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Sean Clifford

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A Modernity Paused:
James Joyce, Catholicism, and the Celtic Revival in the Pre-Revolution Ireland of *Dubliners*

Sean Clifford

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Dr. Ellen Scheible, Thesis Director
Dr. Heidi Bean, Committee Member
Prof. Bruce Machart, Committee Member

Sean Clifford

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James Joyce, Catholicism, and the Celtic Revival in the Pre-Revolution Ireland of *Dubliners*

The Ireland of James Joyce's first published work, *Dubliners*, is a nation only a few years away from revolution. It is a land still under the control of England and the specter of the Potato Famine. Charles Stuart Parnell's push for Home Rule and his subsequent fall from grace and the failed revolutions of the past still lingered in its collective conscience. Adding to the turmoil of the times was the fact that the country was struggling with the juxtaposition between burgeoning modernity and strict traditionalism. In *Dubliners* this struggle becomes especially apparent in regard to Catholicism. Joyce captures the spirit of an Ireland on the verge of vastly important political and philosophical change, and one of the main ways he did this was by highlighting how Irish attitudes towards Catholicism were changing in the face of modernity. The church itself has thinly veiled financial motives and a desire to impose its will on the people of Ireland. Further, the characters and their interactions with Catholicism represent a microcosm of the pent up restlessness of the pre-Revolutionary Ireland that Joyce was writing about. Joyce paints the citizens of Dublin as restless yet paralyzed, yearning for change but unwilling to part with their past, and Catholicism is central to this predicament.

Along with the Church, the Celtic Revival was also a source of stagnation for Irish culture in Joyce's eyes. Instead of forging a cultural identity intended to move forward into the contemporary western world, the Revival created a faux-Irish past that clung to the decidedly not

modern history and lifestyle of the west of Ireland. Joyce makes this situation particularly clear in “The Dead,” and as a result it is the only story analyzed in reference to the Revival in my argument. Some characters in the story champion the idea that the Revival is an authentic representation of Irish culture. Gabriel Conroy is chastised for not holding this belief and comes to be haunted by his wife Gretta’s idealized vision of West Ireland. Joyce shows how the Revival creates nothing productive for Irish society in the climatic final scene, in which Gabriel and Gretta are paralyzed by their own false notions of the past.

The scholarship addressing Joyce’s relationship to the Church in his writings is quite prolific. However, most of that scholarship focuses on his three novels as opposed to the short stories of *Dubliners*. Older scholarship on Joyce and the Church, such as *A Pauline Vision*, tend to either cast a more forgiving eye on the church and attempt to paint Joyce’s feelings towards it as complicated yet positive overall, or take a stance closer to Richard Ellman’s and say that he disposed any relationship to the Church in favor of a greater aesthetic vision. However, in contemporary criticism, the majority of the scholarship agrees that Joyce was critiquing the Catholic Church as detrimental to Ireland, with some making the argument that he still maintains a complicated affinity towards it.

A large portion of the scholarship on Joyce’s relationship to the Church relies on a historical reading of Ireland during the time of Joyce’s writings. In *Help My Unbelief: James Joyce and Religion*, Geert Lernout explores the parallel between Joyce’s personal relationship to the church and the way in which it is depicted in his works. Lernout believes that it is impossible to separate Joyce’s complicated emotions towards the Church, along with the feelings of those close to him, from the way in which they are represented in his texts. There are descriptions of Joyce’s brother Stanislaus as an atheist, his mother as a reluctantly devout woman in a house

marked by an indifference or contempt towards religion, and Nora Barnacle as a Catholic who wished to marry Joyce yet was long prevented from doing so by his anti-marriage views. When he speaks of *Dubliners*, the first thing that he notes is the fact that a letter to Stanislaus Joyce from James indicated that *Dubliners* was meant to be about religion even from its very inception as an idea in Joyce's mind (119). He also notes that a similar letter to Stanislaus revealed the inspiration for "Grace" was also a personal anecdote. This personal-meets-textual approach to Joyce's relationship is common in much of the scholarship on the matter. I will employ this strategy at several points in my argument, although the majority of my analysis will be textual. Lernout spends an extensive amount of time summarizing the portrayal of religion in *Dubliners*. This section covers almost every story in the collection and inventories the instances in the text where religion is criticized or evoked. However, Lernout's analysis of these instances serve better as an introduction to the critique of religion within the stories. Where Lernout is most illuminating is in the historical background he provides for Joyce's relationship to the Church. He analyzes the effect of Catholicism on Ireland's political landscape in Joyce's time and before from O'Connell's Catholic nationalism to the inclusive politics of Parnell up until the Fenianism¹ of Arthur Griffith in Joyce's time. The nationalism of the time was shifting from the secular approach that Joyce preferred towards an ideology of Catholic nationalism that was exclusive and constricting and Lernout highlights Joyce's personal opinions on the matter, which favored a more secular approach than Sinn Fein was taking.

A productive lens through which we can analyze the ways in which Joyce critiques Catholicism is through Jacques Derrida's theory of Deconstruction. Many critics have analyzed the relationship between Joyce and Derrida. Post-structuralist critics are interested in the ways

¹ Fenian's are members of the highly influential nationalist political group called Sinn Fein.

Joyce structures his texts, and while most of the focus is on *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, much of it is applicable to *Dubliners* and some of it is directly focused on its stories. In his work *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, Alan Roughley notes that the works of both Joyce and Derrida “rupture the taxonomic structures” that are founded upon the principles of “presence, facticity, genre, teleology, progression, and linearity (xi).” Roughley applies Derrida’s concept of textual blankness or “hymen” in regards to the snowfall at the end of “The Dead” and claims that the blankness caused by this coat of snow is what allows for the “mark” of writing in the first place. Roughley also claims that phallogocentrism is evident in many of the stories of *Dubliners* along with Joyce’s other works. He notes that Derrida believed that the structure of novels and stories tend to be phallic in nature, with one linear path towards the end. Joyce is said to disrupt this phallic linearity through his switches “between various narrative styles” (117). My argument will draw on this link between Joyce and Derrida by analyzing the ways in which Joyce represents the nature of the Church as a structural institution through the actual structure of the stories in *Dubliners*. While Roughley notes that the change of styles Joyce employs within his novels breaks up the linear and phallic structure inherent to storytelling, I contend that short stories themselves also present a way with which to break up this linearity. The short story structure of *Dubliners* mirrors the fractured identity of an Ireland haunted by the Church’s ubiquitous presence. Derrida’s deconstructionist approach allows for a way to link the construction of Joyce’s text to his critique of the construction of the Catholic system in Ireland through the dissection of the structure of the stories.

Furthering the concept of a blankness or absence within these stories, Kevin Whelan investigates the final and most famous story of the collection, “The Dead,” in his article “The Memories of ‘The Dead.’” Whelan argues that the Irish past that the Revival presented to the

wounded Irish public was false or gone and could only truly be felt as an absence (66). He looks at the story from a historicist standpoint and starts the article with an analysis of the Potato Famine's importance to Irish history and "The Dead." The article goes to great depths to analyze the "biographical, literary, historical, geographical, musical" elements of the story and their importance (59). He links the trauma of the Famine to the development of the Land League² and Gaelic Athletic Association,³ but most importantly for my argument, the Celtic Revival. Furthermore, he argues that Joyce refuses to buy into the binaries⁴ that Yeats had simply flipped in order to advance the Revival. He says that Joyce rejected these categories and instead sought to "dismantle the binary system itself" (67). The synthesis in Whelan's work of heavy historicism supplemented with deconstructionism is akin to the approach I am taking in my own research.

