

BACHELARD'S POETICS AND THE CATHOLIC FAITH:
INSULARITY AND RESILIENCE IN
JAMES JOYCE'S *DUBLINERS*

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DEDICATION

To Virginia Beam, my mother.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In *The Soul of Man*, published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1891, Oscar Wilde wrote the following:

Now and then, in the course of the century, a great man of science, like Darwin; a great poet, like Keats; a fine critical spirit, like M. Renan; a supreme artist, like Flaubert, has been able to isolate himself, to keep himself out of reach of the clamorous claims of others, to stand „under the shelter of the wall“, as Plato puts it, and so to realize the perfection of what was in him. . . . (1)

Wilde’s discussions of great artists offers numerous striking correlations to the artistic path chosen and traveled by James Joyce, and had Wilde lived a longer life—he died in 1900—one feels confident he would also have named Joyce as a great twentieth-century artist who had realized “the perfection of what was in him.” Wilde wrote that men of “private means” had a distinct advantage in realizing “Individualism.” He lists Byron, Shelley, Browning, Victor Hugo, and Baudelaire as men who “have been able to realize their personality more or less completely,” and, Wilde points out, “Not one of these men ever did a single day’s work for hire” (6). Those familiar with the life of James Joyce may, by this comparison, revere his early accomplishment of writing *Dubliners*

even more, achieved as it was amid odd jobs and sporadic income. Self-exiling himself from Ireland, Joyce followed a pattern not only of his acknowledged mentor, Henrik Ibsen, who left his native Norway, but also of Byron and Shelley who, as Wilde puts it, “got out of England as soon as possible” (8-9). Joyce got out of Dublin as soon as possible, claiming that he had to escape from Ireland in order to write, but these other examples of luminaries who distanced themselves from the society into which they were born show that escape is necessary even from a more cosmopolitan environment, if that environment imposes strictures that thwart a gifted individual’s self-realization.

In this thesis I am concerned with the self-realization of Joyce’s *Dubliners*, with a focus on certain of Joyce’s protagonists who demonstrate admirable qualities generally overlooked in critical readings that dwell on the very bleak aspects of these individuals’ lives. *Dubliners* is comprised of fifteen short stories that obliquely illuminate the insularity of Dublin and its citizens, and the ways in which this insularity reinforced the resiliency and endurance of a burdened people. *Dubliners* is about Dublin’s Irish Catholic population, predominantly lower to lower-middle class, and its uneasy interdependency with the Protestant minority and the ruling British state. The stories are often described with words such as “grim” and “depressing,” and emphasize themes such as the narrow and confining social milieu (Bolt xxiv) or the degradation of genteel poverty. The young James Joyce himself despised Dublin and its citizens. His brother Stanislaus wrote in his diary of Joyce, in September of 1903, “His great passion is a fierce scorn of what he calls the „rabblement“—a tiger-like, insatiable hatred” (Ellmann 137). While living in Italy in 1906, Joyce referred to the Irish as “the most hopeless, useless and inconsistent race of charlatans I have ever come across . . .” (217). And he wrote to Nora Barnacle, the

woman he would love throughout his life, in October of 1909 (two years after completing the last and best of the fifteen stories, “The Dead,” and still awaiting the publication of *Dubliners*), “I loathe Ireland and the Irish. They themselves stare at me in the street though I was born among them. Perhaps they read my hatred of them in my eyes. I see nothing on every side of me but the image of the adulterous priest and his servants and of sly deceitful women” (*Letters* 174).

Despite these harsh indictments, I will argue that *Dubliners* also bears witness to an intense network of loyalty to family, community, religious faith, and country, and that at the very core of this remarkable collection of stories is nothing less than insistent human love with all its vagaries and dysfunctions. To read the lives of Joyce’s protagonists as debased and without integrity is to read narrowly. At the time Joyce wrote *Dubliners*, between 1904 and 1907 when he was aged twenty-two to twenty-five (Brown vii-viii), he was still resentful of the decline of the Joyce family from one of privilege to near-destitution. Joyce wrote with considerable bitterness these stark portrayals of suppression, oppression, and betrayal, and the Irish posture of subservience Joyce particularly despised. These condemnations were partly, I contend, a way to act out his own youthful anger and angst. Yet when viewed from a century of distance, and from the perspective of the human continuum, each life in *Dubliners* can be seen to hold a glimmer of potential.

Joyce considered himself “morally intrepid” (*Letters* 75), evinced in part by his courage to live as an exile. Although I realize that Joyce’s escape from Dublin was necessary in order to honor his artistic directive, much of my argument is underpinned by my view that Joyce gave himself the freedom of choice to leave his country, but, unfairly,

did not respect his fellow-citizens" choosing to remain in their homeland. Andrew Gibson writes that "Dublin in 1904 was possibly the most impoverished European city outside Russia" (68). I contend that the Irish men and women who chose to remain in Dublin, or even stayed because they lacked the wherewithal to do otherwise—those who continued to try to create their own lives" meanings *within the confines*, if you will, of nation, community, church, and family—are at least as morally intrepid as one who opted to leave.

There is frequently a sensitivity in *Dubliners* that softens the harsher aspects of Joyce"s character portrayals, and Richard Ellmann draws attention to "the pathos which is involved, even when not dominant, in all the stories, or the humor which is in most of them" (210). However, much of the commentary I have come across emphasizes the negativity and hopelessness of Joyce"s protagonists. Sydney Bolt writes that "the subject of *Dubliners* was precisely the constant evasion of themselves and the world they lived in . . . an affliction which he [Joyce] diagnosed as „paralysis" or „hemiplegia of the will"" (28). This assessment assumes there is a single agreement about what constitutes for any person or group of persons, "the world," which is precisely the assumption I hope to discredit. Bolt also asserts that "*Dubliners* is a collection of stories about people who are too timid and conformist to see things as they really are" (33). Again, this suggests that there is only one way to "see things as they really are," and that the characters in *Dubliners* are unable to see this reality. And this assessment, "Joyce"s stories are stories of failures to make discoveries" (47), seems to me a very odd statement because it disregards the much-discussed theory that each story describes an epiphany. This revelation is generally at the end of the story, at the place where the narrator abruptly

deserts the reader, yet it is a simple leap of reason to predict that the epiphany portends the catalyst that could result in renewed momentum for the character or characters involved.

Joyce's treatment of his characters in *Dubliners* has been described as "clinical" (Bolt 16), and in fact it is this clinical approach and Joyce's technique of "impersonality" (52) that allows the reader to discern the underlying strength in his characters. The community, the love, the loyalty to Ireland, and the binding together within the Catholic faith, are all evident in Joyce's stark details. Even a tragic and disconcerting event such as Emily Sinico's death in "A Painful Case" signals the catalyst that has the potential to change protagonist James Duffy's life for the better. Joyce doesn't resolve his characters' conflicts, and he doesn't reconcile their struggles, but resolutions and reconciliations are implied by the numerous indications throughout the stories, that although Dublin has more than its share of problems, the bonds that hold the Catholic community together provide support that has in the past and will in the future enable these stolid people to survive, and survive as Irish. Joyce would hone and polish his writing and his creed in the ensuing years, but at the time he wrote *Dubliners* this work was as ideologically conflicted as the young artist who created it. In some ways this makes the earlier stories, such as "Eveline" and "A Painful Case," even more interesting than the finely tuned and more mature "The Dead." And this ambivalence in *Dubliners* as a whole is its great contradistinction when compared to the more revered *Ulysses*.

Although post-colonial theorists do not generally include the Irish in their discussion of indigenous peoples whose cultures were ransacked by British imperialism (Tyson 424), it is clear that the Irish have had to survive the same post-colonial

challenges of “finding ways to think, speak, and create that are not dominated by the ideology of the oppressor” (423). Catholics in particular had to devise ways to keep from becoming “unhomed”—“torn between the social and psychological demands of two antagonistic cultures” (427)— and from “othering” themselves (440) beyond recognition as they lived in the shadow of English and Irish Protestants in order to survive. Irish children were culturally distanced from their Gaelic-speaking parents in English-speaking public schools established in Ireland, and also in the private Jesuit schools in which Joyce received his excellent education. Joyce distanced himself intentionally from community and nation both by leaving, physically, and by unequivocally embracing the English language. He continued the process of othering himself by such intentional acts as giving his children Italian names and refusing to have them baptized into the Catholic faith (Ellmann 204). Joyce unhomed himself by the same process, an inevitability he had prophesied when still living with his parents, and they and Joyce had gone to see Hermann Sudermann’s *Magda*. The following day Joyce remarked, “The subject of the play is genius breaking out in the home and against the home. You needn’t have gone to see it. It’s going to happen in your own house” (54).

As a young cosmopolitan intellectual, Joyce was impatient to see the Irish surge ahead as he witnessed other Europeans surging into modern times. Dublin’s practice of insulating itself from the modernism breaking out all around seemed to come from an intrinsic, collective desire of the Irish—an instinct of sorts—to protect by preservation what was still intact in Irish culture. This they could do at home in small friend and family groups, in small local music venues, and by the practice of Irish traditions and Catholic rituals.

Although Joyce beautifully crafts the semblance of impersonality in these early stories, his distinct personal agenda is fairly easy to discern when one reads his fiction with knowledge of his epistolary record. This of course in no way diminishes the excellence of *Dubliners*, which offers detailed and accurate insights into the human condition. Joyce's viewpoint, unusual then and even today, was summed up by Alessandro Francini, a friend of Joyce's in Pola (at that time a possession of Austria), who said of Joyce that "he accepts unquestioningly the existence of the rabbit and the eagle, sun and mudheap" (Ellmann 187).

In the chapter following I give a very brief overview of Irish history from about 1600 to 1900, since it is helpful, for understanding the Dublin of Joyce's youth, to know something about the events that led to the Gaelic, primarily Catholic, culture's decline and the simultaneous rise of the Protestant elite. For the historical facts I am primarily indebted to Christine Kinealy's 2004 publication, *A New History of Ireland*. I then demonstrate, in Chapters III, IV, and V, how Joyce's detailed narratives reveal the deeper natures of his characters, and perhaps even future events, revelations that predict the propensity of Joyce's Irish protagonists to survive despair and defeat against great odds. Owing to the minute details in *Dubliners*, to which Joyce was assiduous, one can see in many of his characters their potential redemption. Joyce, as creator, is entitled to his bias, but what I hope to bring into better balance is what I believe to be an even more biased, and primarily negative, critical reading that has been widely propagated.

