

TOWARDS A HIBERNIAN HYBRIDITY: JOYCEAN APPROPRIATIONS
OF CELTIC MYTHOLOGY AND THE REALIZATION
OF A MODERN IRISH IDENTITY

by

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ABSTRACT

In nineteenth-century Ireland, the Celtic Revival established an Irish identity in opposition to British colonialism through a nativist construction of true Irishness based on premodern, precolonial Celtic mythology, language, and culture. This created a primitive Irish identity situated in a binomial dialectic with a civilized British identity, establishing the Irish as an internal Other for the British imperial self. This effectively justified British colonialism as a necessary catalyst in a teleological progression intended to save Ireland from the uncivilized Irish. This thesis explores how Joyce's appropriation of literary artifacts of Celtic mythology in "The Dead," specifically the sovereignty goddess mythology and its subcategory, the *aisling* story's *spéirbhean*, inaugurates the possibility of an Irish identity that counters the Revival's self-Othering. Joyce achieves this effect by underwriting Gabriel Conroy's modernity with premodern mythology in order to realize an identity informed simultaneously by both. The famous ambiguity of Gabriel Conroy's final epiphany suggests that the Irish of the early-twentieth century were perhaps unable to achieve a truly discursive conceptualization of Irish identity, continuing to rely on the primitive/civilized binomial. However, by creating an awareness of the colonial binomial in Revivalist identity formation, "The Dead" inaugurates a new space of possible identity construction in the reader's consciousness. As evident by Joyce's influence on the work of contemporary Irish authors such as Paul Muldoon, Seamus Deane, and Seamus Heaney, a truly discursive Irish identity—one that

encompasses “all the living and the dead” of a multivalent Ireland spanning the premodern, modern, and postmodern eras—is eventually realized.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: PRIMITIVISM AND THE CELTIC REVIVAL	13
CHAPTER TWO: JOYCEAN ENGAGEMENTS WITH COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM	31
CHAPTER THREE: THE SOVEREIGNTY GODDESS AND THE AISLING IN “THE DEAD”	57
CONCLUSION	81
REFERENCES	89

INTRODUCTION

History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.
—*Ulysses* (34)

In 1906, a 24 year-old James Joyce had already cast himself as a repudiated exile from Ireland and was living and writing on the continent, in Trieste, because, as Richard Ellmann neatly summarizes, "[t]o measure himself and his country he needed to take the measure of a more alien world" (*James Joyce* 110). Joyce developed his own understanding of Irish identity on the continent, but he felt that he needed the distance of exile in order to do so.

The many projects in which he was invested in Trieste include, among other things, attempting to finalize both the publication details (which, due to a recalcitrant publisher and printer, would not occur until 1914) and the body of *Dubliners*; drafting his autobiographical *bildungsroman* novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; and developing his ideas of Irish politics and artistic exile. The latter was something that had come to occupy much of Joyce's time and attention. Exile as a means of enabling artistic dissidence largely informed his self-imposed banishment, and he intended, from the vantage point of physical distance from Ireland, to draft and present a series of three lectures concerning Irish nationalism and identity at the Triestine Università Popolare in 1907. Although the second lecture, on James Clarence Mangan, was never presented and the third lecture never written, the first of the series, "Ireland: Islands of Saints and

Sages," was written and presented on April 27 of that year. Joyce's political leanings of the time are apparent in this lecture; filaments of the ideas discussed therein run throughout his correspondence of the time and his literary work going forward.

The body of writing comprising his lectures and correspondence expresses two facts of Joyce's political thinking at the time. First, Joyce is indisputably a proponent of Irish independence, and, second, he espoused very pointed views about the most effective means toward that end, views that often found themselves in opposition to those of the dominant literary nationalists of the time, the Celtic Revivalists. This thesis explores how Joyce appropriates themes of the Celtic Revival in order to expose the colonially complicit nature of the Revival's method of identity construction by ceding the creation of an Irish identity in an act of negative objectivity. The Revivalists establish Irish identity as an object to the external British imperial subject; however, as Seamus Heaney later suggests in the poem "Station Island," Joyce's texts advise Irish writers and thinkers that "[t]hat subject people stuff is a cod's game," and that Irish identity should self-construct "with signatures on [its] own frequency" rather than a British frequency (Heaney 93, 94). Joyce's texts, from *Dubliners* to *Ulysses*, suggest an attempt at a positive construction of Irish identity, an Irishness that does not define itself by that which it is not (sc. British) but by that which it is, that which is ineluctably present in Ireland.

The Celtic Revival comprises a collection of cultural and nationalist movements in Ireland that gradually developed across the nineteenth century as a response to British colonial rule. In her historical exploration of the rise of the Revival, Jeanne Sheehy writes that "[t]he growth of Irish national consciousness in the nineteenth century had two

phases" (95). The first phase, a precursor to the Revival, "began with the development of interest in antiquities," which was sparked in part by the curiosity in history, especially the middle ages, then being exhibited in England and continental Europe (Sheehy 95, 7). Sheehy traces the interest in Irish history to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, in which Irish Catholics were identified as a viable political community. "From then on," writes Sheehy, "Ireland was increasingly aware of itself as not only politically but culturally different from England. Leaders of thought began to see the possibility of restoring Ireland's self-respect by restoring its cultural past" (7). The Revival movement would eventually be built on the bedrock of cultural history and mythology that these pre-Revival leaders of thought were to gather over the next sixty years.

