Yeats, *The Secret Rose*, ed. by W. Gould, P. Marcus and M. Sidnell (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1981), p.144

⁵⁴ *Lyra Celtica*, William Sharp, p.26

⁵⁵ Foster, *Fictions of the Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p.68-9

There where the dews of the gloaming are falling?
Come away from the weary old world of tears,
Come away, come away to where one never hears
The slow weary drip of the slow weary years,
But peace and deep rest till the white dews are falling
And the blithe bugle-laughters through Dreamland are calling.

Gabriel's dream-reverie takes him away from his sense of the here-and-now (Gretta, a hotel bedroom) towards a mystical land where the dead are still alive in the manner of Moore's poem: "his own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world" (224-5).

As with the presentation of Michael Furey and the use of twilight setting and dream imagery, the language here is similarly allusive towards Celtic mythology:

'Otherworld' [is] a general term for the various lands of the gods, both good and evil, and for the place where one was reborn after death [...] The Celts were one of the first European peoples to evolve a doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Their basic belief was that death was only a changing of place and that life went on with all its forms and goods in another world, a world of the dead which gave up living souls to this world. A constant exchange of souls was always taking place between the two worlds; death in this world brought a soul to the Otherworld and death in the Otherworld brought a soul to this world.⁵⁶

In Gabriel's revelation, Joyce fuses at least four areas of thought: this Celtic tradition of spiritual death and re-awakening through ghosts communing with the living; the Ibsenite metaphor, suggested by a title such as *When We Dead Awaken*, of the soul struggling through the

⁵⁶ Beresford Ellis, *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology*, p.193

encrustation of bourgeois pseudo-morality and materialism towards self-knowledge and a re-appraisal of social reality; the Paterian emphasis on living life intensely because of its short duration (“better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age” [224]); and the Catholic belief in giving an account of one’s life at the seat of judgment (the story’s final words “upon all the living and the dead” echo The Apostle’s Creed’s formulation “hence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.”)⁵⁷

The *sprezzatura* description of the snow falling across Ireland in the final paragraph is, I think, essentially epic in design. The grandeur comprises not only the sense of geographical sweep as the focus moves from west of Dublin to Galway, and the evocation of the whole of Irish history (“all the living and the dead”), but also a gesturing towards a profound, age-old insight about human life. As with Leopold Bloom’s meditation on “the apathy of the stars” (*Ulysses*, 867) in which he finds a cosmic perspective for his private anxieties about his wife’s infidelity, so Gabriel implicitly transmutes “the strange friendly pity” (223) he feels for Gretta into a stoic intuition of the fragility and brevity of man’s existence in the light of vast, indifferent natural processes (“the snow falling faintly through the universe”). The snow’s coldness and soft grace contrasts, for example, with Gabriel’s “riot of emotions” some minutes earlier (“a fever of rage and desire”, “the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins”, “the shame that burned upon his forehead” [218-224]). Emphasis on the snow’s falling develops the closing mood of resignation and lassitude hinted at through images to do with decline and gentle recession.⁵⁸

Perhaps Joyce presents the transforming effect of Michael Furey upon Gabriel, (a state of flux suggested by the “mutinous” waves of the Shannon) through a parallel with the classical epic convention of a divinity visiting a hero at dawn in a dream or vision. In particular, the notion of Gabriel preparing himself for a “journey westward” is a form of spiritual homecoming

⁵⁷ Donald T. Torchiana suggests “striking” correspondences between Gabriel and St. Patrick. ‘James Joyce’s Method in ‘Dubliners’’, in *The Irish Short Story*, ed. Raffroidi and Brown, p. 139-40

⁵⁸ “the yielding mood”, “now that she had fallen to him”, “he said softly”, “he said again, softly”, “when he spoke he was humble and indifferent”, “her voice was veiled and sad”, “he was in decline, they said”, Gretta “flung herself downward on the bed”, Gabriel let her hand “fall gently and walked quietly to the window”, “his curious eyes rested long upon her face”, “a petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side”, “the blinds would be drawn down”, Gabriel “lay down beside his wife”, “one by one they were all becoming shades”, “a dripping tree”, “fading out”, “dissolving and dwindling” (219-225).