"The Heavy Gray Face of the Paralytic": The Church as a Paralyzing Agent

Throughout *Dubliners*, the Catholic Church is an agent of paralysis to the modernity and prosperity of Ireland. In "The Sisters," Catholicism is not something that can be easily dismissed by its characters. The story's opening paragraphs find the narrator associating the word "paralysis" with the word "simony", which is the act of selling a blessing for money (1). From the very first paragraph of the work Joyce is making connections between Ireland's stagnant present and the church's corrupt and financially motivated past. It is a story that focuses on a young boy and his relationship to a priest who is "not long for this world" (1). There is some

² Foundation that quite successfully sought to eradicate the landlordism thought to be responsible for the Famine to varying degrees.

³ The GAA's main goal was to foster pride and camaraderie in the Irish people through the restoration and practice of traditional Irish games such as Hurling or Irish Football.

⁴ Celtic or Saxon, Catholic or Protestant, modern or traditional, national or cosmopolitan, English or Irish.

opposition to the boy's relationship to the priest, as a family friend, Mr. Cotter, said to the boy's aunt, "I wouldn't like children of mine to have too much to say to a man like that" before rationalizing that he should "run about and play with young lads of his own age" and "when children see things like that, you know, it has an effect" referring to the paralytic priest (2, 3). Cotter's beliefs mirror Joyce's desire for an Ireland that progresses into secular western modernity instead of remaining encumbered by a church that is stagnant and on its way out. The Church's own paralysis forces the people of Ireland into a dialectical relationship of mutual paralysis.

It is the Church that prevents the modernization of Ireland by hindering the youth from progressing. The boy feeds the priest with "packets of High Toast", which signifies that it is the willing youth that keeps the dying Catholic Church alive in Ireland (4). The boy even acknowledges the burden it had been to take care of the sickly priest by saying he felt "as if I had been freed from something by his death" (4). Meanwhile, Catholicism has trapped the elderly priest into its never ending and mundane life of symbols and rituals that he cannot escape. He questions his faith yet he has spent his whole life bound by it. The story ends with the revelation from the priest's sisters that he was going through some sort of nervous breakdown stemming from the "chalice he broke" (10). Symbolically, the word chalice represents the Holy Grail from which Jesus drank from during the last supper, and by breaking such a religiously charged item the priest himself has broken his faith in the church. Yet, it is too late in his life for his severance from faith to do him any service and he instead must die knowing that the church he spent his whole life serving was what caused his paralysis. In the final words of the story, one of the sisters says that the discovery of the priest laughing quietly by himself in a confession box late at night by his colleagues led them to believe "that there was something gone wrong with him"

(10). The confession box in this passage resembles a sort of malignant womb that recalls the priest's inability to leave the constriction of the Church. Perhaps the most revealing line of the story comes on the night the priest dies, as the young boy's dreams are haunted by the "heavy grey face of the paralytic," showing that even in the modernizing Ireland of this story there is no way to escape the ghost of Catholicism as it is so deeply embedded into the culture.

There is a communal desire within *Dubliners* for the Catholic Church to forcefully recruit or indoctrinate those who are not already unquestioningly faithful. In "Grace," the friends of Tom Kernan, a drunkard salesman, attempt to convert him into a devout Catholic. Kernan was born of "Protestant stock" but had "converted to the Catholic faith at the time of his marriage," although he was by no means involved in the church and was known to give "side-thrusts at Catholicism" (156). Unhappy with her husband's drinking, Mrs Kernan is happy to hear that Mr Powers, a friend of Mr Kernan's, intends to "make a new man of him" (154). Powers, along with friends Mr Cunningham and Mr M'Coy, wish to achieve a change in Kernan's drinking habits by instilling him with a newfound devotion to the church. Throughout the story, the Catholic religion and its dogma are imposed on the characters within. For example, Mrs Kernan's "beliefs were not extravagant" but she admits to herself that "if she was put to it, she could also believe in the banshee and in the Holy Ghost," implying that logic tells her not to believe in such things but if she were told to believe in them then she would have no choice (157). While Mrs Kernan's susceptibility believe in supernatural nonsense is not directly caused by the Church, it is the result of centuries of dogmatic impositions on the Irish psyche by the Church. In an extended conversation about religion, the Cardinal John MacHale (John of Tuam)⁵ is said to have been one of two Cardinals to vote against Papal Infallibility, however, when the Pope spoke "ex cathedra,"

⁵ Tuam is a town in County Galway.

in effect declaring Papal Infallibility an official Catholic Dogma, MacHale spoke back “Credo!” or “I believe” (169). In this anecdote, MacHale is forced to change his beliefs by the declaration of the head of the Church. Additionally, Mr Powers states “Well, Mrs Kernan, we’re going to make your man here a good holy pious and God-fearing Roman Catholic,” and this one sentence effectively sums up the theme of this story, that being Catholic is not a choice but an imposition (170). Mr. Kernan becomes the only person to acknowledge this within the story when he refuses to hold the traditional candle at confession, as he says, “I bar the candles... I bar the magic-lantern business” (171). Kernan refuses the dogmatic and often silly demands of the church that everyone else in the story has fallen prey to. When his exasperated wife sarcastically says “There’s a nice Catholic for you!” it is precisely that blind niceness that Joyce is critiquing. The Catholics of this story care more about being polite than they do about approaching the Church with a discerning eye and this allows the Church to avoid the scrutiny it deserves. Kernan is the closest we get to a hero of the story by being the only one immune to the niceties and customs that require an Irishman to respect the Catholic Church. The people of Ireland did not have much of a choice in their Catholic indoctrination and Joyce highlights this by showing the subtle, sinister way in which it imposes its will on them.

The Church in the Dublin of these stories is the main harbinger of education for its citizens via the Christian Brothers or Jesuit schools, yet the stories are riddled with critiques of this education system, which hinders its students from freedom and creates drunkards or inaccurate historians of former students. In “An Encounter,” the focus of the story is three young boys in a Jesuit School⁶ (246). Joe Dillon is said to have been the boy “who introduced the Wild West to us” as he had “a little library made up of *The Union Jack*, *Pluck*, and *The Halfpenny*

⁶ Most likely Belvedere College where Joyce attended as a boy.

Marvel,” all of which are adventure comics (11, 245). Yet, Dillon’s family is unusually devout even for the standards of the time, as they attend “eight-o’clock mass every morning” and Dillon himself had a “vocation for the priesthood” (11). When Dillon is caught reading a copy of *The Apache Chief* by a Jesuit priest at school, he is scolded as behaving like a National School boy, implying a lack of Catholic values often associated with the secular and Catholic and Protestant mixed National Schools (12, 246). The narrator of the story longs for the adventure of the stories Dillon introduced to him and the two of them, along with a boy named Mahoney, plan a day of “miching” or skipping school, but Dillon fears they “might meet Father Butler or someone out of the college,” so he opts out (13). The Catholic schools and fear of the priests keep Dillon from participating in something he is clearly interested in, and it is telling that these stories are referred to as *Wild West* by the narrator because it implies the church keeps Ireland from joining the modern western world. Through its prevalence and the fear that it imposed on those who disobeyed, the Church prevented the young students of Ireland from thinking or acting outside of its guidelines.

Not only did the Church-run schools hinder the progress of its students, they also indoctrinate past graduates with misinformation. In addition to the theme of forced conversion in “Grace”, there is also a theme of historical inaccuracy about the Catholic Church. The lengthy conversation that the men of this story engage in about the history of the Catholic Church and the Jesuit order is often woefully misinformed and in some cases just wholly false. These half truths and lies begin when Mr. Cunningham aggrandizes the Jesuit Order by saying “the General of the Jesuits stands next to the Pope” and that “the Jesuit Order has never once reformed,” both of which are patently false statements (163, 299). They also suggest that “Lux upon Lux” was the motto for Pope Leo XIII, although Popes do not have mottoes and this is a ridiculous and

bastardized combination of Latin and English (166, 301). Their confusion about Pope Leo is ironic because he is a Pope known to be a great advocate for education (301). Another event that has been misremembered by these men is the Papal Infallibility scene, in which neither John of Tuam nor the German Dowling was present (303). With all of these falsehoods about the Church, Joyce shows the danger of myth passed as fact through the Catholic raised (and presumably educated) men. The prevalence of Catholic schools is dangerous because they have power in the education of an impressionable generation of young Irish and the older generation of misinformed graduates.