The second phase of developing a national consciousness began in the 1880s with the advent of the Celtic Revival. In 1902, the modernist dramatist and ethnographer John Millington Synge lamented the paucity of information relating to precolonial Irish culture in the period leading up to the 1880s; however, by the 1890s premodern Irish history was strongly represented in publications like the *United Irishman* and the *All Ireland Review*, the cultural campaigns of myriad nationalist groups¹, and in Revivalist texts by writers of such standing as George Russell (AE), Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde, Standish O'Grady, Synge himself, and William Butler Yeats, whose romantic and, according to the Celticist scholar Seamus Deane, largely fictional re-imaginings of premodern Ireland came to define the movement (*Celtic Revivals* 28-9). Indeed, the work of the Revivalists was often skewed away from the original source material as represented by the work of the

¹A brief and incomplete list of subdivisions of the Revival includes The Gaelic League, The Gaelic Athletics Association, The National Literary Society, and The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Joyce takes special pains to lampoon and critique the ideology and practices of almost all of these organizations in *Ulysses* during the "Cyclops" and "Scylla and Charybdis" episodes.

mid-nineteenth century historical recovery and towards the Revivalist aims of constructing and making public a native Irish culture.

Chapter One of this thesis explores how the Revivalists' use of premodern Ireland's mythological texts as vehicles of identity formation establishes what would become a problematic binomial between a primitive Irish identity and a modern English counterpart. Yeats's early career especially colludes in the creation of this colonial dialectic, demonstrating a "desire to obliterate or reduce the problems of class, economic development, bureaucratic organization and the like, concentrating instead upon the essences of self, community, nationhood, racial theory, *Zeitgeist*" (Deane, *Celtic Revivals* 33). The practical aspects of a modern identity, Deane's economic and bureaucratic concerns, are denied the Irish in Revivalist discourse. Instead, true Irish identity is cast as an essentialization of a natural state whose definition lies in a spiritual connection of race and geography, a *Zeitgeist* that places the Irish in a colonial dialectic with the civilized imperial subject.

In *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (2004), Sinéad Garrigan-Mattar identifies in Revivalist literature this replication of Arnoldian discourse as the product of a recurring theme of regret over the loss of a preferable, premodern, romanticized past. Garrigan-Mattar reads the targeted essentialism of Irish identity in texts by Revivalist authors like Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge as a form of nativism or Orientalism that she terms primitivism. This reductionist primitivism ultimately contributes to the continued subjugation of the modern Irish by affirming a colonial dialectic that is complicit with the British imperial project. Considerations of targeted essentialism have become popular in recent Joycean criticism. A brief and incomplete survey of scholars who have recently

taken up this issue include Garrigan-Mattar, Kathleen St. Peters Lancia, Gregory Castle, Maria Tymoczko, Maria McGarrity, Claire A. Culleton, John McCourt, Justin Carville, and, tangentially in terms of Homi Bhabha's nativism and Edward W. Said's Orientalism, Vincent J. Cheng and Maria Tymoczko. These authors all document the deleterious effect of Revivalist primitivism on the modern Irish state, an effect that, although he does not do so in the language of postcolonialist theory, Joyce describes as a self-defeating paralysis. Joyce explicitly targeted this paralysis in his fiction, with *Dubliners* being the first text to do so (*Letters I* 55).

The Revivalist contribution to primitivism is ironic, as its nationalist program was to continue the work done in the early-nineteenth century of forming an independent Irish identity by presenting the images and stories of Celtic mythology to the people of Ireland. Joyce himself described the Celtic culture as possibly "doomed, after many centuries of struggle, finally to fall headlong into the ocean"; Revivalist discourse rescued it from this doom, but not as perfectly preserved artifacts (*Occasional* 124-5). Revivalist presentations of premodern mythology are re-presentations filtered through the Revival's own Anglo-Irish lens. As Sheehy notes, "[a]lthough the new generation [Yeats, et al] built on the old they also reacted against it, and did not think very highly of its literary achievements" (95). The Revivalists did not simply distribute the texts of their historically minded predecessors; they altered them for political effect. In so doing, Yeats and his contemporaries continue a precedent in Irish letters of adopting the work of previous generations for a new generation's needs, of building on the new possibilities uncovered by yesterday's body of work in order to indicate future directions for artistic and national growth. In the words of Gregory Castle, the Revivalists "transform

indigenous materials into new cultural texts" (3). Perhaps no author in Irish history is more influential in effecting such a transformation than James Joyce, whose own knowledge and carefully modernized appropriations of Irish mythology are heavily indebted to the publications, organizations, and authors of the Irish Revival.²

Chapter Two of this thesis explores Joyce's interactions with and appropriations of Revivalist mythology and indicates his interest in moving beyond the Revivalists' essentializing primitivism into a program that embraces what he understands as the economic and cultural realities of modernity. Gabriel Conroy, the protagonist of Joyce's 1907 story "The Dead," is established as a catalyst who, though apparently incapable of embodying that change, might create an awareness in the reader that such a change is possible. This possibility becomes an important step in constructing an Irish literary and cultural identity in the works of later Irish authors like Paul Muldoon and Seamus Heaney.