French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, whose phenomenological theories in *The Poetics of Space* and *The Poetics of Reverie* I employ to back up my interpretations of Joyce's plots and protagonists in Chapters II and III, explains that the written word is a

phenomenon of its own: “[The book] speaks to you with a monotonous authority which even its author would not have. . . . Besides, in writing, the author has already performed a transposition. He would not *say* what he has written. He has entered—his protests are in vain here—the realm of the written psychism” (*Reverie* 24). Bachelard writes, “To enter into the domain of the superlative, we must leave the positive for the imaginary” (*Space* 89). Joyce carefully constructs his details around ellipses, offering the reader of *Dubliners* an even more meaningful, “superlative” plot, a plot that can be imagined with the aid of clues within the evident, or “positive” plot. Joyce’s idea of epiphany is a type of phenomenology, a way of viewing life through art, especially when he characterizes his epiphanies as “eucharistic,” another term arrogantly borrowed by Joyce from Christianity and invested with secular meaning” (Ellmann 83).

Joyce wrote a description of his and Nora’s apartment in Rome, which is pertinent to this discussion when viewed with reference to Bachelard’s theories of domestic or intimate spaces, primarily because of its stark contrast to what I see as the “felicitous spaces” (*Space* xxxv) found within most of the fifteen stories of *Dubliners*, and which I discuss in detail in Chapter III. This tiny window into Joyce’s personal space also demonstrates the unusual mental life of Joyce that superseded material concerns, allowing him to work even amid uncomfortable surroundings—greatly softened, of course, by his Madonna Nora and Child Giorgio:

[Scene: draughty little stone-flagged room, chest of drawers to left, on which are the remains of lunch, in the center, a small table on which are *writing materials* (*He* never forgot them) and a saltcellar: in the background, small-sized bed. A young man with snivelling nose sits at the

little table: on the bed sit a madonna and plaintive infant. It is a January day.] Title of above: *The Anarchist*. (Ellmann 228)

Joyce acknowledged the primitive longing for intimate spaces like those described by Bachelard, in the following symbolic disclosure written in a letter to Nora in 1909: “I *know* and *feel* that if I am to write anything fine or noble in the future I shall do so only by listening at the doors of your heart” (*Letters* 173).

Joyce wrote about Dublin from the viewpoint of a young, brilliant, yet materially and nationally disenfranchised artist-poet. He wrote, from observation, a true and meticulous account of the people he grew up with, but could not at that young age value the core of stability in his community. Joyce left Dublin because in order to create the superlative he had to distance himself from evidence of the positive. Joyce may have been privately mystified and perhaps envious of fellow-Dubliners who had the option of remaining in the house in which they were born, or in which they had lived for many years. Joyce, whose family had left the first home in which he was the first child of then-wealthy parents, was from that time on always a transient and exile. Only nine years old when his family began their descent through various houses and deteriorating neighborhoods, the adult Joyce later might have wandered from country to country, house to house, in a vain attempt to find again the first home of his early childhood, the home where, Bachelard says, “we feel calmer and more confident . . . the old home . . . the house we were born in . . .” (*Space* 43). Joyce apparently never knew the strength of a house with the “virtues of protection and resistance [that] are transposed into human virtues,” as Bachelard explains so well. “Come what may the house helps us to say: I will be an inhabitant of the world, in spite of the world” (46-47). Joyce, by peopling with his

fictive characters the houses he had inhabited briefly while growing up in Dublin, became, by writing *Dubliners*, Bachelard's "dreamer of houses" (55), an ideal compromise for Joyce's unsettled temperament, because he was thus "housed everywhere but nowhere shut in" (62). Bachelard assures us that "bit by bit the house that was lost in the mists of time will appear from out the shadow. We do nothing to reorganize it; with intimacy it recovers its entity, in the mellowness and imprecision of the inner life" (57). Joyce created his fiction by assembling precise recollections. Perhaps both the felicitous and non-felicitous interiors described in Joyce's stories, with their warm, cozy fireplaces or their cold, empty grates, or their dusty curtains and familiar chair in the corner, and the staircase leading up to the child's bedroom, are all fragments of his lost homes.

Following the discussion of Joycean spaces in Chapters II and III, Chapter IV explores the intimate interiority of a lonely woman who opts out of "reality" in defiant refusal to pretend that her life is other than an unbearable, loveless existence. I will use excerpts from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Reverie* to illuminate the unusual but, I argue, deliberate choices made by Emily Sinico, in "Grace."

From the very personal interiors of individual dwellings and psyches, I expand my argument in Chapter V to discuss the somewhat wider venues of Joyce's *Dubliners*. But even here are characters who group close together in familiar homes, businesses, and neighborhoods, and always within the controlling yet protective influence of the Roman Catholic Church and its churchmen. The chapter includes a brief overview of the transition of the native Irish from their pre-Christian Gaelic heritage to a tradition with the Catholic Church and rituals at its center. The purpose of this chapter is to bring to bear the exigencies of Irish experience on Joyce's characters and their various dilemmas,

and to underscore the role of their Catholic faith as a primary factor enabling the kind of stolid endurance I find admirable in these individuals.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF RECENT HISTORY OF IRELAND

During the time in which Joyce wrote *Dubliners*, Dublin was still suffering from the many years of war and economic distress in Ireland, the Irish poor living at subsistence levels and emigration still draining the population. The home rule movement and its opposition was a current issue creating the enmity that seemed perpetually to divide Irish Catholics from Irish Protestants, even though Catholic emancipation in 1829 had ended the special privileges formerly given to the Anglican Church (Kinealy 147, 184). This chapter gives a brief account of Irish history beginning with the death of Elizabeth I up through the end of the nineteenth century, as a necessary prelude to understanding the conditions in Dublin at the time *Dubliners* was written.

James I, son of the executed Mary Queen of Scots and already James VI of Scotland, succeeded Queen Elizabeth to the English throne on her death in 1603, the Treaty of Mellifont ending the Nine Years War and completing England's conquest of Ireland. James I became the first ruler of all three countries—England, Scotland, and Ireland—although each maintained a separate parliament, with the parliament of Ireland residing in Dublin. Throughout his reign, James, a Protestant, was tolerant of Roman Catholicism in Ireland; nevertheless, during the seventeenth century the Gaelic (predominantly Catholic) culture declined, coinciding with the rise of a Protestant elite

(79-82). Suspicion of all Catholics by Protestants, including the Old English landed Catholics in Ireland, deepened during James's reign even though he worked for conciliation, marrying his Protestant son and heir Charles to a Catholic French princess, Henrietta Maria (91). After Charles's succession to the throne matters worsened for Irish Catholics, and during the reigns of both James and Charles land was taken from Catholics, and Catholics were segregated from the new Protestant settlements. The Catholic Church gained influence among Catholics in Ireland at this time, as the Church in Rome stepped in to reinforce the Catholic faith and prevent further loss to Protestantism.

The Irish Catholic rising of 1641, incited by the continued usurpation of power by the Protestants, resulted in the murders of an estimated four thousand Protestant settlers and was followed by vicious reprisals (94-95). Irish Catholics had maintained an allegiance to Charles, and when Charles was executed in 1649 by the English parliament under Oliver Cromwell, they found themselves dangerously at odds with the new English government. Cromwell entered Ireland with twenty thousand troops and proceeded to crush the Irish Catholic armies and civilian populace, citing as justification for his army's brutality the earlier massacre of Protestant settlers. Kinealy writes that "Cromwell came to Ireland as God's emissary and as a liberator . . . from Catholicism and from Irishness in general. . . . Moreover, he regarded the Irish as barbaric . . ." (99-100).

On his return to England Cromwell was made "lord protector" of England, Scotland, and Ireland, while the heir of Charles I, Charles II, lived in exile (100-01). The Irish Parliament in Dublin remained loyal to Charles II as they had to his father, but Ireland at this time had almost no political influence with the English Parliament. On

“The Restoration” of Charles II to the throne, the Irish Catholics expected land confiscated by Cromwell to be returned, but although there was an attempt to return some land, the paltry settlement caused increased bitterness. In spite of the unsettled land problem, Ireland benefitted from the years of peace during Charles's reign, its population during this time reaching two million, approximately seventy-five percent Catholic. The majority of land was held by Protestants, who dominated in commerce and business and held most government posts; however, there remained a solid Catholic gentry and professional class (104-06).

Charles II was succeeded by his brother James, who had converted to Catholicism, and on accession became James VII of Scotland and James II of England. During James's reign he appointed Catholics to important government and military positions (107-09). The state church at this epoch was the Anglican Church even though most Protestant Irish were not Anglican. Yet despite differences among Protestants, they were generally united in their distrust of Catholics (112). James was defeated at the battle of the Boyne in 1690 by William of Orange, whose wife was James's Protestant daughter Mary. Although militarily indecisive, the battle of the Boyne was notable for both opposing kings having been present on the field of battle, and later the exaggerated events of the battle became symbolic of Protestant supremacy in Ireland (115, 119). Following the battle of the Boyne many Irish soldiers went into exile in France, James's ally. These soldiers were called “Wild Geese,” and James Joyce would later identify his own flight to Europe with these Wild Geese, as continuing in the tradition of Gaelic emigration (Gibson 65).

Following the recognition of William of Orange as sovereign of England and Ireland, anti-Catholic laws, called the “Penal Laws,” were passed in Ireland (Kinealy

119). William had no particular wish to penalize Catholics, but strategically it appeared to his benefit to keep the power in Protestant hands as a means of quelling further violence, and Catholic Ireland also had historically aligned itself with two of England's adversaries, France and Spain (79, 120). The Penal Laws, ironically, anticipated the later Irish literary and Gaelic revival that would emerge in the 1800s, with William Butler Yeats at its center, because it was these debilitating and impoverishing laws which would begin the gradual drive of Gaelic culture into obscurity. An example of the invidious nature of the Penal Laws was the law requiring that land owned by a Catholic must be divided equally, at his death, among the owner's Catholic sons, but if a son converted to Protestantism he would inherit all. Catholics also were prohibited from voting or holding office. From the point of view of England and the Irish Protestant minority, these laws were in large part designed to inhibit the influence and spread of "Popery," which they greatly feared. The Penal Laws were so harsh that some Catholics did convert to Protestantism to escape the consequences (121). Even though the Penal Laws resulted in Irish Catholics' losing cultural and political power in Ireland, the Roman Catholic Church gained influence during this period as priests in Ireland became the "natural leaders" of the Catholic population (120).

Events in the early 1700s in Ireland began the movement towards nationalism. For the first time, a new concept evolved whose focus was on all Irish people and their forced dependence on England. Even Protestants were adversely affected by England's continuous trade restrictions, designed to enrich England while further impoverishing Ireland. Anglican cleric Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was a primary catalyst for this movement, his satirical writings blaming England for the widespread Irish poverty (126-

27). Protestant nationalism would become a new force in the country, but prior to nationalism's reinvigoration of Ireland, the already weary country had to undergo a natural disaster to add to the demoralization of English rule: a lengthy, catastrophic, freezing winter in 1739 and 1740 resulted in an estimated twenty percent of the 2.5 million Irish population's dying by famine. The river Liffey and other major lakes and rivers froze, killing fish and preventing food and fuel from reaching the people. As always, aid to Ireland was not a priority for the British parliament (129).