Capitalism and Catholicism are paired dialectically in these stories and Joyce critiques the way this partnership takes advantage of the people of Ireland. When the boy in “Araby” finally gets to the bazaar late at night he compares the relative emptiness of the place to a church in which the patrons are leaving (26). With this simple comparison Joyce depicts both the diminishing importance of the church and its capitalist economic nature. The bazaar becomes a space of failed capitalism when the boy does not buy anything, which links capitalism to the failure of spirituality that occurs at the story’s end, where he realizes how baseless and vain his beliefs and desires truly are (27-28). Although the church’s capitalistic aspirations are a common theme in Joyce’s work, at no point are these aspirations so clear in *Dubliners* as they are in “Grace.” The whole plan to convert Kernan into a more faithful Catholic revolves around the attendance of a church retreat catered towards businessmen. When speaking of the fellow men at the retreat it becomes clear that Kernan is only evaluating them by their business stature. These men seem to be ordered from most financially successful to least, starting with a “moneylender” and a registration agent called a “mayor maker” and ending with “poor O’Carroll” who “had

been at one time a considerable commercial figure,” implying that he had a fall from grace financially (172). Hope Howell Hodgkins speaks of the materialism of the church:

In “Grace” Joyce presents a social and religious dilemma similar to that of Stephen Dedalus: orthodox religion demands a difficult submission. Yet, if watered down, tamed to fit the individual’s desires, it becomes a shabby materialism, “the death of spiritual predominance.” If Kernan’s companions believe that simply getting him to the retreat will cure him of drunkenness, they kill that hope by misunderstanding, misusing, and diluting the very religious narratives by which they persuade. And if their belief is shallow, then so is its success, since their plot confirms Kernan’s faith only in the economic cult of the gentleman. (433)

According to Hodgkins, spirituality in the text is bastardized by an individualism driven by materialism. The men in “Grace” are all using the Church as a means for their own materialistic desires. Even the priest at the retreat is driven by a materialistic individualism, as he was savvy enough to put together a retreat for the men with the most money (read as: the most money to give). Father Purdon reads a sermon described as “a text for business men and professional men” and also as one “which might seem to the casual observer at variance with the lofty morality elsewhere preached by Jesus Christ” (173). Joyce goes on to say that Purdon “came to speak to business men and he would speak⁷ to them in a businesslike way” and he describes himself as their “spiritual accountant.” This humorous passage paints the church as almost cartoonish in its complicity with capitalism (174). The end of the story continues with the accountant metaphor

⁷ The Sermon is Luke 16:8-9. Father Purdon actually changes a word from “fail” to “die” in the text in order to advance his own agenda (305).

by comparing confession to setting your accounts right with God (174). Joyce's critique of Catholicism is at its most scathing here as the men of this story are clearly only using the church as a means of advancing their financial situation, including the priest, and Kernan seems to be the only one openly acknowledging it. The capitalistic aspirations of the Church are problematic for Joyce because economic success comes at the expense of Ireland's population, who look to the church for spiritual guidance, but only get that guidance for a fee.

The stasis caused by the Church is juxtaposed with a modern Ireland that is clearly in sight in the text. Jill Shashatay argues that the stories are marked by "what Robert Frumkin calls 'frustration when the goal is in sight' and what Joyce calls '[the Aeolian leitmotif of] the derision of victory' or, to highlight the erotic charge enlivening many of these stories, the frustration of desire" (216). In other words, the people of Dublin can see the future of Ireland as a modern western nation yet there is a certain inability or refusal to take that future to fruition. "The Boarding House" finds boarding house tenant, Mr Doran, trapped into potential marriage after news of his affair becomes public knowledge. Doran is described as a man who in his youth "had boasted of his free-thinking and denied the existence of God to his companions in public-houses" (61). His political views were once radical and against the Catholic hegemony. However, in the present he is employed by a "Catholic wine-merchant" whom he fears will terminate him if he does not marry, and despite the fact that he buys a radical London newspaper⁸ every week he still attends to his religious duties. He is a man who can see the potential for a modern Ireland in the near future but is held back by his employment through the Catholic Church. Political views cannot be separated from the sway of Catholicism in an Ireland run in large part in reference to the influence of the Church.

⁸ *Reynold's Newspaper*

The Catholic-influenced nationalist movements of the era prevented a more secular and inclusive nationalism that Joyce would prefer. In “The Dead,” Gabriel is confronted by Miss Ivors, his former colleague and avowed Celtic Revival nationalist. The Celtic Revival as a movement was heavily influenced by the idea that the Catholic Church was an integral part of the Irish identity, as opposed to the Protestantism of England. Ivors accuses Gabriel of being a “West Briton⁹” because he writes for a Protestant newspaper. Gabriel protests on the grounds that he merely writes literary reviews and thusly is not saying anything political. While Miss Ivors insists that she had been joking, it is clear that she is taken aback by Gabriel’s involvement with such a paper. According to Joyce, the inability for this strand of nationalism to refrain from politicizing even literature is ridiculous. Miss Ivors goes on to champion such stereotypical Revival topics such as the Irish language and the west of Ireland. Joyce believes this Revival obsessed strain of Nationalism is not pushing Ireland into modernity but instead clinging to the fallacies of a made up Irish past.

The Church’s condemnation of Charles Stewart Parnell and his modern vision for an independent Ireland haunts these stories and cripples political progress. In “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” the campaign workers for a Nationalist candidate turn their conversation to Parnell on the anniversary of his death¹⁰. Described as “Joyce’s political hero,” Parnell is widely regarded in this time as one of the most important figures in Irish history and a key figure in the fight for Home Rule and the modernization of Ireland (Whelan 61). He was a Protestant Irishman and differed from O’Connell in that he wanted a free Ireland with cooperation from both

⁹ Defined as: “A member of the English nation in Ireland; an Anglo-Irishman; one who sympathizes with the Unionist cause” (309).

¹⁰ The anniversary of Parnell’s death is commemorated with a holiday called “Ivy Day” in Ireland.

Catholics and Protestants. His name was disgraced and discredited after a marriage scandal¹¹ more informed by Catholic sensibilities than politics, and he died shortly thereafter (Duffy 171-176). Michael G. Cronin says, “In Ireland, it was the Catholic Church which primarily articulated the argument that Parnell’s private sexual conduct made him unfit for political leadership” (33). This prudence towards sexuality leads to the fall of Ireland’s greatest advocate and throughout *Dubliners* there is a Freudian repetition¹² of this austere view of sex and the consequences that follow (Freud). Joyce prefers Parnellite politics to the Catholic Nationalism popular during the writing of *Dubliners*, because it is informed by the goal to be a secular and modern nation instead of a government handcuffed by Catholicism. It is a sentiment that becomes clear in a poem by one of the campaigners, Mr Hynes, called “The Death of Parnell,” where he laments that:

He dreamed (alas, 'twas but a dream!)

Of Liberty: but as he strove

To clutch that idol, treachery

Sundered him from the thing he loved. (131)

He goes on to place blame on “*fawning priests – no friends of his,*” implying that the staunch Catholic values expected of the people of Ireland have led to the downfall of the one figure who brought them closest to joining the modern world (132). Geert Lernout illustrates the opportunist

¹¹ Parnell’s longtime mistress Katherine O’Shea gave birth to his child and this riled public opinion against him. However, many had known about the affair for years and both Parnell and O’Shea had been separated from their legal spouses for years yet could not legally obtain a divorce in Ireland (Duffy 175).