Joyce's primary critique of the Revival is its insistence on locating Irish identity at odds with modernity and economic development. In a 1906 letter to his brother, Stanislaus Joyce, James acknowledges his possession of a "thin [...] unsteady and ill-informed" socialism, an economic system in which he locates the best opportunity for Irish independence (*Letters II* 187). Joyce's focus on the economics of modernity and empire is apparent both in this letter, when he itemizes and compares the relative martial expenses of different imperial nations, and in later conversations with friends and associates (*Letters II* 188). As Stanislaus records in a journal entry dated May 16, 1907,

²For an exhaustive review of Joyce's likely familiarity with Irish mythology as popularly reproduced in Revivalist publications, see Maria Tymoczko's *The Irish Ulysses*, pp 185-6 and 226-45.

Joyce's support of Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Féin* policy is based on economic considerations rather than the romantic aspects of its Revivalist leanings: "The Sinn Féin policy comes to fighting England with the knife and fork [...] the highest form of political warfare I have heard of" (qtd. in Ellmann 238). This adherence to practical forms of colonial resistance manifests in his critique of the Celtic Revival tradition, the only aim of which was to re-establish a culture that Joyce declares dead in "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages" (*Occasional* 125). Joyce recognized that a purely romantic Irish identity had, by the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, been irretrievably lost, and that any true Irishness would have to be found not in a romanticized past but in a realization of that past in the present, modern state of the island and its inhabitants. This is the political atmosphere in which Joyce wrote "The Dead," and elements of his views of Revivalism, Irish mythology and politics, the impact of modernity, and the viability of an emancipated Ireland abound in the story.

Chapter Three documents how Gabriel Conroy's final epiphany in "The Dead" exposes the problem of establishing a cultural identity by situating it in a colonial dialectic and, through that exposure, inaugurates a movement towards liberation from the negative objectivity of that dialectic. The Celtic Revival's program of cultural restoration inadequately addresses the underlying cause of colonialism in Ireland, instead just papering over the colonized face of Irish identity like the film of snow blanketing the Irish landscape and British statuary in "The Dead." The nationalists of the Revival focus on Gaelic games, mythology, premodern industry, and language, which, while they are indisputably important elements for cultural formation, are no longer representative of a modern Ireland that is also informed by Anglo games, mythology, modern industry, and

language—in short, empire. Despite the Revivalist's efforts, Britain was still politically and economically dominant, which, in Joyce's opinion, remained in the early-twentieth century the primary cause of Ireland's downtrodden state.

In "The Dead," Joyce explores this dilemma by granting a Dubliner with modern affectations, Gabriel Conroy, an epiphany that reveals this cycle of paralysis and points toward the realization of an Irish identity that acknowledges both British/Continental influence and the primitivism championed by the Revivalists. Although the final epiphany's ambiguity refuses to confirm or deny Gabriel's successful internalization of the epiphany, Gabriel does not, in fact, significantly alter his life during the short span of time that separates the action of "The Dead," which takes place in January, 1904, from his appearance again in *Ulysses*, whose action occurs almost entirely on June 16, 1904. *Ulysses* makes it apparent that Gabriel has been unable to effect an escape from the colonial binomial of identity. Gabriel is still in Dublin and still performing his duties as a replicator of modern imperial discourse at the pro-Union newspaper the *Daily Express* with no explicit indication of his having completed "his journey westward" (*Dubliners* 223)³; he remains paralyzed, despite Joyce's provision of a possibly liberating epiphany in "The Dead."

The vehicle for this possible liberation is a re-appropriation of a literary artifact of Celtic mythology, the sovereignty goddess archetype and its subcategory, the *aisling's spéirbhean* ("sky woman"). Maria Tymoczko describes the sovereignty goddess as "one of the oldest and most pervasive patterns of Irish myth," a tradition whose authority lies

³In an early and influential analysis of Celtic mythology in "The Dead," John V. Kelleher playfully describes the Conroys of 1904 as still being "a well-known jog-trot married couple" about Dublin (417). Kelleher also posits the date of "The Dead" as 1892; however, both Muldoon (53) and Don Gifford (110) date the story's action more accurately to 1904.