comparable with Aeneas's journey across the sea to "the Western Land" (Hesperia, which he does not yet know to be Italy) through which he must prove himself to be a new kind of hero and the worthy founder of the Roman race. There is an epic echo, too, in the description of the snow falling, which Richard Ellmann suggests is a borrowing of Homer's description of arrows falling in the Trojan War:

The snowflakes fall thick and fast on a winter's day. The winds are lulled, and the snow falls incessant, covering the tops of the mountains, and the hills, and the plain where the lotus-tree grows, and the cultivated fields, and they are falling by the inlets and shores of the foaming sea, but are silently dissolved by the waves.⁵⁹

The idea of snow being "general all over Ireland" is in itself a magical-seeming occurrence, especially as snow is so rare in the island. The appearance of snow seems all the more special since it falls in the early hours of Epiphany, the Morkans' party having taken place on the evening of January 5th.⁶⁰ There might be a deeper significance to the snow's magic in terms of ancient Celtic beliefs, which constitutes part of the national epic dimension of the story's close. Renan, in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races* (1854), describes traditional Celtic "faith in nature and her magic influences" as both an instinctive appreciation of beauty and a mystical apprehension of spiritual truth:

This mythology is nothing more than a transparent naturalism, not that anthropomorphic naturalism of Greece and India [...] but in some measure a realistic naturalism, the love of nature for herself, the vivid impression of her magic, accompanied by the sorrowful feeling that man knows,

⁵⁹ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p.251

⁶⁰ David Cowart, 'From Nuns' Island to Monkstown: Celibacy, Concupiscence, and Sterility in *The Dead*', *James Joyce Quarterly* 26.4 (Summer, 1989), p.500 (p.499-505)

when, face to face with her, he believes that he hears her commune with him concerning his origin and destiny.⁶¹

The falling of this Christmas snow (the only extended description of nature in *Dubliners*) seems to constitute for Gabriel a mythic surrender to the beauty of his country and a veiled acceptance of mysterious forces which are beyond his control. For Joyce it seems a valedictory blessing for all Irishmen.

T.W. Rolleston elaborates on the ancient Celtic idea of mystical communion in nature which Renan points to:

The fundamental conception of magic is that of the spiritual vitality of all nature. This spiritual vitality was not, as in polytheism, conceived as separated from nature in distinct divine personalities. It was implicit and immanent in nature; obscure, undefined, invested with all the awfulness of a power whose limits and nature are enveloped in impenetrable mystery. In its remote origin it was doubtless, as many facts appear to show, associated with the cult of the dead, for death was looked upon as the resumption into nature, and as the investment with vague and uncontrollable powers, of a spiritual force formerly embodied in the concrete, limited, manageable, and therefore less awful form of a living human personality.⁶²

The close of *The Dead* in this respect is similar to the typical conclusion of the mystical Celtic stories of William Sharp / Fiona MacLeod, such as *Silence Farm* (1899) in which the heroine instinctively knows she must stay on her land as “thus only, she knew, could she live and keep

⁶¹ Renan, *The Poetry of the Celtic Races*, p. 24, 22

⁶² Rolleston, *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race*, p.60

her soul alive”;⁶³ or the end of *Pharais* (1894), which means ‘paradise’, in which snowfall presages the hero’s “vision” of entering the Otherworld:

There was no wind, so the flakes fell light as feathers, grey in the gathering dusk as the down that falls from the wind-swept breasts of wild swans in their flight to or from the Polar seas.

Denser and denser it came; soundless at first, but after a while with a faint rustling and whirring, as though the flakes were wings of invisible birds of silence [...]

A little later, looking out into the night, they saw the flakes drift over and past them like a myriad of winged things hurrying before a wind that pursued, devouring. The island lay in a white shroud [...] The exceeding beauty of sunrise over that vast stretch of waters, over the isle in its stainless white shroud, filled him with an exalted joy [...] ‘It is so beautiful. Pharais has opened to us at last’.⁶⁴

Similarly, Martyn’s *Maeve* ends with the spectacle of frost covering the earth as the heroine, through her death, travels to Tir nan-oghe: “the whole country is white, as if it were covered with snow”.⁶⁵