¹² Freud believed that people who had suffered through a serious event of trauma would habitually return to that moment of trauma. Joyce represents the people of Ireland as returning to a central moment of trauma represented by Parnell’s death.

nature of the capitalistic Church's role in Parnell's fall when he says "the Parnell affair offered a fine opportunity" for Irish bishops in regards to "taking initiative in the alliance (between English Gladstone-ian¹³ Liberals and Irish Nationals in the push for Home Rule) away from the lay politicians whom (they) felt had become too dominant" (45). These bishops used the guise of a moral vendetta to justify their true goal of wresting power away from Parnell and back to the Church. Through this greed driven coup of Parnell, the once strong and unified movement for Home Rule became fractured and the result was a decades-long stagnation in that movement and Irish politics in general. As Hugh Kenner says, "The shadow of Parnell to whom they had made years before the one act of faith of which they were capable lies over not just one man but a roomful of paralytics" (61). Politics in Dublin have been paralyzed by the church's condemnation of the political spearhead of the push for Irish modernity. According to Joyce, the best way for Ireland to push past the frustration of the goal in sight is to shed any ties to the Catholic imposition on its people.

"A Damned Decent Orangeman": The Othering of Protestantism

In *Dubliners*, Protestantism is the "othered" religion, which is in stark contrast to the colonial mindset of the era in which Catholicism was the "other". Early in the collection, the boys in "An Encounter" are mistaken for Protestants. They have rocks flung in their direction and are denounced as "Swaddlers," a derogatory term for Protestants. This scene is the most straightforward portrayal of the tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the Ireland of *Dubliners*. There is also a scene in "The Dead" in which the Protestant Mr Browne offends his Catholic hosts by imitating a drunken Irishwoman with "sidling mimicry" while assuming a "low

¹³ Refers to William Gladstone, a liberal British Prime Minister, who had been one of Parnell's main allies in the push for Home Rule.

Dublin accent” (183). Emily C. Bloom refers to this scene as a “failed performance” on the part of Browne and notes that it is the rare occasion where an Anglo-Irishman is the performer rather than the audience within the context of literature (1). Browne also starts to cheer “For they are jolly gay fellows!” in honor of these hosts, in a continuation of his performance role (206). Joyce is othering Mr Browne by making him perform for his Catholic hosts, which is a reversal of the usual role. There is also a desire on the part of his Catholic hosts to not scandalize the Church in front of Mr Browne as he is of the “other persuasion,” which shows the still tentative relationship between the faiths (195). Protestantism, normally in the English position of power, is placed in the position of “other” in *Dubliners* in order to place the power of narrative into Irish Catholic character’s hands.

Joyce is reclaiming the colonized Ireland for the Irish Catholics by “othering” the Protestants, yet he is also advocating for a symbiotic coexistence between the two religions. The rest of the collection portrays Protestantism in a relatively stark contrast to these scenes, still portraying it as an “other” while maintaining a relatively civil attitude towards it. Maria of “Clay” notes, “she used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to live with” (96). While she dislikes the Protestant tracts on the wall, it is likely that she would not be able to distinguish it from Catholic doctrine, and instead dislikes them “based on the warnings from her parish priest” (Lernout 123). Maria’s dislike of these tracts stems from the warning she has received about Protestantism as something other than Catholicism instead of anything ideological. In “Grace,” when Joyce describes the depiction Crofton in a conversation about Fr Tom Burke¹⁴, Mr Power

¹⁴ An infamously nationalist and radical priest known for giving impassioned sermons about his sensational brand of Catholic nationalism.

asks if he is an “Orangeman¹⁵” and receives the reply that Crofton is a “damned decent Orangemen” (165). Kernan quotes Crofton as saying, “*we worship at different altars, but our belief is the same.*” This assertion by Crofton lines up with the reasonable approach to religion and nationalism that Joyce favors. There is an acceptance of Protestantism within these stories that does not quite line up with the ideology of the time. In an era when the tensions over the Home Rule question between a prominently Protestant Ulster County¹⁶ and the rest of predominantly Catholic Ireland were at their height this acceptance is a stark contrast.

Joyce laments the aborted hope for an Ireland freed by a union of Irish Catholics and Protestants¹⁷. The Nationalists of “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” include both Catholics and Protestants. They spend the entirety of the story arguing about relatively trivial matters and generally not quite agreeing on many things. Arguments over the candidate, Mr Tierney, and his motives are prevalent in the story and even matters as small as a bottle of Guinness result in endless squabbles. Crofton, who appears in “Ivy Day” as well as “Grace,” is depicted as a Protestant other, as Emily C. Bloom notes, “although the story is composed almost entirely of dialogue, Joyce never directly represents Crofton speaking” (7). However, when Mr Hynes reads his poem in memory of Parnell, the only consensus is reached, as everyone in the room is moved by the poem. The story ends with Mr Crofton saying, though not in direct dialogue, “it was a

¹⁵ A term for Protestants derived from William of Orange.

¹⁶ Now known as Northern Ireland.

¹⁷ Although much of the early history between Irish Catholics and Anglo-Irish Protestants is marked by disdain and a belief of colonial superiority, years of unrest in both parties over English rule of the country led to a change. The late 1700’s into the 1800’s saw prominent Irish Independence groups comprised of both Catholic’s and Protestants. This started with the parliamentary petitions of Henry Grattan and his United Irishmen. The Young Ireland movement, half Catholic and half Protestant, continued this trend with their push for independence, which crested in the Rebellion of 1848. The peak of this coexistence would be with the rise of famed politician, Charles Stewart Parnell, whose legacy Joyce was quite clearly enamored with exploring (Duffy).

very fine piece of writing,” and the Catholics all laud it as well (133). Joyce depicts the squabbles that characterize much of the story as petty, and with the universal praise of the poem, positions the inclusive nationalism of the Protestant Parnell as the ideal for Ireland moving forward. It is a scene of revisionist history on Joyce’s part, as it takes place in the same committee room where the Parnellite split of 1890 divided the nationalists of Ireland into two sects (Duffy). The men of this story disagree about almost everything besides the greatness of Parnell while the men of the Parnellite split agreed about most everything besides the Catholic sensibilities that informed the man’s fall from grace. By setting this story in the very room where the split had happened Joyce offers a way to revise the original mistake. Joyce attempts to rectify the mistake made by the damaging split by setting this story in the very room where it had happened to an Irish public that would be well aware of the location’s importance. The missed opportunity for a free Ireland achieved through non-religious means created an invisible scar that the marred relationships between Catholics and Protestants in the Ireland of Joyce’s text and became visible with the creation of Northern Ireland only years later.

“A Creature Driven and Derided by Vanity”: Sexual Confusion and Marriage in Catholic Ireland

Sexuality within these stories is marked by an inability to move past a sort of abstract barrier within the Irish mindset. Years of sexual repression in the country had left the Irishmen and women of *Dubliners* with an inability to discuss or express their sexuality in the ways they wished to. The Church condemns the display of sexuality out of marriage and even punishes characters for implied sexuality, leaving the men and women of Joyce’s Ireland in a state of sexual failure. In “An Encounter,” an old man confronts the narrator and his friend Mahony in an open field. He asks them if they have any “sweethearts,” and Mahony replies that he had “three

totties,” and the old man notes that he used to have a lot of sweethearts at their age and “every boy has a little sweetheart” (17). The narrator notes that this view was “strangely liberal in a man of his age,” and the old man goes on to list all the qualities he likes about young girls. It seems that all of this sexually charged thinking has disgusted the old man as he comes back and insists that Mahony should be “whipped” and that “if he ever found a boy talking to girls or having a girl for a sweetheart and told lies about it then he would give him such a whipping as no boy ever got in this world” (19). As the narrator notes, the old man seems to “have forgotten his recent liberalism” in the matter of sexuality. Joyce implies that the man may have left to masturbate and it can be surmised that this act has awoken a Catholic shame within him in regard to sexuality. The shame associated with premarital expressions of sexuality in Ireland is informed by the Church’s omnipresent cultural power and stunts a healthy view on sex.