in the pre-cultural, geographic landscape of Ireland. The sovereignty goddess is a feminized embodiment of Ireland who grants, by a ritualistic sexual consummation, sovereignty over herself to aspiring Irish kings. The sovereignty goddess is authorized to do so because she is a pre-cultural being; her authority rests in the natural, geographic landscape in which the kingdom is establishing itself. The *aisling* as a poetic form is also steeped Celtic tradition, but its action produces a longing to return to a preferable—but no longer available—romanticized past rather than the realization of a viable Irish kingdom in the present. At the heart of the *aisling* story is an epiphanic moment where, during a dream-vision, the Irish Catholic narrator is assured that some form of political or martial redemption is pending, usually through the return of a redeeming figure who would restore Ireland to a form of that idealized past. This assurance invariably proves false; the narrator awakens in the same state of dissatisfaction that he was in at the poem's outset, when he entered the dream-vision state (O'Donoghue 421). Since the longed-for past is irretrievable, the *aisling* narrative fails to produce any effect except a cycle that excites feelings of hope in the narrator only to return him to despair. In "The Dead," Gabriel's experience of the *aisling* story reaffirms its tradition of failure; however, it is immediately succeeded by an encounter with a sovereignty goddess, which brings Gabriel's modern identity into conversation with the Celtic mythology of the Revival. By establishing this contact, Joyce indicates a prospective identity that both the Revivalists and the West Britons have built their body of nationalist discourse on denying: an Irish modernity informed by an undercurrent of Celtic mythology and history.

The Revivalist program is based on an adamant insistence on racial purity, which is championed in *Ulysses* by the men at the pub during the "Cyclops" episode, who "have

limited vision and only see the binary poles, see everything in stark categories of black and white, English or Irish" (Cheng, *Joyce* 207). Gabriel's failure to internalize the epiphany stems from the fact that, like the Citizen's fellow pub-goers and the Revivalists more broadly, he is so heavily invested in his subject formation that he is unable to conceive of an alternative to an identity not completely defined by one of these two poles. For Gabriel (and, later, Joyce's autobiographical character Stephen Dedalus), such an alternative is not yet a part of what Pierre Bourdieu describes as "the cultural space of possibles," a cultural field comprising "all that one must have in the back of one's mind in order to be in the game [...] defining the universe of problems, references, intellectual bookmarks" and thereby determining what can be thought, said, or done at a particular cultural moment (Bourdieu 176). "The Dead" inaugurates into this space of possibles the idea that a modern/premodern hybridity is possible. Rather than an Irish nation composed of an individual Irish race, "The Dead" imagines a collection of individuals, who are themselves representative of various hybridities, constituting a multivalent Irish nation.

The contemporary Irish poet Paul Muldoon has tracked the influence that "The Dead" exercises on Irish authors since its publication. In *To Ireland, I*, Muldoon traces the development of Irish identity through its course of literature, tripping whimsically through an alphabetized list of Ireland's poets throughout the ages while discussing their importance to Irish letters and the relative contributions that they have made. Muldoon locates Joyce's "The Dead" as the medial (or liminal and narthecal, terms which Muldoon believes features significantly in Irish literature [Muldoon 5]) joint between the premodern and postmodern writers, a fact that he explicitly acknowledges: "I should say, of course, that I'm likely to be a little promiscuous myself, referring, when appropriate, to

matters other than the one supposedly in hand, though with a tendency to keep coming back to James Joyce's "The Dead" (Muldoon 5). He uses "The Dead" as a linking element to describe a general course of Irish literature beginning with the premodern poets, proceeding through the modernists (who ostensibly, given the pride of place Muldoon affords his work, peak with Joyce), and finally to the postmodernists, who write in Joyce's wake. At the heart of this continuity is a tendency for Irish authors to possess "magical powers of transformation [and] essential liminality," to produce art that addresses the matter of the past by altering it to meet the needs of the present, establish the threshold of the future, and create a continuous strain of Irish identity (Muldoon 5). Although Muldoon at times waxes hyperbolic, the transformational liminality of the Irish poet, especially as it relates to his central Irish text, "The Dead," is a useful tool to employ in a discussion of Joyce's literature. It is through this liminality that a text like "The Dead," with its ambiguous ending and not-fully-realized implication of a Hibernian hybridity, appropriates the literature that has come before to establish a continuity of Irish identity from premodern to modern times and beyond.

As noted above, the Revivalists respond to the Celticists who preceded them by appropriating and re-applying the previous group's literary artifacts. Joyce's response to the Revivalists is the same. Although Gabriel himself is unable to transcend the colonial dialectic of Revivalist Ireland, Joyce's modernist re-appropriation of the Celtic mythology that the Revivalists had previously appropriated from the Celticists of the nineteenth century both re-affirms the tradition of primitivism while simultaneously altering the cultural space of possibles to include a collection of hybridized, impure identities in a continuity of Irishness that the Revivalists denied. The ultimate accomplishment of "The

Dead" is not to free Gabriel from his life of masculist imperialist complicity, but to problematize the understanding of Irish identity as a binomial dialectic by acknowledging that Irishness, like the snow in the story's final scene, is itself "general all over Ireland," and it falls evenly and equally upon "all the living and the dead," whether they adhere to the primitivism prescribed by the Revivalists, the modernity of a West Briton, or some compromise in between (*Dubliners* 223-4).