The American War of Independence and signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 brought a new rhetoric into Ireland. The political ideologies of freedom, and specifically independence from England, became the new discourse of Irish and European activists (132). England ruled Ireland from Dublin Castle, but Irish nationalists, galvanized by revolutionary ideals begun in America, forced England to relax the hated Penal Laws. With the passage of Hobart's Catholic Relief Act in 1793, Catholics regained some rights, including the right to hold certain government and military posts and the right to bear arms. They had already the previous year regained the right to practice law and intermarry with Protestants (135-38).

The French Revolution, begun in 1789, was a further incitement to Irish who sought relief from British subjugation. Irish leaders including Wolfe Tone, an Anglican who nonetheless was committed to religious equality for Catholics, convinced France to join Irish rebels against England in an insurrection in 1798, an uprising brought on by counter-revolutionary legislation intended to repress insurgents in Ireland. British military response was ruthless; thirty thousand Irish were killed in the wars following, and again the Irish were defeated (140-43). With intent to maintain Irish subjugation, the Act of

Union was created and passed by both British and Irish Parliaments in 1800, becoming effective 1 January 1801. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was thus formed, and the new Union Flag was created. The Roman Catholic Church had supported the Union, hoping that it would benefit Catholic Irish (145-46, 155); however, separated by religion, culture, and geography, Ireland never was fully integrated into the Union. Britain was still largely anti-Catholic, and continued as before to govern from Dublin Castle, which “became a symbol of [unwanted] British presence in Ireland,” generally supporting Protestant domination (147, 155).

Even under severe oppression Catholics in Ireland continued to be a presence that could not be ignored, and a strong Catholic middle class remained a political force. To prevent civil war in Ireland, British parliament passed the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 following a “mass movement” that grew out of the Catholic Association formed in 1823 (156). Catholic emancipation allowed Catholics throughout Britain to vote and hold seats in parliament, and further legislation resulted in “Dublin Castle”’s policy of appointing Catholics to important positions” (158). As always, perceived momentum by Catholics was feared by conservative Protestants, at this time represented by the Orange Order, and although not all Protestants agreed with the intolerant stance of the Orangemen, overall religious differences continued to be intractable (157).

The Irish potato blight, “*An Gorta Mór*” or “The Great Famine,” began in 1845 with the appearance of a blight that destroyed the potato plant, and lasted six more years during which Ireland lost twenty-five percent of its population by starvation and disease, and by “famine emigration.” This catastrophe of nature was exacerbated by extremely poor management of “relief” measures which ultimately caused the further catastrophe of

eviction, homelessness, dislocation, and an increase in emigration, usually to the United States. Even after the famine had passed, the Irish continued to leave Ireland, and by 1900 the population was half what it had been in 1845 (161, 165).

Even before the famine there had been calls for the repeal of the Act of Union, but after the United Kingdom's deplorable mishandling of the situation, and the government's apparent indifference to the mass suffering in Ireland, it was clear, states Kinealy, "that the Act of Union had failed" (166-67).

British authorities planted informers in Ireland who attended secret meetings of repeal groups, and laws were passed making it treason to speak out in any way that might lead to rebellion. Repeal leaders and newspaper editors were arrested on charges of sedition. A radical repeal group called the Young Irelanders, who were the first to initiate what would become the Gaelic revival, was willing to use physical force to achieve its aims, even devising a plot to abduct Queen Victoria in Dublin in August of 1849. The plot was discovered, the conspirators arrested and transported, and Young Ireland was defeated (168-71).

Of new cultural movements that spread throughout Europe in the mid-1800s, neither socialism nor feminism was widely embraced in Ireland; however, the temperance movement spread rapidly beginning in 1829, especially in rural Ireland, and three million Irish during a period of four years "took the pledge" to abstain from alcohol (160). The temperance movement is parodied in *Dubliners* as another of Joyce's observations of seemingly impotent efforts to pull the weary Irish out of a state of apparent somnambulism.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood, known as Fenians, was organized in both Dublin and New York in 1858. Angry primarily over the treatment of Ireland by England during the famine, which caused so many Irish to abandon the homeland for America and elsewhere, the Fenians had widespread support in America and other countries. However, their aim of winning Irish independence by violent means caused many other nationalists to distance themselves. Fenians, although primarily Catholic, also wanted separation of church and state, a stance that caused the Catholic Church in Ireland to denounce the movement. The Fenians were eventually crushed in 1867 and several leaders hanged, but Fenian support in Britain resulted in English Prime Minister William Gladstone's becoming an advocate for "home rule," a movement which carried on the nationalist cause for which the Fenians had fought (171-73).

Land continued to be the issue on which hinged both political power and wealth in Ireland, and the cause of incessant political upheavals. Michael Davitt, a young Irishman whose family had been evicted during the potato famine, had lost his right arm at age eleven after it was caught in a machine in the factory where he worked in Lancashire. Davitt had been a member of the Fenians and served fifteen years in prison for gunrunning. After being released from prison he formed the Land League, and home rule politician Charles Stewart Parnell became the organization's president. Parnell's sisters, Anna and Fanny, were also home rule activists who formed the Ladies' Land League. Some of the injustices of Irish land laws were remedied by the 1881 Land Act and the Purchase of Land Acts of 1885 and 1891, and then the Land Act of 1903 (also called the Wyndham Land Act) enabled Irish tenants to purchase land under favorable terms,

resulting in the transfer of ownership, from landlords to tenants, of eleven million acres (174-79).

By 1880 Parnell, who also was chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party as well as Land League president, became the acknowledged leader of the movement for Irish home rule. Parnell and Gladstone became allies, since Gladstone believed home rule would strengthen both Ireland and the United Kingdom, but Gladstone met with unanticipated resistance from a strong Protestant Irish faction whose interests lay in remaining fully integrated within the United Kingdom. Still, home rule seemed imminent when in 1889 Parnell was publically exposed for his intimate relationship with the married Katherine O'Shea. Although Parnell married O'Shea after her divorce, the Catholic Church denounced Parnell as did many Irish, even those who had previously supported him. According to Kinealy, it was with reluctance that Gladstone asked Parnell to “temporarily retire from politics” (183). Parnell refused, which completed the split in the Home Rule Party, and when Parnell died suddenly in 1891 at age forty-six, Irish politics again became essentially inert. Gladstone tried to pass a home rule bill twice; the first time the bill was defeated in the House of Commons, and the second time, in 1893, it passed in the House of Commons but was defeated in the House of Lords. Gladstone resigned in 1894 (182-83).

Parnell's disgrace and subsequent death was a demoralizing event which left Ireland “politically powerless and without a leader” (Igoe xvii). According to Vivien Igoe, although Dublin at this time was comprised of eighty percent Roman Catholics, it was the Protestant minority of twenty percent who still held most of the power and wealth (xviii). The fall of Parnell was to be for Joyce a permanent association with betrayal, and

specifically betrayal of Irish by Irish, a theme Joyce would express in *Dubliners* and subsequent works (Brown xii). In the autobiographical *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce would recall scenes from his childhood, of his father John Joyce, a loyal Parnellite, arguing with Dante, a female relative who lived with the family and was Joyce's first teacher. John Joyce defended Parnell even after the disclosure of his affair with O'Shea, but Dante, a staunch Catholic whose own husband had deserted her, turned on Parnell, joining in the Roman Catholic Church's condemnation of him (P 31).

After home rule was no longer impending, a new literary movement was born as nationalists turned away from politics and looked back to Ireland's mythic past. Distinguished writers and intellectuals including William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, and A. E. Russell, recovered the heroic legends of ancient Ireland to find a new source of national pride. The new poetry was a blend of "Symbolism," "Theosophy," and "an idyllic peasant wisdom" (Bolt 13). Despite this new cultural flourishing, a legacy of resentment and mistrust continued to define Dublin in the early twentieth century, the city being representative of the steady decline of Ireland as a whole. As described by Terrence Brown, Dublin at the forming of the Union in 1801 was the second largest city in the British Isles, and one of the ten largest in Europe. By 1860 Dublin had dropped to fifth largest, and by the end of the nineteenth century Belfast had passed Dublin as Ireland's largest city (xvii-xviii).

Joyce captures Dublin's political climate at the end of the century In "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," twelfth of the fifteen stories in *Dubliners*, in which Joyce describes conversations taking place in a room serving as a makeshift headquarters for men employed to canvass for a municipal election. The story takes place on the

anniversary of the funeral of Irish Nationalist leader Charles Stewart Parnell. In the opening scene, “Old Jack” is trying to rake a fire up in the grate of used-up coals, clearly a fitting parallel for the Dublin electioneers trying to stir up interest in the past glory of Parnellite politics, the upcoming election, and other current events. The conversations that take place in the committee room elicit agreement and disagreement, but with a modicum of conviction that fails to resonate. Mr. O'Connor, in the room warming himself at the meager fire, is described as “young” but “grey-haired” (Joyce, *D* 115), bringing to mind Hesiod's dismal race of iron, the human race that will be destroyed “when they come to have grey hair on the temples at their birth” (Hesiod 17). The committee room in which the story takes place is “denuded” of furnishings except for a small table and an election address on the wall (*D* 117). The suspicion and division between Catholic and Protestant, and Irish nationals bitter over English authority, is made plain in conversations such as the following:

I believe half of them are in the pay of the Castle.

—There's no knowing, said the old man.

—Oh, but I know it for a fact, said Mr Henchy. They're Castle hacks . . .

—That's a fellow now that'd sell his country for fourpence—ay—and go down on his bended knees and thank the Almighty Christ he had a country to sell. (122)

Andrew Gibson writes that Joyce's “The Dead,” the final story in *Dubliners*, was an “epitaph,” and Joyce's “oblique homage to a history of suffering” (76). Although Gibson's epitaph metaphor is appropriate, since Joyce also implied, by his choice of title,

a double meaning pronouncing the Irish as dead to ideas, dead to change, and lacking in vital force, I will demonstrate in the discussions to follow why the Irish characters portrayed by Joyce in *Dubliners* are neither spiritually dead nor dead in essential human inertia. If Irish history teaches anything, it is that the Irish continue to rise no matter how many times they are buried, and in the next three chapters I will describe in detail the unique resilience of several of Joyce's protagonists.