Sexual confusion saturates the lives of the characters that populate Joyce’s Dublin. The narrator of “Araby” is a prime example of this confusion. It is the story of a boy’s initiation into the world of sexuality. The first page sets up this theme with mention of an Eden-ic “wild garden” with a “central apple-tree,” preparing the reader for a loss-of-innocence narrative (21). A girl who is only referred to as Mangan’s sister is the object of the boy’s sexual awakening. He watches her from afar and she becomes the “chalice” that he lusts after. Joyce links the religious connotations of the chalice to the sexual desires of the boy, making Mangan’s sister the unattainable grail (23). However, sexual confusion makes it likely that the boy does not even know that his desire is physical, and he instead spends his nights crying “O love!” to himself in imitation of the equally misguided knights of literary chivalry’s past (23). Tellingly, it is in the dead priest’s room that he performs this ritual, showing that it is the specter of the church causing sexual confusion in Ireland. In fact, the boy is unable to shed the influence of

Catholicism even in his choice of words to describe his desire. As Lernout points out by quoting the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the word “adoration” has roots in the Greek *latreia*, which means “worship called forth by God, and given exclusively to Him as God” (121). This shows that not even his sexual desire can be extricated from the omnipresence of the Church. The sexuality of these characters is inextricably linked to the doctrine of the Church and it leaves them with a profound sense of confusion and shame in regards to the matter.

Even the ostensibly positive realization of their sexual confusion leaves the characters almost regretfully aware in a society that is unaware of its damaging stance on sexuality. When Mangan’s sister asks the boy if he is attending the titular bazaar, all of his confused sexual desire becomes transfixed on the allure of this exotic and abstract representation of her. Attending the bazaar becomes all he thinks about in the days preceding it and his obsession envelops him. However, he is nearly prevented from attending by a tardy uncle and an insistence by his aunt that he can “put off (his) bazaar for this night of Our Lord” (25). Much like the girl of his desire, the narrator is nearly prevented from attending the bazaar by an invocation of Catholicism. When he finally does attend the bazaar he has a now famous epiphany, saying “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger” (28). This quote normally associated with the vague concept of “the loss of innocence,” but more specifically it is about the moment that he recognizes the profound confusion of his sexual understanding. As Joe Valente and Margot Backus argue in their article, “‘An Iridescence Difficult To Account For’: Sexual Initiation In Joyce's Fiction Of Development,” the boy’s initiation to sexuality is imperfect:

Understanding the ways in which Joyce employs ambiguously sexual formulations that position both his characters and readers as imperfectly initiated

allows for a fuller appreciation of the workings of his literary style. It also affords greater insight into how the social world leaves its most salient imprint upon the individual subject through contingent personal experience, and how, conversely, such highly individuated experience lends intense affect to larger social movements and ideologies. In Joyce's case, the most consistently impinging of such ideologies is Irish-Catholic nationalism. (Valente and Backus 524)

His sexual confusion is caused by an imperfect initiation into sexuality caused by the “impinging” ideology of “Irish Catholic nationalism.”¹⁸ Similarly, the push for Irish independence is muddled by its overbearing Catholic leanings. The boy’s epiphany, however depressing it may be is a necessary step in the process needed for Ireland to shed ties with Catholicism in the quest for independence.

The pursuit of one’s sexual desires must be completed through marriage or somehow outside the scrutiny of the Church. In “Two Gallants,” two friends, Corley and Lenehan, discuss Corley’s success in picking up a woman. They are both relatively pathetic figures but Corley has a noted success in his encounters with women, a concept which Lenehan cannot comprehend. These two men engage dialectically with the limitations placed on sexuality by Catholicism in Ireland. When Lenehan implies the girl Corley is seeing may expect marriage, Corley replies, “She does not know my name” (45). Lenehan buys into the Catholic view of sexuality requiring marriage while Corley must conceal his identity in order to keep his sexuality away from the church’s influence. When telling Lenehan that a girl Corley had sex with had “others at her before me,” Lenehan was “inclined to disbelieve” (47). Lenehan is so indoctrinated by his

¹⁸ Ideologically, the nationalism of the era was predominantly one dominated by Catholic sensibilities. Sex would have been taboo and education on the topic would have been scarce.

Catholic view of sexuality that he cannot believe that there are others that go against it. Joyce depicts the two men as foolish in order to highlight how ridiculous their Church influenced views on sexuality are. It is tremendously problematic that the people of Ireland must pursue their sexuality either through marriage or in some sort of self-imposed exile from the view of the Church and the judgments of the society informed by it.

Joyce depicts sexual failure in several ways throughout the text and one of these ways is through the aimless wandering of the characters. After Corley leaves him to go see his girl, Lenehan is left to wander the city aimlessly while he waited for his friend. Lenehan's aimless walking recalls the modernist flaneur.¹⁹ Luke Gibbons refers to the characters of *Dubliners* as corresponding with the idea of the flaneur, as they are "at once part of, and yet detached from, official space" (140). Lenehan's stroll through the city certainly supports Gibbons assertion but it also implies a sexual detachment in addition to the detachment from space. It is only when he sits down for dinner that he thinks about his sexual failure and laments that it would be different if he were "able to settle down in some snug corner and live happily if he could only come across a simple-minded girl with a little of the ready," once again returning to the marriage dynamic as the solution for his sexual failure. This is not the first time the Church has informed the aimlessness of a flaneur. Gabriel Conroy fantasizes about taking a stroll through the city instead of giving a speech to the guests at his Aunt's dinner party. He laments how "much more pleasant it would be" to stroll through the park past the Wellington Monument than to speak at dinner. His mention of the Wellington Monument aligns him with the Duke of Wellington who had

¹⁹ According to Luke Gibbons, a flaneur is a "city stroller, a key figure of modernity, who roams through the streets seemingly at random, but often in the shadow of a counter-public sphere."

steadfastly refused to be acknowledged as Irish despite his birth in Dublin.²⁰ This thought depicts Gabriel as detached from his own Irish people; a man who would rather take the stroll of the flaneur past English monuments than speak of Ireland to his fellow Irish. In addition, the priest in “The Sisters” was known to wander the streets alone after his breakdown and before the man in “An Encounter” returns to the boys to scold them he is depicted as wandering around the field “aimlessly.” When the priest wanders in “The Sisters,” it depicts the directionless nature of the Irish psyche caused by its dependence on the church. Much like the priest, it has depended on the Church for its identity for too long to shed ties without damaging that sense of Irish identity. Meanwhile, the scene with the old man in “An Encounter” mirrors the aimlessness of Irish sexuality under the control of the Church, where one discovers sexuality but due to religious discouragement does not know how to apply it, and therefore ends up aimlessly wasting their sexuality until they grow disdainful of it. However, instead of wandering through the city like the modern flaneur would, the old man is wandering in an open field. Joyce draws a contrast between Ireland and other more modern nations, as the heart of Ireland still lies in the Yeats-ian ideals of the Irish countryside rather than the metropolitan modernity of Western Europe.

In “A Painful Case,” Joyce depicts sexual failure through the conventions of relationships between men and women in the shadow of Catholic Ireland. The main character of the story is Mr Duffy, an atheist with socialist leanings who lives in the Chapelizod²¹ section of Dublin. Joyce’s characterization of Mr Duffy positions him as a binary opposite of many of the hallmarks of Catholic Ireland within the text. However, these binary opposites produce a stifling

²⁰ He once said, “to be born in a stable does not make one a horse,” in reference to his birth country (311).