CHAPTER ONE: PRIMITIVISM AND THE CELTIC REVIVAL

The poet is the intense centre of the life of his age to which he stands in a relation than which none can be more vital. He alone is capable of absorbing in himself the life that surrounds him.

—*Stephen Hero* (85)

In *To Ireland, I* (2000), an at-times meandering exploration of Irish literary history, the contemporary poet Paul Muldoon notes a tendency among Irish writers "to have a quite disproportionate sense of his or her own importance" and to write in a way that seems to insist they have a "mandate [...] to speak on national issues, to 'speak for Erin'"⁴ (4). Muldoon traces the beginning of this tradition to the beginning of Irish poetry with the the poet Amergin, who, according to another contemporary Irish poet, is typically "supposed [...] the first poet of Ireland" (Montague 44). In his own reproduction of the mythology surrounding the defeat of the Danaans by Amergin's Milesians and the subsequent division of "the spiritual and the earthly" Irelands, the Celticist T. W. Rolleston also identifies this mandate: "Amergin [...] as poet—that is to say Druid—takes the lead in all critical situations" (136).

Amergin was the "chief bard" of a fleet of Spaniards known as the Milesians and who are commonly considered "the last great wave of psuedo-historical invaders of

⁴One of Joyce's contemporaries, Patrick Pearse, echoes this claim some centuries later. Before being executed as the leader of the Easter 1916 uprising, Pearse wrote a dramatic monologue titled "*Mise Eire*" or "I am Ireland." Pearse's political violence and poetic assertions both suggest that he did feel possessed of a mandate to speak for Erin.

Ireland" (Muldoon 3). The poet himself refers to the Milesians as the "Tribes of the sons of Míl," so named after their leader *Mil Espáin*—literally "Spanish soldier" (Montague 44). This is somewhat problematic because, despite being described by both Muldoon and Montague as the first Irish poet, Amergin is a Spanish immigrant and so lacks a nativeness that a much later generation of authors who also claim to speak for Erin, the nineteenth century's Celtic Revivalists, would champion. This theme of nativeness/nativism is one that Edward W. Said's examinations of colonialism engage with and complicate, and it is a thread that I return to later. For now, it is relevant to note that Amergin, as part of a military expedition, is also implicitly indicted as an invasive colonizer. The figure who first claims to speak for Erin does so having just set foot on the soil, with no other link to the island than the pending conquest. It seems counterintuitive, then, that the Celtic Bardic tradition that he helped to engender is considered essentially Irish by the nationalist movements that would form in reaction to the later colonization by Britain. His status as invader highlights the fact that Irish identity essentially consists of a succession of cultures that invaded or colonized Ireland.

"The Dead" complicates the Revival's identity in a similar way by adding a layer of Irish modernity, which the Revivalists shun as indicative of the "filthy modern tide," an essentially different identity than the "Irish, born into that ancient sect" (Yeats qtd. in Garrigan-Mattar 18). The Revival's truly Irish precede modernity and define their identity in opposition to it, despite accepting as Irish all previous invading cultural identities such as the Milesians, the Danes, the Firbolgs, etc. This apparent discrepancy may be explainable by the fact that the Milesians were the last of a series of mythological invaders, so whatever cultural hybrid that developed as a result became the long-standing

Celtic tradition of Ireland. Qualifying statements aside, Amergin's first poem, "The Muse of Amergin," is itself a sort of colonial manifesto.

"The Muse of Amergin" is an example of the type of exploration or travel narrative that Western imperial powers would later rely on to repackage colonized landscapes and peoples as exploitable colonial subjects. Said calls the colonizing process "an act of geographical violence," one in which the landscape of the colonized space is itself translated into the terms of the colonizing culture (*Culture* 225). "For the native," Said continues, "the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider" (*Culture* 225). Amergin inaugurates this process in "The Muse" with a description of Ireland's geographical features and natural resources ("Fertile fruitful mountains, / Fruitful moist woods, / Moist overflowing lochs, / Flowing hillside springs") and a feminine personification of the land ("That haughty lady, Eire")—all punctuated by Amergin's claim that he "speak[s] for Erin" (Montague 44). Amergin's feminization of the landscape is the first known example of a tradition of feminization of Ireland that informs certain aspects of Celtic mythology, particularly the sovereignty goddess archetype and its subcategory in the *aisling* tradition—both of which will be treated in more detail in Chapter Three. With the advent of British colonialism, the Irish themselves were feminized in imperial discourse as part of a gendered dialectic of British dominance. As Claire A. Culleton and others have documented, this subjugating imperial discourse has persisted throughout the centuries; disputing it has become part of the program of nationalist resistance put forth by the Celtic Revival, especially as evident in the hyper-

masculinity championed by the Gaelic Athletics Association.⁵

As evidenced by Amergin's immediate claim to speak for Ireland, the Irish writer, from the very first, has set him- or herself up as a public figure, one who defines both the physical geography (mountains, fields, and lochs) and national identity (sons of Míl) of Ireland. This idea, while present throughout Irish literary history, is especially manifest during the Celtic Revival of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when a paucity of visual arts led to a more prominent position for lingual arts.