CHAPTER III

A TOPOANALYSIS OF “CLAY” AND “THE SISTERS”

“Clay”

Joyce often derided the limited, lackluster lives of the Irish, especially during the years in which the early *Dubliners* stories were conceived and written, calling his fellow-citizens “the most belated race in Europe” (Ellmann 89). Despite this viewpoint, the enclosed spaces described by Joyce in “Clay” illustrate images of the warmth and security of intimate, safe enclosures that Gaston Bachelard, in his “Introduction” to *The Poetics of Space*, characterizes as “*felicitous space*” (xxxv). For the solitary Maria, in “Clay,” the kitchen where she prepares tea in the “*Dublin by Lamplight*” laundry (*D* 96), the single room in which she dresses and sleeps in her place of employment, and the Donnelly’s home, are all familiar abodes that shelter and protect Joyce’s plain, shy protagonist, and allow her “to dream in peace” (*Space* 6).

As the story opens, the kitchen is clean and congenial, and the barmbracks (holiday cakes) have been cut neatly by Maria, ready to be served to the laundresses with hot tea. The fire in the kitchen is “nice and bright,” and the atmosphere is enhanced by Maria’s own cheerfulness, as she “looked forward to her evening out” (*D* 95). Joyce’s skill in mimicry, here used to describe Maria’s life in a diminutive language corresponding to this woman of very small physiognomy and equally small horizons, works to enhance

both the various interiors and the simple human comforts and security available to Maria. The childlike trust evoked by Joyce's plain language, phrases like, "Everyone was so fond of Maria," and, "What a nice evening they would have, all the children singing," subtly impel the reader's protective inclination towards her (*D* 95-96).

In further observing the "topoanalysis" of Maria's life, topoanalysis being "the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives" (Bachelard, *Space* 8), the laundry also houses a conservatory in which Maria is allowed to care for her "lovely ferns and wax-plants" (*D* 96). From these plants she would give cuttings as gifts to her visitors, a demonstration of the hospitality Joyce would later admit was one of Dublin's virtues (Ellmann 245). In the confinement of Maria's "little bedroom" she dresses for the holiday gathering, and privately enjoys the "quaint affection" she feels for her own "diminutive body" as she contemplates its reflection in the mirror, remembering dressing for mass on Sunday when she was a girl. Joyce's phrase used to describe her ritual of dressing the small body, "which she had so often adorned" (*D* 97), indicates an uncomplicated self-love, notably devoid of the complex ego-irony that informed Joyce's own self-love. Unlike the atmosphere of chaos in which Joyce apparently thrived, moving, as Ellmann puts it, "from crisis to crisis, from exacerbation to exacerbation" (201), Maria's quiet daydreams are like Maria herself, simple and pacific, like those described in *The Poetics of Space* as "the recollection of moments of confined, simple, shut-in space [which] are experiences of heartwarming space, of a space that does not seek to become extended . . ." (10). Her recollection of herself as a young girl also is connected with the implied security she derives from the insulation of enclosures, as in Bachelard's language of intimate spaces, "the house holds childhood motionless „in its arms“" (8). The small

moments and movements of Maria's narrow world are thus imbued with the virtues of simplicity and ingenuousness, virtues personally unavailable to Joyce even while his scrupulous attention to detail accurately swathes Maria in their protective armor.

Maria's journey from the laundry to the Donnelly house, by tram in rainy weather, causes some apprehension for the reader who, accustomed to see Maria safe inside, worries about the stark contrast of her traveling alone, exposed to the city and the elements. The tram trip illustrates what the phenomenologist describes as “the dialectics of outside and inside,” which, explains Bachelard, “has the sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*,” and can “govern all thoughts of positive and negative” (*Space* 211). Maria's exposure *outside*, to the remark of the catty young woman in the bakery who asked “was it a wedding cake she wanted to buy”; the elderly gentleman who kindly made room for her on the tram, and whose red nose advertised his inebriation; the wet weather; all create a tension only mitigated once she's *inside* again. One feels relief when Maria safely reaches the Canal Bridge stop and then enters the Donnelly's warm home to greetings of “*O, here's Maria!*” (*D* 98-99).

In the wake of the small disaster of the missing plumcake, Maria is comforted by Joe Donnelly who “made her sit down by the fire” (99-100). We are told by the narrator that Joe would often say, “Mamma is mamma but Maria is my proper mother” (96), and as Maria and Joe “sat by the fire talking over old times” (100), the scene recalls the “maternal features” of the first home (*Space* 7). The fireplace figures largely in the felicitous spaces of Dublin habitations. Although taken for granted at the time “Clay” was written (at least by those who could afford fuel), the ubiquitous fireplace in Joyce's interiors bespeaks a luxury commonplace yet essential to the collective memory of human

security, the “consolations of the cave” in topoanalytic terms (*Space* xxxvii). In Maria's and Joe's enactment of reciprocity (Maria's giving of cakes and Joe's giving the warmth of his hearth) this ordinary woman occupies, in this particular place and time, the center of an ancient guest-host ritual, a prominent theme in Homer's *Odyssey* which Joyce would revisit famously in *Ulysses* when Leopold Bloom, at four in the morning, brings Stephen into his kitchen on Eccles street, seats him in front of the hearthstone, and makes him a cup of hot cocoa (*U* 547, 553; ch. 17).

Although during the “Hallow Eve” game, a blindfolded Maria chooses wet clay which the children had included as a poor joke (*D* 100-01), the superstition attached to the clay is not an augury of Maria's bodily demise, but enacts Joyce's preoccupation regarding the constant proximity of the dead to the living, an idea he had written about in “The Sisters,” would expand on in “The Dead,” and which would be a primary theme in *Ulysses* (Ellmann 244).

In the final scene of “Clay,” Maria is persuaded to sing “I Dreamt That I Dwelt in Marble Halls” (from Balfe's opera *The Bohemian Girl*) (*D* 102), and here Joyce describes a familial scene he would often replay, reminiscent of the Joyces' homes being filled with singing. Even in the gloomy days after the Joyce family moved to Drumcondra after being forced into poverty by John Joyce's dissipations, Stanislaus Joyce recalled “times when all the children sat around singing in the house” (Igoe 60). As Maria sings of marble halls and being the hope and pride of a fine family, Joyce's choice of song insulates Maria inside “a sphere of *pure sublimation*,” pure because it is “a sublimation which sublimates nothing, which is relieved of the burden of passion, and freed from the pressure of desire” (*Space* xxix). This phenomenon is an oneiric necessity, it can be argued, for a woman

whose personal living space consists of a single small bedroom and space for her plants in a shared conservatory, and who is considered to be past the time in her life when she might have had the lover and marriage she is constantly teased about. Although the Hallow's Eve clay might prophesy the death of romance for Maria, she herself never appears to dwell on thoughts of romantic love, unless she does so during her conversation with the man on the tram, although that seems unlikely. Rather it is the people around her, immersed in their own narrow perception of a woman's worth, who insist on her viewing herself as somehow lacking. As evinced by Maria's fond gaze into her mirror as she dresses, her solitary containment is not necessarily a cause of unhappiness. Maria's personality is well-suited to the close confines of her ordered life, just as her compact body is a perfect fit inside her allotted physical spaces. Would Maria, had she married, have known greater love and affection than her life already affords? Would Maria's small body have survived even one pregnancy given conditions in 1905? If she were able to bear children would she then, like Joyce's mother, have died at age forty-four after fourteen more pregnancies? Realistically, marital bliss seems a gamble of doubtful odds in this case. Maria sings the same verse twice for her listeners:

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 the 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. (D 102)

Maria is a daydreamer of love and marble palaces, like poet Henri Bosco's description of a contented servant. Bosco wrote that “however commonplace the work she was doing, and without in the least seeming to dream, she washed, dusted and swept in the company of angels” (*Space* 68). Maria, at the close of this brief glimpse of her, remains “a flower's dream . . . still enclosed, tightly folded, inside its seed,” and Bachelard wisely suggests that sometimes it is better to “see not happiness, but pre-happiness remain enclosed in the round chamber!” (24-25).

“The Sisters”

In *The Poetics of Space* Bachelard tells us that “the lamp in the window is the house's eye . . . it is always enclosed light, which can only filter to the outside,” and is the symbol of vigilance (34). “The Sisters” begins with the narrator's description of a vigil: “Night after night” a boy watches a dimly lighted window for signs of the two candles that will signal the death of Father James Flynn. In this case, the vigil outside is intimately concerned with the vigil inside. The boy is attracted to the dimly lighted interior where the priest lies dying, and thinks about “paralysis,” which, the narrator tells us, sounded to the boy “like the name of some maleficent and sinful being.” Yet despite its fearful associations, he “longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work” (*Dubliners* 1). In the poetics of lived-in space, “all the spaces of intimacy are designated by an attraction,” claims Bachelard. But he also tells us, significantly, that “their being is well-being” (*Space* 12).

In a topoanalysis of “The Sisters,” even though the narrator's focus is on the corruptible qualities of paralysis, both physical and mental, many aspects of well-being in

both homes described in the narrative illustrate the security the interior spaces represent to these residents of Joyce's Dublin. The hearth is the focal point in the home of the boy's aunt and uncle, and the boy comes downstairs in the evening to find them visiting with a neighbor. Mr. Cotter, who is sitting by the fire, has come by to deliver the news of the priest's death. The boy's place of shelter and sustenance is simply accepted as a matter of course by both the boy and the narrator. The reader, however, notes the close, protective environment in this modest Dublin home in which the child, presumably an orphan, is fed and housed. His uncle refers to him affectionately as "the youngster," and then a bit critically (but proudly) as "that Rosicrucian," referencing his having been singled out for instruction by the old priest (*D* 2). All these characters are members of the roughly seventy-percent Irish Catholic population who are lower to lower-middle class and live amid economic uncertainty. The hospitality of the house is extended to Mr. Cotter—he's offered a portion of a leg of mutton—while the boy's supper is only "stirabout," perhaps to stretch the grocery budget rather than any slight to the child's care (1). Cotter is probably short of funds himself, and times his visit to arrive during supper, hoping for a meal in exchange for his news. That the boy is well-cared-for, as far as the family's means will allow, is further verified when he goes upstairs to his room to sleep. He has a bedroom of his own, and we are told that he tries to divert his mind from disturbing images of the priest's face by thinking about Christmas, another indication that his guardians are sensible to his childhood happiness (3).