²¹ It should be noted that this is a section of Dublin depicted in *Tristan and Isolde*. Because of this, it is often a neighborhood associated with old-world Celtic romanticism, and that romanticism was rekindled during the Celtic Revival era. Joyce is likely trying to de-romanticize it here and in *Finnegans Wake*, which also takes place in Chapelizod.

and male dominated dynamic that is just as unproductive as their Catholic and capitalistic counterparts. Mr Duffy's relationship with Ms Sinico is just as one-sidedly dominated by his patriarchal superiority complex as the Church influenced patriarchy of the other stories. Just because he reads Nietzsche and attends the meetings of Socialist parties does not make him more progressive when it comes to the matter of female sexuality. Duffy is made uncomfortable after Ms Sinico presses his hand to her cheek during one of their passionate discourses and decides to ignore her based on her forward gesture. He enjoys her company when she is only a "maternal" figure that he can make "his confessor," but when she wants more he decides they must "break off their intercourse" (106-108). His refusal to engage in a physical relationship is unproductive and seems to be a retreat to the womb in a sense and it is no different from Ireland's refusal to leave the comfort of the Church. He can only accept Ms Sinico as the simpatico mother figure who reassures him of his intellectual worth by listening to his ideas. When she threatens the womb-like state of his life she must be disposed of. Duffy may have plenty of intellectual ideas for the future of Ireland, yet his refusal to leave the embryonic isolation of his apartment ensures that they will never be acted out.

When he writes about the end of the relationship he says "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" (108). This illustrates a sexual confusion within Duffy caused by the Church's view on intercourse. Despite the fact that Duffy is an atheist intellectual, he has still been indoctrinated by the church's stringent view on the matter of sex and homosexuality. It is for this reason that he shuns Ms Sinico at the first sign of a physical relationship. Duffy is aware of the stigma caused by homosexuality in Catholic Ireland and instead of acknowledging it within himself he retreats to his home and his books, at the expense

of Ms Sinico. The church makes its presence known in the sexual attitudes of those who are not Catholics themselves and prevents them from practicing their sexuality in a healthy way.

Implied sexuality is just as damning as actual sexual intercourse within the text. In “The Boarding House,” Mr Doran is implicated in an affair with the daughter of his landlady despite hints at his celibacy. Alan Roughley notes that “We see Bob Doran lighting Polly’s candle, but the two times Doran is described as a celibate make it unclear if Doran actually did what Mrs. Mooney will accuse him of” (101). Doran does not even need to engage in the act of intercourse to be condemned by Catholic sexual sensibilities. His rumored intercourse with Polly is enough to warrant demands of marriage. As I noted in an earlier section, this implied sexuality on the part of Mr Doran also puts his employment through the church in jeopardy. There is no need for proof of actual sex in the Dublin of “The Boarding House” because the implication of intercourse is enough to damn Mr Doran or any other Irish man or woman.

The implication of a sexual relationship between Mr Doran and Polly is enough evidence to Mrs Mooney to call for marriage between them. The dishonor that a perceived affair would cast on her daughter that makes her so invested in forcing marriage upon Doran. This also illuminates the ways in which female sexuality was seen in the eyes of the church, as it is said that Doran could “go his ways as if nothing had happened, having had his moment of pleasure, but the girl has to bear the brunt” (60). In the context of this quote Joyce implies that female sexuality is judged more harshly in the eyes of a Catholic Ireland than male sexuality. Implied female sexuality also brings along the threat of violence here as an *artiste* who “made a rather free allusion to Polly” is threatened by her brother’s insistence that “he’d bloody well put his teeth down his throat” (63). “The Boarding House,” much like “Two Gallants,” ends with a refusal to talk about the sexuality that permeates throughout, as it ends right before the

discussion between Doran and Mrs. Mooney. Through this refusal to acknowledge the very root of the story's conflict, Joyce critiques Ireland's refusal to address the issue of Church-repressed sexuality and the inability to open discourse on the matter.

Marriage in these stories is marked by Joyce's strong disdain for the institution, which he saw as capitalistic and suffocating, and his vitriol towards the Church's propagation of the institution as the only acceptable outlet for the expression of sexuality. Joyce sees marriage as a trap that plagues the Irish public and refuses to marry his partner Nora Barnacle for most of his life out of a fear of compromising his "moral nature" and when he finally does agree to marry it is out of protection of his children's financial futures (Roughley 135). The article states, "The attitude towards marriage in the *Dubliners* stories is an important part of the strategies which Joyce developed as he exiled himself from the Church and distanced himself from the moral paralysis of his countrymen." His treatment of marriage in "The Boarding House" is true to this view, as it is depicted as a trap sprung on the unsuspecting and intellectually promising Bob Doran. French feminist Helene Cixous sees the story as a "parable in which (Joyce) defends his decision to reject marriage," with Joyce clearly relating to the plight of his fellow intellectual.

In "A Little Cloud," the character Little Chandler feels that his intellectual life and potential career success has been constricted by his marriage. The catalyst in this depressing realization by Chandler is a visit from a former friend, Ignatius Gallaher, who is now a successful journalist in London. Chandler believes that he is more intelligent and deserving of the success than his friend and wonders how Gallaher had become so well respected in his field. After Chandler implies Gallaher may be married by their next meeting, Gallaher responds by saying he wanted to live and see more of the world before he "put his head in the sack" (76). The reply that Chandler gives informs his inability to think outside of the Christian marriage

dynamic, as he says to Gallaher, “you’ll put your head in the sack like everyone else if you can find the girl.” What Chandler does not realize is that the very reason Gallaher has been a success is that he was willing to forgo the binding and compromising influence of marriage in order to leave Ireland and live outside of the Catholic realm of expectation. The only situation in which Gallaher sees himself getting married would be an economically feasible one, saying “she’ll have a good fat account at the bank or she won’t do for me.” Gallaher recognizes the capitalistic nature of marriage and refuses to engage in it unless the system benefits him financially. He continues by insisting that there are “thousands of rich Germans and Jews” just waiting to be married, and through his lack of reference to an Irish Catholic woman he has shunned the Irish Catholic marriage dynamic that is so stifling throughout the text in favor of the modernity of continental Europe (77). Their meeting ends when Gallaher expresses his wish not to get tied up with one woman as that “must get a bit stale,” an indirect insult and diagnosis of his friend Chandler’s situation. This meeting sets off a formerly latent sense of discontent within Little Chandler. The catalyst for this discontent needed to come from outside of Ireland and from someone who once lived there, in the form of Gallaher, because Chandler is so entrenched in Ireland himself that he cannot see outside of its church dominated cultural norms.

Little Chandler’s realization of the restrictions imposed by marriage on his livelihood and intellectualism comes too late for him to change his paralysis. When Chandler arrives home his wife Annie is in a bad mood and is short with him in their exchange before leaving to buy tea. Once she leaves, Chandler looks at a picture of her and finds something “mean” in her and questions why he ever married her in the first place, instead longing for the exotic “rich Jewesses” Gallaher had spoken of (78). This desire for the exotic occurs throughout the stories of Dubliners, whether it is the boy’s dream of Persia in “The Sisters,” the bazaar in “Araby,”

Argentina in “Eveline,” or the “strange, perfumed and musical” body of Gretta in “The Dead,” and it represents an escape from the constricting Irish Catholic lifestyle. Chandler then describes the house he lives in to be “mean” as well and “a dull resentment for his life” grows inside of him as he wonders if it is “too late for him to try and live bravely like Gallaher” (79). A hope that he could escape by writing a book arises in his mind and he reads Lord Byron²² as he wonders whether he could ever write so well before being interrupted by his child’s sobbing. He then laments that he is a “prisoner for life” to the Irish Catholic family dynamic before shouting at the sobbing child that represents his imprisonment. The child has prevented him from pursuing his intellectual interests much like his wife did when “shyness” had held him back from reading his books of poetry to her (66). Chandler is stuck at home with his wife and child and must regretfully accept that his intellectual life and career success will always be stagnated as a result. This is a microcosm of the true reason that Chandler never became an intellectual success, which would be the fact that he never left the confines of Ireland and the constriction of the Catholic lifestyle.