The growing importance of a Celtic oral tradition and a corresponding decline in the production of Celtic visual arts such as architecture, painting, and sculpture—all of which disciplines the Celts had demonstrably mastered by the eighth century—becomes evident in the twelfth century. Jeanne Sheehy documents a series of causes for this decline in applied arts, including a protracted "period of invasion and conquest," which resulted in a relative dearth of the leisure time, stability, and economic currency required to produce visual arts, and the later economic influence of empire and industry, which replaced traditional techniques of artistic production with newly imported, modern ones (8). Because of these influences, the Celtic tradition produced an oral culture that could be more easily transmitted between artists and generations, yet left less of a record behind (Sheehy 8). By the nineteenth century, "literary expression came naturally," so "[t]he expression of Irish identity became more and more a matter of a return to the language [...] of the early Irish. This was possible in literature, for the Irish language was alive, though only just" (Sheehy 8). Since the Celtic traditions had largely faded from record

⁵Joyce's attitude toward this hyper-masculinity is evident in his caricature of the GAA's founder, Michael Cusack, who serves as the inspiration for the myopic, racist citizen of *Ulysses*'s "Cyclops" episode.

and into the oral traditions of the peasants of the West, it was up to the literary Revivalists to both document the Bardic history of Ireland and decide what was preserved as Irish and what was to go unrecorded.

This attitude of the creation of an artistic and historic identity is evident in an 1892 address to the Irish Literary Society given by then-president Charles Gavan Duffy. Duffy gave a tangential definition of his own idea of the role of the Revivalist author by posing a question: "What do we hope to make of Ireland?" (qtd. in Garrigan-Mattar 13). Duffy doesn't wonder what Ireland already is, but what he and the assembled literary figures can mold it into.

Robert F. Garrat identifies this tendency in W. B. Yeats, one of the Revival's central figures, noting Yeats's "purposeful commitment to the stewardship of Irish letters" and, by extension, of Ireland itself (19). Given Garrat's blanket assertion of the literary Revivalists' role of identity construction, the Irish author and intellectual take on new importance in the nineteenth century. The advent of the Celtic Revival was a reaction, in part, to British colonialism. With the decline of the visual arts and culture of the Celts, the oral traditions of sport, song, and especially literature, those readily transmittable artifacts of culture, became the mainstays of establishing an Irish identity. Although the Revivalists witnessed an influx of modern material goods, the language and performative traditions of the West remained unaffected and offered a tempting tool to establish a non-Anglo identity. The writers of the Revival thus developed significant sway in Irish nationalist politics, a trend that corresponds with Edward Said's description of the effect that "poets and visionaries" have on colonized cultures (*Culture* 224). Said writes that colonized nations rely on such figures for identity formation and to establish an initial

campaign of resistance:

Within the nationalist revival, in Ireland and elsewhere, there were two distinct political moments, each with its own imaginative culture [...] The first was a pronounced awareness of European and Western culture *as* imperialism; this reflexive moment of consciousness enables the African, Caribbean, Irish, Latin American, or Asian citizen to assert the end of Europe's cultural claim to guide and/or instruct the non-European or non-mainland individual. Often this was first done, as Thomas Hodgkin has argued, by "prophets and priests," among them poets and visionaries. (224)

The colonized poet or visionary, then, serves as a catalyst for the process of decolonization; they are the figure pointing at the constitutive center of the imperial structure. Establishing this awareness results in a deconstruction of the imperial system's assumed underlying, defining, and naturally existing truth. The truth of a thing becomes its "form"—or, in the case of nationalism an politics, its performance—rather than its actual "matter" (Žižek 134-5). By performing this duty, Said's poet figure belies the naturalness of empire, a naturalness that is assumed discursively across a whole system of historically constructed and inscribed mythico-ritual performances masquerading as matter.

Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) offers a means to better conceptualize how literary resistance by Said's poet figure might begin the process of decolonization. Bourdieu writes of dissident art that it is capable of "challenging [...] the established artistic hierarchies" and effecting "the heretical displacement of the socially accepted limit between what does and does not deserve to be preserved, admired, and transmitted" (*Field* 102). By asserting the value and individuality of premodern Celtic culture, the Revivalists are challenging the dominance of British hegemony over which languages, bodies of poetry, artistic production, and identities are viable. The Celtic

Revivalists are following a program of decolonization similar to the one later described by Said.

In the case of Yeats and the other Revivalist writers, this manifests as the promotion of an alternative to the dominant imperial culture; the overarching drive apparent in Celtic Revivalist literature and thought is an insistence on acknowledging an essential difference between the Irish and the British as expressed by Yeats's ambition to "write for my own race" (qtd. in Cheng 195). As the twentieth century wore on, however, the body of discourse produced by this insistence, and the Irish identity that it, in turn, produced, excited an eventual deluge of scholarship identifying a strain of primitivism that runs throughout it.