Compared to such Celtic Twilight imagery of revelation, Joyce’s presentation of Gabriel’s spiritual awakening is at once more mythical and domestic, and more traditionally Irish in its blending of the ancient Celtic and the Catholic:

It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. (225)

⁶³ Fiona MacLeod, *Silence Farm*, p.242

⁶⁴ Fiona MacLeod, *Pharais*, p.167-9

⁶⁵ Martyn, *The Heather Field* and *Maeve*, p.125

The idea of change permeates the close of 'The Dead'. Gabriel possesses a new acknowledgment of the power of romantic passion: "a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul [...] He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love". There is the image of "the solid world [...] dissolving and dwindling", and the evocation of "the mutinous Shannon waves" (224). Perhaps in his presentation of Gabriel's state of consciousness at this point, which, in its compassion, imagination, and humility, constitutes an almost ideal human moment, Joyce has in mind Aristotle's idea of *entelechy*, where goodness is defined by a perpetual process of becoming, and is characterized by an unstatic state predicated by the idea of potential and the need for endless growth. This would illustrate Joyce's original claim in 'The Holy Office' that, in contrast to popular Dublin Platonism, he is "Bringing to tavern and to brothel / The mind of witty Aristotle".⁶⁶ It would also reach back to the traditional Celtic celebration of magical transformation which Yeats explores in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899)⁶⁷ and which is symbolized by the mythic figures of the Shan Van Vocht and Mananaan.

In 'Eveline' and 'The Dead', Joyce explores the complications of Yeats's phrase "the memory of the race".⁶⁸ He turns a comforting Theosophical / patriotic concept, which offers hope of unity and connection, into visions which appear unexpectedly from worlds which are uncannily both familiar and strange. The fleeting apparitions of a broken mother and a boy from the gasworks become obscure symbols of tribal imperatives. The Gaelic cry, "Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!" and a vision of yearning, broken "Furey" become the lament of the Famine generation for a confused contemporary generation, driven by a different, spiritually turbulent hunger. Eveline's mother crying out, in Gaelic, "in final craziness", links her symbolically to the Famine generation since this apocalypse intensified dramatically the decline of the national language. English had become the language of economic progress, the language of the future

⁶⁶ James Joyce, *Poems and Exiles*, ed. Mays, p. 103

⁶⁷ Poems such as 'The Song of Wandering Aengus', 'He mourns for the Change that has come upon him and his Beloved, and longs for the End of the World', and 'He thinks of his Past Greatness when a Part of the Constellations of Heaven'.

⁶⁸ Yeats, *Autobiographies* (quoted in Flannery, *Yeats and Magic*, p.92)

since by the early nineteenth century Irish was “a sort of Romantic ruin”.⁶⁹ The Gothic chant of “Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!”, redolent with images of waste and fear, haunt a modern generation striving to reconcile patriotism and duty and personal fulfilment. James Fairhall argues that:

we may see Eveline’s mother as deliriously exclaiming words half remembered from her parents’ or grandparents’ native Gaelic, a language displaced by English when the family moved from country to city in response to socioeconomic forces including the periodic threat of famine. Hence the cry ‘Derevaun Seraun!’ reflects a traumatic history repressed by Joyce’s Dubliners, who barely acknowledge the existence of the site of the trauma.⁷⁰

Eveline’s mother and Michael Furey answer Terry Eagleton’s careless and strident question: “where is the Famine in the literature of the Revival? Where is it in Joyce? [...] If the Famine stirred some to angry rhetoric, it would seem to have traumatized others into muteness.”⁷¹ Gretta’s eloquent question, rather, touches the depth of Catholic Ireland’s trauma: “Isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young as that?” (221)

⁶⁹ Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, p.63. Roy Foster writes of the consequences of the Famine, “Another casualty was the Irish language – driven out as much by the growth of the market economy and the transport revolution, as by the Famine dislocations.” *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, p.204. F.S. Lyons notes that in 1845 about 4 million people spoke Irish, but by 1850, in a population of 6.5 million, no more than 23% spoke Irish. *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.8

⁷⁰ Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, p.75. Fairhall notes that “many petty-bourgeois Dubliners, the class depicted by Joyce, either were rural migrants themselves or were their children or grandchildren, and would have had relatives with memories of the great hunger of the 1840s.”

⁷¹ Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London / New York, 1995), p.13

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