The second home described is that of Father Flynn's two sisters, who apparently brought their unfortunate brother to live with them after he suffered some form of mental breakdown, making him unfit to continue in the priesthood. The "little dark room" (4)

where the old priest lived had a likeness to the hermit's hut that Bachelard describes as an intimate space of our primal longing (*Space* 31-33). Although the priest's youthful longing may have been for the glories of service in the Roman Catholic Church—material as well as spiritual—the mysterious disgrace around which the story revolves forced the priest into retirement; he had exchanged the Church and its ornate surroundings for those of a more primitive and essential shelter. On the periphery of this story about a boy's struggling to grasp the complexities of human behavior, there is a sub-story of a family's and community's care of a boy, and of an elderly man. At the outset of his descent, Father Flynn took refuge inside a confession-box, under cover of darkness (*D* 10); afterward James, brother of Eliza and Nannie, would spend his days next to the fireplace in an armchair, “nearly smothered in his great-coat” (4). The great-coat and armchair beside the hearth in the home of his sisters had become walls and roof of the refuge the dying priest needed to achieve solace in his old age, his “hermit's hut”:

The image [of the hermit's hut] leads us on towards extreme solitude. The hermit is *alone* before God. His hut, therefore, is just the opposite of the monastery. And there radiates about this centralized solitude a universe of meditation and prayer, a universe outside the universe. (*Space* 32)

As tragic as this end might seem to a young person, as pathetic as it must have seemed to the young James Joyce, if, from the perspective of maturity one accepts the inevitability of old age and death as a condition of being human, it could be argued that James Flynn might well have found repose in these final days of enforced hermitage. The old priest's final connection to the outside world was a boy to whom he imparted fragments of his former vocation, but his hopes for peace and forgiveness existed, if they

existed, as hopes apart from the outside world. The shelter of his own imagination had taken the physical form of closed-in, warm space wherein the hermit waited. If the evidence of Bachelard's topoanalysis of space is valid here, and I believe it is, James Flynn's final physical refuge was itself a symbol of spiritual redemption. Whereas the boy's disturbing epiphany must remain in "this world," the priest's final days of seeming destitution served as the catalyst necessary to propel him beyond temporality: "The hut can receive none of the riches „of this world.“ It possesses the felicity of intense poverty; indeed, it is one of the glories of poverty; as destitution increases it gives us access to absolute refuge" (*Space* 32).

Joyce's home interiors almost all have a feeling, if only psychologically, of protecting the inhabitants from the perils of the outside. These perils would include, besides weather, the oppression of cultural and national conditions against which Irish Catholics continued to struggle. Joyce himself described Dublin as a "musty sick-room" from which he must escape (Bolt 14). Yet in all the stories included in *Dubliners*, Joyce describes families, however dysfunctional they may be, still connected and compelled by blood and the duty blood requires. James Flynn was a sick man, and he was cared for not only by his sisters, but by extended family, neighbors, and the Church community. In spite of the mistrust endemic in Ireland resulting from an English legal system that rewarded betrayal of Irish by Irish, there remained a core community of Catholic Irish who could be altered but never wholly defeated. "The Sisters," when read from the viewpoint of family and community solidarity, demonstrates the continuing viability of life in Catholic Dublin. Descriptions of the care given to an aged, broken man and an

orphaned boy, and fortified by details of the private enclosed spaces richly recorded by Joyce, make the case for the inner strength of Joyce's Dubliners.

CHAPTER IV

THE *COGITO* OF THE DREAMER IN “A PAINFUL CASE”

Gaston Bachelard, in his introduction to *The Poetics of Reverie*, questions the scientific method wherein a psychologist observes, measures, and classifies the process through which imagination is born in children “without ever really examining how it dies in ordinary men” (2). James Duffy, in “A Painful Case,” is a man in whom imagination has died, or let us say it has retreated into the further recesses of his psyche. Bachelard explains his ideas on the “*cogito*” of the dreamer (*Reverie* 147) wherein he describes the contrary, a man who no longer dreams, and who could be Duffy:

The life given animation by the reality function is a fragmented life, fragmenting outside us and within us. It rejects us to the exterior of all things. Then we are always *outside*. . . . His *cogito* assures his existence only within a mode of existence. And thus through artificial doubts, doubts in which—if it dare be said—he does not believe, he establishes himself as a thinker. (162)

Duffy considers himself a thoughtful man, but having drawn rigid conclusions from his early insights, he has become unbending, like his “black iron bedstead” (*D* 103). Consequently, his own didacticism has trained his emotional being to adhere to the same order he demands in every other aspect of his life. The narrator tells us that “Mr Duffy

abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder,” and that “he lived at a little distance from his body” (104). He lived alone and “had neither companion nor friends, church nor creed. He lived his spiritual life without any communion with others . . .” (105). His house, which contained furnishings “he had himself bought,” (“he himself” emphasizing Duffy’s self-centeredness as well as his isolation), was “old” and “somber,” within sight of a “disused distillery” and “the shallow river on which Dublin is built,” making it plain that Duffy’s chosen surroundings were a description of what he would become: old, somber, disused, and shallow (103). The walls were “free from pictures” as Duffy’s mind was “free” from the risk of emotionalizing imagination. Even after meeting Emily Sinico and sensing the nourishing effect she brought to his existence, Duffy reasoned cautiously that “We cannot give ourselves . . . we are our own.” He insisted “on the soul’s incurable loneliness” (107).

Jacques Derrida formulated the theory of “binary oppositions” that are also small hierarchies, such as good and evil; in any production one of the oppositions is always considered superior. When one identifies which is superior, the ideology of that production becomes apparent. Lois Tyson explains that in the binary opposition of objectivity and subjectivity, there is usually an assumption that first there is such a thing as “objective” (read: “rational”) and that objective/rational is superior to subjective/personal-emotional, an assumption that is not necessarily true (Tyson 254). My primary assertion about “A Painful Case” is that the interior person is privileged over the exterior persona, most evident in the character of Emily Sinico, who also is the privileged character; that is, the more interesting of Joyce’s two protagonists. Emily, despite her tragic death, I find to have been truer to the living, human force within her than was the

pragmatic James Duffy, and there is probably a general agreement that Joyce was also “on Emily’s side.” The reader is told that Mr. Sinico, Emily’s husband, “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” (*D* 106). This dismissed woman is described by the narrator as having an intelligent face, and eyes “very dark blue and steady. Their gaze began with a defiant note. . . .” We also are told that her eyes revealed “a temperament of great sensibility” (105). The narrator tells the story while hovering over Duffy, so we only have Emily’s story second-hand or third-hand. Even so, Joyce’s immaculate perception, even at the age of twenty-three when he wrote this story, renders an almost uncannily sensitive portrait of a woman just approaching middle-age, and of the changes to her life after meeting a man, Duffy, who awakens her suppressed passion. Philosopher Luciana O’Dwyer, in discussing Bachelard’s phenomenology, describes the elevated mental state of poetic reverie, the state of mind into which, I propose, Emily had retreated, with the aid of alcohol, after she could no longer endure her reality. O’Dwyer explains that “this profound consciousness . . . is in fact the transcendental consciousness which, far from being an abstraction made up by us within our reflection, is our living reality which renders intersubjective life possible for us” (47). Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Reverie*, states candidly that “one of the functions of reverie is to liberate us from the burdens of life” (73).

“A Painful Case” is Joyce’s astute portrayal of two compatible souls who meet, are severed, and who reconnect again due to an instance of self-sacrifice which is also an act of self-gratification (Emily’s death). Emily Sinico, I contend, is admirable for her defiance of the role society would have her play, literally a play-acting of the good wife

and mother when her passionate nature demanded more. In a discussion of the role of reverie in love, Bachelard reminds us of that which we already know, that “reverie which lives out the future of a passion idealizes the object of its passion” (58). I may be stretching a philosophical point in claiming that the drunken Emily was living within a lofty “transcendental consciousness,” but in this argument on her behalf I must insist that this sensitive, intelligent, passionate—and defiant—woman could and would enter this transcendental consciousness as preferable to a sterile, dull reality such as the isolated and friendless Duffy had chosen. Without doubt she idealized James Duffy, but that is one of the most mysterious—and most magnanimous—features of love. I maintain that in her crippled yet heroic stance, woman-like and Irish-like she fought the good fight for them both.

Even though Duffy looked for “redeeming” qualities in others, the narrator tells us, he was generally “disappointed” (*D* 104). When Emily first proffered friendship that retained the quality of “maternal solicitude,” of a confidant and “confessor,” Duffy could fit her neatly into his tidy life (106). But Duffy backed away the instant Emily betrayed an emotional involvement. Bachelard writes that “the man who loves a woman „projects“ upon that woman all the values which he venerates in his own *anima*” (73). Duffy’s egocentrism prevented his seeing Emily as a separate and equal individual with whom he could find a new kind of completion. As long as she suppressed her inner life, as he did, she was the mirror image of himself, but the night she “caught up his hand passionately and pressed it to her cheek,” he was, the narrator tells us, “disillusioned” (107). His refusal to continue the relationship was indeed appropriate in view of the social mores to which he and she were accustomed. Rigidity and order having taken control in this

rational man, emotionalism and the possibilities it offered had been carefully put away—or so he believed.

Emily Sinico, in the course of the five or so years spanned in “A Painful Case” is, curiously, the less tragic of the two primary characters, despite the regrettable fact that she dies young and under tragic circumstances after apparently drinking heavily. James Duffy initially reacts to the circumstances of her death with deep shame—especially the disclosure that she had become frequently and publicly intemperate—and regrets having been associated with a woman who would allow such disorderliness, and in public no less. Joyce was, initially, probably more concerned with the life of James Duffy than with the death of Emily Sinico, its being well-known that he wrote “A Painful Case” with his brother Stanislaus in mind, having many times derided Stanislaus for living a life so withheld from experience that he was, in Joyce’s opinion, in danger of ending up trapped in the kind of impotent isolation the character of James Duffy represents (Ellmann 133). However, Joyce unexpectedly treats Emily Sinico with a gentle respect for the validity of her emotional life, even though Emily would probably have become an adulterous wife had James Duffy remained in her life. There is pathos rather than judgment in the account of her death, even on the part of the press, and the judgment of the narrator as I read it—again remarkable for the early 1900s and in a story written by a man—falls squarely on Duffy for his desertion.

Noël Parker, in an essay on Bachelard, explains the phenomenon by which, as I see it, James Duffy is enlarged, ultimately, rather than diminished, by his association with this woman who chose an “anarchic” reality that only she could “see,” rather than a conventional reality that was dead to her:

Partly via close relationships with each other [we are able] to perceive a nonpurposive, non-self-centered wholeness that is beyond the reach of purposive individuality. Particularly via our perception of this wholeness in other intimates, we may come to perceive it within ourselves also, and within the world. (88)

Emily had discovered within her feminine depth an inner repose that James Duffy had failed to perceive even as a possibility, until the revelation brought about by Emily's death. Bachelard discusses the masculine/feminine unification that exists in all persons, which also seems to me to describe the forces driving both Emily and James in their mutual struggles:

The dialectic of the masculine and the feminine unfolds on an indepth rhythm. It goes from the less deep, ever less deep (the masculine) to the ever deep, ever deeper (the feminine). It is in reverie, "in the inexhaustible reserve of latent life," as Henri Bosco says, that we find the feminine deployed in all its breadth, reposing in its simple tranquility. Then, as it must be reborn with the coming of the day, the clock of the intimate being rings in the masculine—in the masculine for everyone, men and women. Then, for everyone, the times of social activity return, an activity which is essentially masculine. And even in love life, men and women both know how to use their double force. (61)

Two months after James Duffy had dismissed the possibility of intimacy with Emily Sinico and broken off the friendship, he wrote: "Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and

woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse” (*D* 108). This story of the man’s rejection of love, which eventually results in the woman’s own rejection of the loveless existence she had previously endured with her legal husband, is to me a story primarily of Emily Sinico, and it becomes the story of James Duffy only after Emily dies.