This Revivalist appeal to an inherently different Irishness produced three results. The first is that the nineteenth-century Revivalists simultaneously created an essential Irish identity, the idea of a lost national sovereignty, and a movement to restore both. As Vincent J. Cheng invites his readers to do, "we might do well to reflect on what that means, on the inherent contradiction in such a desire for a return to being a 'nation' called Ireland. For the fact is that (at least before 1922) there never had been such a thing!" (*Joyce* 216). Instead, Ireland has been, throughout the island's post-Milesian history, a collection of warring tribes and kingdoms that were only ever united under the dominion of an external power—be it Dane, Norman, or British.⁶

The second result of the Revivalists's insistence on an essential, premodern Irish identity is that it effectively undermines its eventual aim—national sovereignty—by

⁶During the invasion of the Danes and Norwegians, much of the island fell under Scandinavian control. Joyce comically describes the reaction of the indigenous peoples to most of the Scandinavian occupation: "The native kings were busy killing one another at the time, occasionally taking a well-earned break for games of chess" (*Occasional* 113).

affirming the British empire's colonial domination of Ireland as a necessary project of civilizing the primitive Irish. Sinéad Garrigan-Mattar writes that, "As post-colonial criticism has now made abundantly clear, in Classical as well as nineteenth-century empires, images of primitiveness among subject peoples were consistently employed as political tools to illustrate the necessity of civilization" (10-1). The Irish of the Revival are a noble race, a more pure race from which modern civilization had degenerated to its present state. With the advent of comparative anthropology in the mid-nineteenth century, the noble savage of "romantic literary primitivism" was replaced by the evolutionary savage of "modernist literary primitivism" (Garrigan-Mattar 3, 4). In modernist literary primitivism, the primitive of the romantics, from which modern culture had devolved, became, from the vantage point of comparative science, a manifestation on an evolutionary trajectory that terminates with modern civilization. By insisting on a targeted essentialism that cast Irish people—especially the poor, rural Irish from the west—in opposition to the urban, modern population of the metropolitan center, the Revivalists situate Irish identity as an early step in a teleology of anthropological progression. The Irish thus become an internal Other, and the British colonists become, from the imperial viewpoint, the necessary catalyst in a teleological progression that will save Ireland from the primitive Irish.⁷

This is evident across the cultural landscape of modern Ireland. One critic describes the role of the Irish National Museum during the late modern era as one that

⁷Cf "Two Forces," a political cartoon by John Tenniel published in the October 29, 1881 edition of *Punch*. The cartoon is reproduced on the cover of Gregory Castle's *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, represents the result of modernist literary primitivism well, and is indicative of the widely held view that the Irish are, as Joyce describes the primitive misrepresentation, "the incapable and unbalanced cretins that we read about in the leading articles in the *Standard* and the *Morning Post*" (*Occasional* xi).

"establish[es] a temporal and spatial distance between the primitive people on display and the modern citizens visiting the exhibition." This creates "an institution in which the narrative of Ireland's history was constructed in the terminology of colonialist discourse" (Lancia 81). This passage describes the effects of primitivism created through the targeted management and display of Ireland's premodern material culture. Much like the Anglo-Irish authors of the Celtic Revival, this 'museumizing' discourse is responsible in part for "assimilating that culture into an essentially anthropological frame of reference" by affirming the natural dominance and obvious superiority of the civilized British empire over the primitive Irish (Castle 30).

A sterling example of this lies in Yeats's recurrent use of darkness as somehow representing an essential Irish identity. In "The Statues," Yeats writes of

We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face. (*Collected Poems* 337)

Garrigan-Mattar explores the use of "our proper dark" in this poem through Yeats's previous poetic uses of darkness, concluding that "darkness is taken as an index of all that is chaotic, pre-civil, and pre-moral," and "[Yeats's] poetry and plays were part and parcel of a quest to lead the Irish towards their 'proper dark'" (18-9, 41). Instances of darkness in Yeats's other writings support Garrigan-Mattar's reading: "There remains but a wild anarchy of legends [...] There behind the Ireland of today, lost in the ages, this chaos murmurs like a dark and stormy sea full of the sounds of lamentation" (Yeats qtd. in McCourt 23-4).

Additionally, the theme of darkness as opposed to civilization is presented in texts

across the spectrum of colonialism including Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, where he writes of the habits, behavior, and personalities of fictionalized colonial subjects that "these were signs of cultural survival that emerged from the other side of cultural enterprise, the darker side" (xiii). In Bhabha's estimation, the quality of being on "the other side of cultural enterprise" is what identifies a thing as dark. Darkness as both a figurative and a literal manifestation of Otherness has long informed the binomial distinction of imperial self and Other in colonialism.