“I’ll Say a Hail Mary...”: The Trap of the Catholic Nuclear Family and a Patriarchal Exploration of Derridean Phallogocentrism

The domination of the Catholic heteronormative family in these stories acts as a constraint to characters that wish to pursue a life outside of it. In “Counterparts,” the Catholic family is a source of restriction for the main character Mr Farrington. He works a job where he is disrespected in order to support his wife and children. Farrington find that his wife is not at home after he spends the day being chastised by his boss and drinking with his money leeching friends.

²² It is worth noting that Lord Byron was known to be an extensive traveler and eccentric personality, much like Gallaher and unlike Chandler.

His son tells him that she is “at the chapel” and this awakens a violent temper in Farrington (93). The man goes on to mock his son’s voice by repeating the phrase “at the chapel.” He then turns his attention to the distinguished fireplace and threatens his son that he’ll “teach” him to let that fire out again before rolling up his sleeve “to give his arm free play” (94). Farrington strikes the boy with a phallic and patriarchal stick multiple times and the boy begs him not to continue by insisting he’ll say his Hail Mary’s. The story ends with this insistence and the word Hail Mary trails off with ampersands, which implies an inescapable continuation of this boy’s plight within a patriarchal Catholic family and the violence that comes with it. It is the mother’s absence from the domestic space due to her visit to the chapel that allows this violence to happen, yet the only preventative measure the boy can think of is to say his prayers. This shows the boy’s lack of knowledge about solutions outside of the lifestyle of a family in Catholic Ireland and highlights the ignorance that this system willingly fosters. Through the prevalence of the Catholic nuclear family, the Church has yet another way of restricting views outside of its own worldview.

The threat of violence always looms within the patriarchal system in Joyce’s Ireland and the Church acts as an agent to keep the characters in place. Eveline is in a similar situation to Farrington’s son in “Counterparts,” as she is stuck in a house with her mean and abusive father and his “blackthorn stick” (29). A picture of the promises to Mary of Alacoque²³ hangs in the domestic space of her home next to the fading picture of a priest (30). The promises are ironic as her stature as a good Catholic has done nothing to protect her from abuse in her own home. Invoking god has paralyzed her from escaping the bad situation at home. Later on, when Eveline is trying to decide whether to leave for Argentina with Frank, the sailor whom she was courted by, she calls on God to help her. Eveline relies on the “direction of God” to guide her decision

²³ These are promises handed down to Saint Mary Alacoque by Jesus. Promise number two promises to establish peace in the families of all of his believers (254).

and decides to stay in the house and attend to her “duty,” with her drunken abusive father (33). She reflects an Ireland that would rather be paralyzed but comfortable instead of one that takes a risk in order to live in a more progressive society. Even the seemingly noble aspects of this patriarchy have violent and sinister undertones. In “The Dead,” Gabriel wishes to assert his patriarchal dominance over his wife Gretta. He wishes to “defend her against something and then be alone with her” (214). When Gretta has an interaction with a furnace man Gabriel wishes to protect her from his vulgarity, which posits his patriarchal instincts as protective (215). Yet when they get back to their hotel room, he says he wishes to “crush her body against his, to overmaster her,” despite the fact that he can see she does not want him to do so (218). His violent language suggests the primitive nature of the patriarchal society and exposes the protective nature of the earlier interaction as merely a guise for the desire to dominate female sexuality in the same mode as the Church hierarchy.

The construction of the text indicates the stagnation of the development of Ireland caused by the ever-present Church. Many of the stories in this text have critical events occurring outside of the narrative that are merely glossed over by Joyce. Roughley explains this phenomenon:

The logic governing the Aristotelian teleology by which a unified plot moves from its beginning through its middle to its end is disrupted by the structures of many of the stories in *Dubliners*. The central, climactic events that should center the stories are absent: the death of Father Flynn; the possible masturbation in “An Encounter”; Bob Doran’s seduction of Polly; Eveline’s romance with Frank; Corley’s extraction of the coin from the young woman. These and the other gaps in the stories are in part a result of Joyce’s depiction of the despair, the loneliness, and the paralysis of his characters. (116)

The structure in these stories imitate the decentering force of the Church, which takes attention away from what is important for Ireland in the future and negates or ignores progress. For example, Eveline's romance with Frank is merely recalled in a few offhanded sentences and exactly three short lines of dialogue spoken by him, when it is ostensibly the driving motivation and central hope of the story. By refusing to show this romance in scene, Joyce is highlighting the inhibiting nature of Eveline's patriarchal Catholic nuclear family, as it stifles her sole chance of escape in the text. For Eveline it was "impossible" to imagine pursuing this escape she longs for and when Frank beckons her, all she can do is "set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal," and "Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (34). Her life is entrenched in the patriarchal and Catholic home she grew up in and it has left her unable to function outside of it or even feel any emotions towards anything not within that system.

Eveline, like Ireland, cannot imagine a future independent from the Catholic and patriarchal way of life and Joyce shows this by refusing to render in scene or dialogue any hope for a future that is foreign to that system. "Two Gallants" ends with a continuation of this sexual failure when Lenehan cannot even live vicariously through Corley's encounter, when he asks, "Did you try her?" only to get no reply from his friend before the story's end (54). The silence mimics the church's censorship of sexual matters outside of marriage in Ireland. Roughley notes that the lack of direct indication of central events in the text creates "a series of textual blanks" (98). These blanks "allow for the mark in the first place" according to Derrida and within *Dubliners* it is this blankness that allows the church to make its mark in all of these stories. There is emptiness within these characters caused by a lack of a true Irish identity that allows the Catholic Church to stand in as the default Irish identity.

The structure of these stories also illuminates the patriarchal hierarchy of Catholic Ireland as detrimental to the woman, children, and even the men of Dublin. There is a phallogocentrism built into the structure of the book, mirroring the patriarchal structure of Catholic Ireland (Roughley, 117). There is phallic imagery littered throughout the text and these phallic objects often inflict pain on the characters, whether it is the train that kills Ms Sinico or the stick with which Farrington beats his son. This phallogocentrism can also be seen in the word choice and sentence structure within the text. After Mr Duffy learns of Ms Sinico's death, in "A Painful Case," he is shown as cynical towards her in his sense of patriarchal superiority. It was this cynicism towards her that indirectly caused her death in the first place and Joyce shows the power of the patriarchy by starting every sentence in the last paragraph with the male signifier "He" (114). Thus, the story ends in a manner dominated by male point of view, much like Ms Sinico's death was caused and reported by a male dominated world.

"Her People Are": The Myth of a True Irish Identity in "The Dead"

"The Dead" contains many allusions to the West of Ireland as more ideally Irish than any other part of the country, but according to Joyce this was a falsehood informed by a misremembered past that the Irish people cannot shed. This belief was brought on by the Celtic Revival, which fetishized the language, religion, games, failed revolts, and myths of the Irish past. As a whole, the Revival was interested in creating a distinctly non-English identity for Ireland but in many ways it did this through Derridean binaries in which being Irish only meant being the opposite of English.²⁴ Catholicism became the prominent signifier of Irish identity in opposition to Protestantism and as a result deepened the schism between the two factions in

²⁴ Catholic vs. Protestant, Irish Language vs. English, Hurling/Irish Football vs. Football, West vs. East, etc.