Emily’s defiance of the societal mores that had ceased to have meaning for her demonstrates a type of human strength that rebels in the face of false values. Something in James Duffy had reawakened Emily Sinico’s woman’s heart, and she chose to nourish a lost love, even an imagined love, rather than endure a far greater loss by admitting to a life devoid of passion. Her death, the manner of her death, and her public “disgrace,” show again the power of this human encounter to disarrange the complacency of the stodgy Duffy, a man content to mark off his corporeal existence in a room and heart chiefly distinguished by their austerity. Austerity is of course not a bad thing, but for Duffy it had become a form of regulated sterility that afforded him a kind of repose, true, but repose without imagination, without emotion, without genuine vitality. From this the ostensibly weak Emily saved her lover; in a way, she died that James Duffy might live, following another theme with which Joyce was fascinated, that “the dead do not stay buried,” and that “we can be at the same time in death as well as in life” (Ellmann 244).

Bachelard explains why liberation from our “reality function” is a desirable psychic state:

The demands of our *reality function* require that we adapt to reality, that we constitute ourselves as a reality and that we manufacture works which are realities. But doesn’t reverie, by its very essence, liberate us from the reality function? From the moment it is considered in all its simplicity, it is

perfectly evident that reverie bears witness to a normal, useful *irreality function* which keeps the human psyche on the fringe of all the brutality of a hostile and foreign non-self. (13)

Bachelard also challenges positivism, that assumption that material substance is dominant to imaginative substance (13-14). The reader of “A Painful Case” is only told that Emily Sinico stepped into the path of a moving train (*D* 110). We don’t know whether this rash act was intentional suicide or whether she was so deep into her drunken reverie that the train had ceased to have substance in the diaphanous world of her mind, the world where she could forget the unbearable misery of her reality, and “live,” however briefly, in a place where she was loved as a woman even if she had to create this world herself. Bachelard tells of a character in Henri Bosco’s novel, *The Antiquary*, who describes having “created a third equivocal world for [himself] between reality and dream”:

Sometimes the most evident reality would melt into the mists there while a strangely bizarre fiction would illuminate my mind and make it marvelously subtle and lucid. Then the vague mental images would condense in such a way that one would have thought it possible to touch them with his finger. Tangible objects, on the other hand, would become phantoms of themselves, and I wouldn’t be far from believing that one could pass through them as easily as he cuts through walls when he is walking around in dreams. (161)

I suggest that it was during such a state of mind that Emily proposed to pass through the phantom train, which after all was probably the least important of the images

in her own equivocal world. And the train, being spectral, posed *real* danger only for those whose reality lacked such “double malleability” (167).

As tragic as it seems to those of us who are fortunate enough to validate our humanity without the desperate recourse of chemically induced irreality, I defend Emily’s choice, in this particular and painful case, as the path necessary for a soul’s “discovering its world, the world where it would like to live and where it deserves to live” (*Reverie* 15). Emily Sinico was mourning a lost love—perhaps two lost loves—and she had, I believe, made a deliberate choice to turn her back on a false life, and for her the only true sanity that remained was the truth in her imagination.

Emily’s life, love, and death offered Duffy the possibility to come into a new reality of love imagined, and it required the shock of her death, and the manner of it, to force him to recognize and acknowledge the love and life he had withheld from her. My own poetic imagination sees a newly liberated James Duffy into a future in which, amid the usual setbacks, he will live a more lucid reality than he did before this intimate encounter and its myriad implications. He will eventually recall Emily Sinico in his reveries and honor her for the largesse she brought to his stale and fading life. In the recognition of the loss of her, he will discover his own intimate needs. He will love again, perhaps marry, perhaps father a child, and the stubborn—but not irredeemable—Irish race will go forward.

In *The Poetics of Reverie* Bachelard quotes a line by philosopher and theologian Franz von Baader in which Baader, “linking the world to man’s need,” asserts that “the only possible proof of the existence of water, the most convincing and the most intimately true proof, is thirst” (178). I have, in the lines below, changed two words of Baader’s

enigmatic assertion, using his idea to create what I believe to be a summation of James Duffy's need for Emily Sinico, and to conclude my homage to this most poignant Joycean love story:

The only possible proof

of the existence of love,

the most convincing

and the most intimately true proof,

is loss.

CHAPTER V

CATHOLIC FAITH IN “EVELINE,”

“A BOARDING HOUSE,” AND “GRACE”

In this chapter I discuss excerpts from *Dubliners* that capture the political and cultural environment of Joyce’s personal experience growing up in Dublin, focusing on characters in “Eveline,” “A Boarding House,” and “Grace.” Undeniably dismal in their revelations of mental inertia, economic distress, and an apparent lack of Church leadership, Joyce’s stories also are replete with mundane yet significant details that portray Irish Catholics as heirs to the spiritual and communal estate which was their birthright. If that inheritance seems at times paltry, consider again the hardships previously highlighted in the chapter on Irish history. The ongoing trauma in Ireland leading up to the time in which *Dubliners* was composed is succinctly stated in Lawrence McBride’s essay about Irish historical fiction between 1870 and 1925, in a quotation from Irish novelist James Murphy:

Now, I should like to know where an Irish novelist is to look for the lights and shadows necessary for a novel—where to look for the story of human hopes and sorrows and passions—if not in the strife waged for many years between one faction seeking the extermination of the people and the latter equally sturdily resolved to hold their homes. (83)

Also in this chapter is a brief description of the pervasive influence of the Catholic faith in Ireland, and includes a discussion of the transition from a pre-Christian culture to a more orthodox Catholic culture, which helps in understanding the daily role of the Church in Joyce's Dublin. My analyses of Joyce's fictional events and characters will reinforce my argument that the seemingly feckless characters who people Joyce's stories belie a steadfast propensity for survival perhaps unique to the Irish Catholic nation. As a necessity, Joyce's anti-heroes often walk the line between loyalty to tradition and subservience to the British imperialist system, but their posture of submission is laced with a subversive, covert intent born of several centuries of underground resistance, secretive meetings, hiding out, and guarded expression, as these expedients were often the only ways in which Irish Catholics might practice and retain their native faith and traditions (Killeen 38).

As Kevin Collins points out, it is important to remember that the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland was the Church of people of English origin long settled in Ireland as well as the Church of the native, or Gaelic Irish (45). For the purposes of this thesis, my discussion focuses primarily on the situation of native Irish Catholics leading up to and during the time James Joyce was raised and educated in the Dublin area. I reference some of Joyce's issues with the Church, a discussion in large part informed by J. Mitchell Morse's *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism*, although I disagree with Morse's assessment of *Dubliners*.

Since poverty and the continuous economic distress of many of the characters in *Dubliners* is one of the backdrops of Catholic Irish experience, I include some of Keynesian economist John Kenneth Galbraith's theories on mass poverty. At the time

Galbraith summarized these theories in *The Nature of Mass Poverty* (1979), the “grip of poverty,” as he describes it, was already “permanently relaxed” in Ireland, the “equilibrium of poverty” and accompanying “accommodation” to this impoverishment by the populace having been traumatically broken by the Great Famine (1845-1850) and resulting emigration (Galbraith 80, 122). At the time Joyce wrote *Dubliners*, however, the Irish were still feeling the aftermath.

Joyce’s creative spirit required that he live and write in exile, and he vacillated between berating (mostly) and defending (sometimes) the Catholic Irish among whom he was reared. The few times he returned to Ireland after leaving Dublin he claimed that he hated the Irish and felt he was a stranger among them (*Letters* 174), yet as we know, his early Irish Catholic milieu and the characters who peopled it constituted the substance of his work throughout his life. J. Mitchell Morse neatly summarizes this Joycean contradiction by explaining that “[Joyce was] never less at home than when at home, in exile from exile” (21). According to Ellmann, Joyce defined himself by “tenaciously [holding] to the character of the exile, punishing himself and his country, full of distrust and nostalgia for her” (258).

The Catholic Church also can be defined by its internal contradictions. As an example, Morse points out in his chapter about Thomas Aquinas that “Aquinas’s theology, like Aristotle’s philosophy, was first condemned as heretical and later prescribed as the standard of orthodoxy; thus, in each case, an independent thinker was domesticated and made a means of discouraging independent thought” (90). Joyce blamed the Church, as did other Irish thinkers at that time, for much of the backwardness of Ireland when compared to the rest of Europe. Morse references *Stephen Hero*, in which

Dedalus, clearly reflecting Joyce's opinion, "„cursed“ the influence of Catholicism on Ireland“ . . . „the inhabitants of which entrust their wills and minds to others that they may ensure for themselves a life of spiritual paralysis“” (70). In another of his many complaints about Ireland, Joyce comments on the wealth of the Church in Ireland, which offended him even more than that of the Church in Rome:

And almost as if to set in relief this depopulation [since the Famine] there is a long parade of churches, cathedrals, convents, monasteries, and seminaries to tend to the spiritual needs of those who have been unable to find courage or money enough to undertake the voyage from Queenstown to New York. Ireland, weighed down by multiple duties, has fulfilled what has hitherto been considered an impossible task—serving both God and Mammon, letting herself be milked by England and yet increasing Peter's pence. . . . (Ellmann 256)

A very different perspective on the Church's wealth is expressed in Jarlath Killeen's *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde*, by Speranza, Wilde's Protestant nationalist mother, who admired the Catholic Church and argued that the Church deserved praise for the culture it brought to the Irish people:

Indeed, the sole patron of the arts is the Catholic Church and considering the scant and insufficient means supplied by the faithful and impoverished people, it is marvellous to what an amount we are indebted to it for all that is best in architectural, pictorial or sculptured art throughout the country. Catholicism alone has comprehended the truth that Art is one of the noblest languages of religion. (13)

Speranza's astute observation situates the Church within a more appropriate perspective, reminding us of a significant feature of the Catholic Church's power, which is its vast scope encompassing twenty centuries of endurance and influence.

Pre-Christian Ireland

Killeen explains that in Ireland prior to the Famine many Irish practiced a version of "folk-Catholicism," which was "a form of Catholicism with strong connections to pre-Christian traditions, and which blended belief in fairies, [in Irish, *daoine sidh*, "people of the other world" (Collins 38)], magical healing, holy wells, popular prophecies and divination with more „orthodox“ Catholicism such as Transubstantiation, Marianism and the sacraments" (18-19). And although the Catholic Church officially opposed folk practices, Killeen writes that "numerous priests actually participated in these traditions and refused to condemn them" (39).

David W. Miller, in "Mass Attendance in Ireland in 1834," briefly describes his findings regarding Celtic festivals. What he terms "extra-canonical rituals"—festivals, pilgrimages, patterns, wakes, bonfires, and celebrations at holy wells—had survived "because they functioned as a kind of predictive magic which may have allayed anxiety over potential harvest failure." When this magic failed utterly during the Famine, these "dysfunctional" practices were replaced by canonical Catholic practice (177).

Collins calls the shift from an Irish-speaking culture to an English-speaking one, concomitant with the shift from a pre-Christian Celtic heritage to one with the Catholic Church at its traditional center, an "identity crisis" culminating in a religious revival (44). According to Collins, the Famine marked perhaps the most striking divide between Gaelic Ireland and English-speaking Ireland. He reports that the majority of the one

million who died, and another million who emigrated, were Irish-speaking. In the 1851 census only twenty-three percent of the population remaining were Irish-speaking whereas prior to the Famine an estimated fifty percent were Irish-speaking (41). Post-Famine Ireland replaced the Celtic sacredness of trees, wells, lakes, mountains, and holy sites, with the Catholic Sacred Heart (a devotion practiced in “Eveline” and “Grace”), Immaculate Conception, penance, confession, and communion. These practices were “reinforced by beads, medals, missals, prayer books, catechisms, candles, vestments, icons, music and singing.” The Irish found a new post-Famine identity within the Catholic faith, and in this new identity Irish and Catholic became synonymous (38, 44).

Lawrence McBride, in his essay, “Imagining the Nation in Irish Historical Fiction, c. 1870-c. 1925,” discusses popular Irish fiction of the period and cites excerpts that give a flavor of Irish life during this era, and specific instances of the ways in which the Catholic priest fit into the community. McBride tells us that “in most of the Irish historical fiction written by nationalists during this period, the Irish nation was fundamentally Gaelic and Catholic.” Significantly, however, McBride also points out that, in these novels, “characters of Norman-Irish or Anglo-Irish or Scots-Irish lineage are tolerated . . . regardless of their role or class” (103). A popular twentieth-century romantic novelist, Annie M. P. Smithson, wrote about Irish characters whose Catholicism was their defining characteristic. Her tales describe “the terrorism of the penal laws, when officials hunted Catholic priests and teachers down like wolves,” depicting English Protestantism as “the diabolical enemy of the native Catholic population” (92). Catholic priests occupy an important role in the stories by Canon Sheehan, in whose novels, *My new curate, a story gathered from the stray leaves of an old diary* (1899) and *The blindness of Dr. Gray*

or the final law (1909), “the priests invariably stand side-by-side with the people during times of trouble, taking direct action, administering the sacraments and offering wise counsel in domestic matters” (97).

“*Eveline*”

J. Mitchell Morse’s treatise about Joyce and Catholicism celebrates Joyce’s individuality and genius, and takes Joyce’s side in the issues regarding his exile from Ireland and the Catholic Church. Certainly Joyce wrote *Dubliners* to be read the way Morse dutifully reads it, and Morse’s entire argument is written in order to elucidate the mind of Joyce as he understands it, such as in the passage in which he asserts that Joyce’s character is an example of fortitude as it was defined by Thomas Aquinas:

The essence of fortitude is deliberate choice of a difficult or dangerous course, and perseverance in it. To face a difficulty or danger fearlessly through ignorance, or through confidence born of experience and skill in overcoming it, or through desperation or rage or vainglory, is not fortitude; to face a difficulty or danger which one fears, which one has no experience or skill in overcoming, which one need not face, which one is not expected to face, and which one will get no credit for facing—that is fortitude. (98)

In “Eveline,” Morse reads the character of Eveline as an example of a weak young woman who is “crushed by [the weight of social opinion]” and lacking in courage (73, 104). I read Eveline as a woman loyal enough to keep a promise to her mother, “her promise to keep the home together as long as she could” (*D* 33), and with love enough to worry about the remnants of an unhappy family that includes an abusive father:

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 a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh. (32)

Eveline's promise to her mother also is a metaphor that invokes the sacrifice of all Irish who remained in Ireland, in spite of privation, to keep the homeland together. For Eveline, deserting family, faith, and country would be a kind of apostasy, as Joyce's choice of a double entendre indicates when at the last moment of indecision at the pier he emphasizes the magnitude of Eveline's contemplated act, as "she caught a glimpse of the *black mass* of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall" (emphasis added, 33). In a mute plea for strength and wisdom to make what, for her, would be the right decision, "she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer" (34). That the character of Eveline was based on one of Joyce's Dublin neighbors, who really did marry a sailor and raise a family with him in Dublin (Ellmann 43) is only an "aside" to the delineated fictional character of Eveline, yet this real-life instance also could be used as an example of the kind of pedestrian fortitude I champion in this argument. Joyce acknowledged to Stanislaus, in a letter written on 18 September 1905, his lack of physical courage as distinctly in contrast to his intellectual and moral courage: "It is strange that a person can be morally intrepid, as I certainly am, and abjectly cowardly in the physical sense" (*Letters* 75). Fortitude need not include physical courage as a condition, yet neither

should it be discounted, and my point is that it took as much fortitude to stick it out in Ireland as it did to leave her.

According to John Kenneth Galbraith, the huge loss of Irish population due to the massive deaths resulting from the Great Famine and followed by massive emigration, was the primary factor that provided for the beginning of Ireland's release, after many centuries, from mass poverty: "The Irish who departed Ireland at the time of the famine, and thereafter, made good their own escape from poverty and made possible the escape of those who remained behind" (96-97). Although a proponent of immigration, Galbraith did concede that there is guilt and resistance associated with leaving one's country to take up permanent residence in another: "Guilt extends, on frequent occasion, to those who have left" (sic). Resistance comes from the country of origin in the form of "pride in the ambition to take care of one's own" (137-38).

The story of "Eveline" clearly describes a young woman who considered her options amid agonizing indecision, weighed her moral obligations against her personal dreams of freedom, and as a devout Catholic sought intercession through prayer. In the end she refused to leave home and country. This process has at least as good a case for being called a decisive action as being called, as it has been called, inertia or "pusillanimity" (Morse 104).

"Grace"

Tom Kernan in "Grace" is a Joycean composite of his father John Joyce and a former neighbor, Ned Thornton, the real Eveline's father (Ellmann 43). After the fictive, inebriated Kernan fell down the stairs of a bar and cut his tongue, a group of male friends planned an intervention to try to persuade him to "take the pledge" to give up alcohol.

The reader is told that, “Mr Kernan came of Protestant stock and, though he had been converted to the Catholic faith at the time of his marriage, he had not been in the pale of the Church for twenty years. He was fond, moreover, of giving side-thrusts at Catholicism.” Kernan’s wife is a practicing Catholic who accepts her husband’s faults and is satisfied that he has a few redeeming traits: “After a quarter of a century of married life she had very few illusions left. Religion for her was a habit and she suspected that a man of her husband’s age would not change greatly before death” (*D* 156-57).

This story is written in a manner that parodies both the well-intentioned friends, who cannot themselves abstain from alcohol, and the local priest, who preaches a sermon about self-improvement and “keeping account” of one’s bad habits, a sermon that appears to be ineffectual in alleviating the debilitating habits of his flock. According to Morse, Joyce had a particular distaste for the Catholic practice of speaking of morality in terms of “accounts.” Morse demonstrates that Joyce derived Father Purdon’s sermon—the sermon delivered at the retreat—directly from Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola’s own teachings, and specifically from his *Spiritual Exercises* in which a confessor striving to break a bad habit is instructed to keep daily accounts of his or her progress or failure (75-76). This sounds sensible enough, except that it was the trading of temporal for spiritual that rang false to Joyce, better explained in this excerpt from a letter written by Saint Ignatius to a woman whose sister had died, and which “refers to the stated value of prayers in terms of years of purgatory remitted: „I am certain on many grounds and from many signs that in the other life she is full of glory as without end, where I trust so long as we do not forget her in our prayers however unworthy and poor, she in her turn will favour and repay us with holy interest”” (qtd. in Morse 76). Father Purdon is described as

very heavy with a large, red face. There is the implication that the priest's red face is due to his own alcoholism, suggested by Joyce's choosing the Father's name from Purdon Street in Dublin, which was in the red-light district of Dublin (the Nighttown of Joyce's *Ulysses*) (Brown 299-300). Prior to the retreat the group of friends drink rounds of stout and then of whiskey, including Kernan. As they drink they discuss the history of the Catholic Church with a maudlin reverence. Kevin Collins, in *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland, 1848-1916*, describes what he calls the Golden Age of Early Christian Ireland, "a period of high achievement by a Gaelic-Catholic people, with the emphasis on Ireland's role as missionary to Europe" (79). "Ireland's role as missionary to Europe" is touched on in "Grace" when Mr. Cunningham, who is a "Castle official only during office hours" (*D* 160), asserts that "the Irish priesthood is honoured all the world over" (163). This is referenced also in "Eveline" by the yellowing photograph of a priest that hangs on the wall "beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque," a school friend of Eveline's father, of whom he would remark casually (that is, proudly) to visitors, "—He is in Melbourne now" (30).

As Terrence Brown explains about "Grace," "much of the comedy of the ensuing conversation between the intending penitents of this tale involves the half-truths and downright errors that their talk contains" (299). In the following excerpt, Mr. Cunningham, who assumes leadership of the intervention group, affirms that the Catholic Church is the original and authentic faith:

There's not much difference between us [Catholics and Protestants],
said Mr M'Coy. We both believe in—

He hesitated for a moment.

— . . . in the Redeemer. Only they don't believe in the Pope and in the mother of God.

—But, of course, said Mr Cunningham quietly and effectively, our religion is *the* religion, the old, original faith.

—Not a doubt of it, said Mr Kernan warmly. (*D* 165)

Joyce must have laughed often and loudly as he wrote this quasi-parody. Even so, underlying this exposure of seemingly fruitless efforts on the part of the friends' intervention and the uninspired directives offered by Father Purdon, are authentic glimpses of momentous events in the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Cunningham's version of Catholic history, even with inaccuracies, doesn't diminish the pride he shares with his neighbors in living amid that momentous history as an Irish Catholic, such as the instigation of the doctrine of papal infallibility:

—Yes, because when the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, Mr Fogarty explained, he is infallible. . . .