Ireland. There has been much said about the Revival and its implementation of a manufactured and misremembered Irish past in the collective conscience of the Irish people. Years of colonization made it impossible to truly recover a purely “ancient Irish history,” a point touched upon by Kevin Whelan:

So thorough was the evacuation (of ancient Irish history) that an indigenous Irish culture could no longer be resuscitated even by a determined policy of cultural revival: “Just as ancient Egypt is dead, so is ancient Ireland²⁵.” To believe otherwise was to live delusionally in a twilight world of Celtic kitsch, by the “broken lights of ancient myth.” (65)

This delusional attempt to conjure a culture out of the blurred and “broken lights of ancient myth” was disingenuous and damaging to the formation of an enlightened contemporary culture in Ireland. Thus, the Revival only added to the stagnation of Irish present by clinging to a false Irish past.

The west of Ireland becomes the symbol for the authentic Ireland in “The Dead.” It is the symbol of the Irish identity that Gabriel can never attain. In the aforementioned encounter with Miss Ivors, Gabriel is invited to the Aran Islands²⁶ and replies that he already has plans to vacation in continental Europe. Ivors chastises him for this and asks why he wishes to go to Europe instead of “visiting his own land” (189). The Revival tinged nationalism that Ivors endorses ignores the modernity of such nations as France and Germany while idealizing the distinctly un-modern west of Ireland. When Gabriel replies that he wants to “keep in touch with

²⁵ Quoted from Joyce in his essay “Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages.”

²⁶ The Aran Islands are off the West Coast of Ireland. They are often thought of as traditionally Irish in a way more pure than most of the country. The Irish language is the primary tongue of the islands.

the languages,” she replies by asking “and haven’t you your own language to keep in touch with – Irish?” This inquiry is true to Ivors’ Revivalist background along with her preference for the west of Ireland. When Gabriel replies that Irish is not his language, Ivors again asked why he does not visit his own country that he knows “nothing of” (190). Ivors implies that the life Gabriel lives in Dublin is simply not truly Irish and the only way to learn of his country is to visit the west. It is problematic for Joyce that the pastoral west is believed to be the ideal for Irish independence as opposed to the more modern and progressive Dublin.

Gabriel’s inability to imagine Gretta’s life in Galway before they met mirrors the Revival’s inability to identify the true past of Ireland. In her invitation to Gabriel, Miss Ivors asks if Gretta was from Connacht,²⁷ to which he replies “her people are” (189). Gabriel’s answer ignores the fact that Gretta herself is also from there and spent much of her early life there. He is unable to conceive a past in which Gretta lived in Galway instead of Dublin. Upon hearing Mr D’Arcy singing “The Lass of Aughrim”²⁸ in the distance, something is awakened in Gretta from her past as she struggles to remember the name of the song. Gretta’s moment of nostalgic memory is juxtaposed with Gabriel’s own nostalgia for the past between the two of them. Gabriel’s memories are also represented through musical terms, as when he sees her listening to the song he thinks that were he a painter he would call such a painting of Gretta, *Distant Music*, while not comprehending her feelings towards the song. He comes back to this music metaphor when remembering their past “moments of ecstasy” by saying “like distant music these words that he had written years before were borne towards him from the past” (215). The allusions to music, painting, and writing are directly aimed at the Celtic Revival and Gabriel’s

²⁷ The most northwestern province in Ireland; known in Celtic myth for the epochal “Tain Bo Cuailnge” or “The Cattle Raid of Cooley,” which is the most well known of the Celtic myths.

²⁸ Aughrim is a village in Galway and the site of a massacre of Irish troops by William of Orange’s soldiers.

misinterpretations of Gretta's past are precisely like the Revival's misinterpretation of Ireland's past. Gabriel only knows of his own past with Gretta and even that is a flawed memory that more than likely embellishes the moments of so called ecstasy and Joyce is showing how the Revival does the exact same thing with Irish history.

Joyce sees the Revival's failure to look forward to a modern Irish nation in favor of looking back to an idealized Irish past as unproductive is illustrated through Gabriel's own idealized memories of his marriage and his failure to have sex with Gretta at the story's end. The musical allusions continue when Gabriel and Gretta arrive at their hotel, as Gabriel's "first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust" (216). In addition to the musical references, there is also a return to the desire for the exotic in his use of the word strange. He also uses this word when he wishes to seduce her in their room by thinking he wanted to be the "master of her strange mood" (218). This sexualization of the exotic is mentioned in an earlier section of this work and can here be linked to the Revival's obsession with mysticism or Ireland's search for an identity outside of the decidedly un-exotic English lifestyle. Gretta's resistance to his advances perplexes Gabriel and he is unsure of how to quell her resistance and successfully seduce her. Her only sign of affection is a kiss comes through Gabriel's overt display of capitalistic superiority over the drunkard, Freddy Malins, whom Gabriel is surprised paid him back the sovereign he had lent to him. Gabriel is encouraged by this turn of events and pulls her close to him and asks her what she is thinking about and when she does not answer, he says, "I think I know what is the matter" (219). However, she begins to weep and reveals it is "The Lass of Aughrim" that is haunting her and Gabriel's implication that he knew what was the matter is proven wholly untrue. Through this misinterpretation, Gabriel shows just how unaware of Gretta's past he truly is. He wrongly assumes that it must be

something from their own shared past that caused her sadness, much like the Revival falsely asserted that their remembrance of Irish past and representation of Irish identity was the authentic one. Joyce is critiquing the notion that anyone can correctly represent or imagine history they were not themselves a part of and even depicts memory as unreliable and fluid. When Gretta reveals she is thinking of a boy named Michael Furey, who loved and perhaps died for her long ago, Gabriel realizes he has been foolish to believe his relationship with her is somehow special. Gretta herself has idealized her past in Galway and the martyred Furey. Furey's death for Gretta and her subsequent idealization of him recall Ireland's obsessively and perhaps hyperbolically reverent relationship to the dead of failed revolutions passed. Whelan notes that like Michael Furey the Irish past "can only return to the present as an absence" (66). Gretta cannot leave behind her past in Galway and is haunted by her memory of its absence in the form of the long-buried Michael Furey. Neither Gabriel nor Gretta can move forward from their past and this results in a present marred by stasis and malaise.

Joyce believed that the only way Ireland could escape the back-looking paralysis caused by the Church and the Revival was to sculpt an Irish identity free from their influence. It is only when Gabriel accepts the fact that he can never fully know his wife, or anything else, that he makes a realization that allows for progress. He now knows he can never apprehend the "wayward and flickering existence" of the dead (224). This realization allows for a certain freedom in thinking that holding on to the past cannot. As the snow falls "general" over Ireland, covering the landmarks of Irish past, ending in the cemetery where Furey lays buried, Gabriel watches and notes that it is time to "set on his journey westward." Westward can be interpreted two ways here, much like the chiasmus of the snow "falling faintly" and "faintly falling," as it could mean a retreat into the West of Ireland and its idealized past or into a form of western

modernity. The snow creates the blankness or hymen that Derrida spoke of and the blanket covers the signifiers of an Irish past. This symbolic erasure allows for hope that the Irish people will move from the past that has constrained them into a prosperous modernity.

In *Dubliners*, Joyce diagnoses the restlessness of an entire era of Ireland's inhabitants. Many of the characters have grand aspirations that they never reach and most of them seem to be passive to a large extent. The ominous engine that drives much of what happens to these people is the not so hidden specter of Catholicism. In their quest for an identity for the Irish future the Irish people ended up bogged down by a false representation of their past. Joyce aims to illustrate the possibility for an Irish identity not only independent from England, but also from the Church and the back-looking Revival. In a way, he has captured the calm before the storm of what would be one of the most tumultuous and momentous eras in Ireland's history. The Dubliners of Joyce's text are clinging to the unchanging tradition of Catholicism and the faux-mystic aura of the Celtic Revival while always knowing that the world they knew was on the verge of immeasurable change.

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