—Papal infallibility, said Mr Cunningham, that was the greatest scene in the whole history of the Church. . . .

—And they were a German cardinal by the name of Dolling . . . or Dowling . . . or— . . . (1st two ellipses in orig.)

—The German cardinal wouldn't submit. He left the church. (168-69)

The doctrine of Papal Infallibility, declared by Pius IX in 1870, was evidence that the Church considered itself the ultimate authority, surpassing the authority of the state. The conflict between the Church and the modern state in Ireland was therefore a situation that could never have a resolution (Killeen 126, 129).

Another source of Catholic pride discussed by the friends in “Grace” is Irish Archbishop John MacHale:

—There they were at it, all the cardinals and bishops and archbishops from all the ends of the earth and these two fighting dog and devil until at last the Pope himself stood up and declared infallibility a dogma of the Church *ex cathedra*. On the very moment John MacHale, who had been arguing and arguing against it, stood up and shouted out with the voice of a lion: *Credo!*

—*I believe!* Said Mr Fogarty.

—*Credo!* Said Mr Cunningham. That showed the faith he had. He submitted the moment the Pope spoke. . . .

—I once saw John MacHale, said Mr Kernan, and I’ll never forget it as long as I live. (169-70)

John MacHale was educated in Ireland and attended a hedge school, Catholic schools that operated illegally under the Penal Laws. MacHale had become an opponent of British rule in Ireland after personally witnessing British brutality during the 1798 Revolution, which included the hanging of his parish priest, Father Andrew Grant (Collins 84). MacHale, although he spoke Gaelic fluently, did not learn to read or write it until he was nearly fifty. He wrote a Gaelic *Manual of prayer*, published in 1840, believing the Gaelic Irish needed religious instruction in their native language (89-90). An example of the Church’s function in the daily lives of Irish Catholics is the following from the *Manual of prayer* regarding Gaelic prayers to be read when a person is dying:

It is a great consolation to a dying person to hear one of the family, or of the neighbours, reciting, at that awful hour, those consoling prayers in the language in which he was first taught to pray, and sustaining his confidence by those moving instances of God's power and mercy. (qtd. in Collins 90)

Joyce chose to use the social situation described in "Grace" to expose what appears to be another example of the Irish as unsophisticated, unprogressive, and hopelessly inert. Yet I suggest that again what Joyce actually illuminates by his meticulous attention to accuracy is a viable network of friends living in a supportive community which, at its essence, is faithfully undergirded by the Catholic Church and its appointed priests. That the individuals described are less than heroic, and that the churchmen themselves fall short of fulfilling their duties as community or national leaders, only serves to create a more thoroughly believable human society. Tom Kernan will never stop drinking, yet he has friends who cared enough to bring him safely home after his fall in the bar, visit him during his recovery, and accompany him to a spiritual retreat.

"A Boarding House"

"A Boarding House" gives several specific examples of the Irish-Catholic system of solving domestic disputes. One of the ways in which the local priest intervened to assist families was in deciding matters of marital separation and custody of children: "One night he [Mr. Mooney] went for his wife with the cleaver and she had to sleep in a neighbour's house. . . . After that they lived apart. She went to the priest and got a separation from him with care of the children" (56). This incident was taken from a

similar one in the Joyce home. A drunken John Joyce violently attacked his wife, Joyce's mother, the frail May Joyce, shortly after she had given birth to a son who died within a few weeks (Ellmann 41). Afterward, May Joyce appealed to their parish priest for a separation, which the priest refused to grant (Igoe 61).

Galbraith would have agreed with Joyce that those in Ireland with the most initiative were the ones who refused to accommodate to the impoverished conditions and that those most strongly motivated were the ones who left Ireland for opportunity elsewhere (120, 138). "Nothing so reinforces this equilibrium [of poverty]" asserts Galbraith, "as the absence of aspiration—the absence of effort to escape it" (62). The motivation of which he speaks is of course economic motivation. I hope I have been clear so far in this thesis in describing a different viewpoint than that of Galbraith, and of Joyce and other critics, of the values by which the Catholic Irish who remained in their country were motivated. Certainly Mrs. Mooney, in "A Boarding House," who coerces her boarder Bob Doran into offering marriage to her daughter, was economically motivated to capture Doran's stable income for her daughter's upkeep, but I maintain that this kind of economic motivation has as its underlying *primary* motive that of ensuring her children and grandchildren will not be forced to leave Ireland for economic security. Why should the family leave the homeland if Mrs. Mooney possesses the wherewithal to provide for her family? Again I argue that Mrs. Mooney's motivation is at least on a par with those who abandon Ireland for the unknown, or even for likely economic improvement. Certainly the emotional cost of escape from Ireland's poverty and hardship would be considered too high for many persons for whom love of home and tradition ranked high in his or her list of personal values.

After Mrs. Mooney had spoken with Polly and confirmed that Polly's honor had been compromised by her clandestine encounters with their boarder, she was ready to confront Doran:

She was sure she would win. To begin with she had all the weight of social opinion on her side. She was an outraged mother. . . . He had simply taken advantage of Polly's youth and inexperience: that was evident. The question was: What reparation would he make?

There must be reparation made in such cases. . . . For her only one reparation could make up for the loss of her daughter's honour: marriage. . . . He [Doran] had been employed for thirteen years in a great Catholic wine-merchant's office and publicity would mean for him, perhaps, the loss of his sit. (59-60)

Morse evaluates Doran this way: "The seducer, though he does not love the girl and in fact is ashamed of her ungrammatical speech, marries her for the same reason that he goes to church though he is an atheist—because he fears he will otherwise lose his job" (106).

It is easy for a contemporary reader to pass judgment on Bob Doran for caving in under threat of the loss of, possibly, the best job or the only job he might be able to secure. But one must keep in mind that the characters in Joyce's stories daily witnessed destitution at close quarters, and poverty was always a real threat. Also, as a stable citizen and respectable man in a devout community, Doran understood duty, and his duty in this case was to marry Polly. These values, although restrictive by today's lax standards, helped keep Irish Catholic communities and families intact through lean times and in the

face of persistent and insidious persecution. As Doran reflected on how his involvement with Polly had come about, he recalled her thoughtfulness in providing him small comforts, and mused hopefully that “perhaps they could be happy together . . .” (62). Although it may offend our modern ideal, whether or not Bob’s and Polly’s marriage would be “happy” or not, is the least in long list of concerns of a people who have been fighting for survival for centuries.

We see the unwary Doran as being trapped into a loveless marriage, but strict parental surveillance and the Church’s and community’s vigilance were all necessary in order to provide for a girl and her offspring. The local priest’s authority in persuading a man to marry a girl he’d had sexual contact with was essential in order to maintain social order. A discussion of whether Polly Mooney and Bob Doran were happily paired in a love-match would be naïve. The Mooneys, like many of the characters in *Dubliners*, were probably not much above the borderline poor, and had to struggle to maintain any semblance of social or personal well-being. An unmarried daughter, especially one with a child, would be a burden to the family, whereas marriage to a man like Doran, with steady employment, would add to the family’s stability. Mrs. Mooney, who had already suffered the extreme burden of an alcoholic husband, was providing for her family, and the tactics she employed to accomplish this were justified in a society whose members were within living memory of the continuous fear of famine and displacement. Her astute summation of the marital possibilities available to Polly and her strategy of entrapping the young couple is abrasive to our contemporary sensibilities, but as a single parent positioning her family’s survival, I suggest we can admire her willingness to secure Polly’s and her grandchildren’s futures by whatever means available, especially since neither Polly nor

her brother appear to have their mother's mettle, and the family's financial stability depends solely upon Mrs. Mooney.

Morse's assessment of Eveline, Bob Doran, and other characters in *Dubliners*, it seems to me, is written from the viewpoint of judging them within the strict confines of each vignette or story, and always within the confines of Joyce's own purported intent. I propose that these characters be viewed within a wider humanity that includes the implied history of continuous civil war, hostile outside intervention, loss of culture and language, fear of poverty, and not least, a deep love of country and the Irish Catholic tradition, and loyalty to community and family.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

One of many underlying motifs in *Ulysses* is the motif of love as conceived by a more mature Joyce (Ellmann 317), primarily embodied in the character of Bloom. Yet the same Joyce who created Leopold Bloom when, in a moment of “*claritas*” brought on by a beating he understood that an acquaintance of his father’s was a man motivated by an encompassing love (161-62), also delineated the characters in *Dubliners*. This epiphany, which portended *Ulysses*, was present in Joyce as he composed *Dubliners*, and although the younger, angrier, and rebellious Joyce would evolve and mature as writer and man over the ensuing years, the human condition remained essentially static. Poets and writers of every age write about that constancy which is love in his or her contemporary language, framing it in its concomitant cultural context, without either enhancing or devaluating its essence, which is immutable. Yeats’s painful line about “love’s bitter mystery,” appropriated by Joyce (Ellmann xiii), includes the love of one member of the human species for any other of its species, friend for friend, kin for kin. This is the love of the *Dubliners*, the love that steps up in cases of extremity: injury, infirmity, abandonment, death. This is love that ultimately does its familial or communal duty and without which humanity would long ago have annihilated itself.

Joyce lucidly described the mental process of reading a well-crafted piece of writing when at age eighteen he reviewed Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* for the *Fortnightly Review*: "By degrees the whole scroll of his life is unrolled before us, and we have the pleasure of not hearing it read out to us, but of reading it for ourselves, piecing the various parts, and going closer to see wherever the writing on the parchment is fainter or less legible" (Bolt 52). I have described what I have discerned in several of Joyce's stories by reading them for myself, by going closer to the parchment to find sometimes barely visible writing. As so much is known about Joyce through his letters and essays, and through the testimonies of his brother Stanislaus, it is customary to read *Dubliners* as consistent with Joyce's generally negative perspective. However, remove Joyce as judgmental narrator and you have, instead of a people to pity or despise, a people whose endurance and continuity bespeaks a life-force that moves the reader "strangely," as author Virginia Woolf was moved by the moth at the window-pane. And my sympathies, as were Woolf's, are "all on the side of life . . . when there was nobody to care or to know." In this same way I have watched the men and women in *Dubliners*, marveling at their individual struggles "against a power of such magnitude, to retain what no one else valued or desired to keep" (Woolf 11). In reflecting on his harsh treatment of the Irish in *Dubliners*, Joyce wrote to Stanislaus in September of 1906 that one of Ireland's virtues was its "ingenuous insularity" (Ellmann 245). It is this insularity—instilled by a hard history of disabling events—that has enabled the Irish to survive what has utterly crushed other races. Read from this perspective, *Dubliners* becomes an important chronicle of Irish resiliency, and even a poignant triumph.

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