By positing this darkness as a proper aspect of Irishness, Yeats positions Ireland's true identity in a romantic Irish past diametrically opposed to "the Ireland of today." Yeats's use of darkness may be read as suggesting that the darkness does have value and should not simply be discounted as inferior to the modern tide, which he obviously eschews; however, regardless of his intentions, Yeats still situates Irish national identity at odds with modernization, reifying the binomial dialectic rather than deconstructing it. His insistence on the Celt's "proper darkness" implies that it is also a true, natural, or original Irish state. Darkness for the Irish is both an idealized past from which the Irish have fallen into the "the filthy modern tide" of civilization and an essential element of Irishness that prevents the Irish from ever fully integrating into the modern present, offering them a way to "climb" out of that tide (qtd. in Garrigan-Mattar 18). This creates an Irishness at odds with itself, pitting modern against premodern (both of which are undeniably represented in Ireland by the twentieth century), and it is indicative of the paralysis against which Joyce set himself and his work.

In "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages," Joyce eulogizes a lost, secularized tradition of Irish intellectual and artistic figures whose words and actions not only

presented the island to the world, but exercised a profound influence over the formation of European culture: "It would be easy to make a list of Irishmen who, both as pilgrims or hermits and scholars or sorcerers, have carried the torch of knowledge from country to country" (*Occasional* 108). Joyce even identifies Irish influence in Dante's *Inferno*, which is perhaps continental Europe's most prominent example of medieval poetry, itself a genre "from which some scholars have wished to derive inspiration for Dante's *Comedy*" (O'Donoghue 420). Though the claim for influencing the *Comedy* is rarely made and difficult to support, there is little doubt that Joyce, at least, believed in a strong tradition of Irish contributions to European culture, contributions made by Amergin-like figures who were authorized to speak for Erin and present Irish culture to the world in an act of cultural exportation rather than one of importation.

As his correspondence demonstrates, Joyce harbored similar ambitions for his own work. In a 1909 letter to his wife, Nora Barnacle Joyce, Joyce foreshadows Stephen Dedalus's famous declaration in the closing pages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by stating his ambition of assuming this mantle: "I will become indeed the poet of my race" (*Letters II* 248). As with Amergin, Duffy, Yeats, and Muldoon, Joyce understands the role of the Irish writer as one authorized to speak for Erin, to present Ireland to the world. There is, however, one important distinction between the ways Yeats and Joyce understand what this mandate means. Yeats seems to believe that he is forming Irish identity by reviving its essential qualities and presenting them, as a pure identity, to the people of Ireland, many of whom often do not share those qualities despite the fact that they are Irish citizens. Joyce, on the other hand, insists that he is merely documenting the state of Irishness as an objective, native ethnographer, with no other motive than to

present what he empirically witnesses to the world.

In a series of letters to Grant Richards, with whom he was in negotiation regarding the editing for publication of *Dubliners*, Joyce writes, "I cannot alter what I have written [...] I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness and with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen or heard" (*Letters II* 134). Accuracy for Joyce was paramount. He wished to replicate Dublin as he knew it in order to define it both to the external world of modernity and, perhaps more importantly for Joyce, to the people of Ireland, both modern and premodern.

Joyce's intended presentation of Dublin to the world is evinced in a letter he wrote to his brother Stanislaus while composing *Dubliners*: "When you remember that Dublin has been a capital for thousands of years, that it is the 'second' city of the British Empire, that it is nearly three times as big as Venice it seems strange that no artist has given it to the world" (*Letters II* 111). In a later round of correspondence with Grant Richards, Joyce again pleads this point first on October 15, 1905 ("I do not think that any writer has yet presented Dublin to the world" [*Letters II* 122]) and again on May 5, 1906 ("my intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" [*Letters II* 134]). These excerpts express Joyce's aim to publish an account of Dublin that, if it fails to address some of the stereotypical representations of Dubliners in particular and the Irish as a whole, at least describes an urban center in Ireland rather than the primitivized West of the Revivalists introduces a new audience for Joyce's writing: the Irish themselves.

Joyce intends not only to present an image of Ireland to the modern world, but

also to present an image of the Irish to Ireland. On June 23, 1906, he writes again to Grant Richards to expand on this sentiment of speaking both for and to Erin: "I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking glass" (*Letters I* 64). Joyce makes this claim in the wake of a previous letter to Richards, dated May 20, 1906, in which Joyce ambitiously asserts that, through the composition of *Dubliners*, he has "taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country" (*Letters I* 63). Yeats often asserted a similar appeal for the ethnographic value of his folklore collections, and the convergence of these two claims is one that indicates either author's engagement with primitivism in writing of both the urban and the rural Irish. While the Revivalists of Yeats's persuasion focused their literary and ethnographic explorations of Irish identity in the largely premodern, rural West of Ireland, Joyce located his own explorations in the modernized Dublin. Later works by Yeats especially would re-examine the Revivalist habit of omitting the modern areas of Ireland⁸, but it would not be until after the publication of *Dubliners* in the early-twentieth century. No element of *Dubliners* is more important to this shift in the understanding of Irish identity than "The Dead" because of the way it incorporates thematic borrowings from the Celtic past in settings, characters, and situations of modern Ireland.

Joyce's ideas of *epiklesis* and epiphany inform much of *Dubliners*, and his transubstantiation of the Celtic mythology favored by the primitivizing discourse of the Revival into modernity is yet one more aspect of this. Whereas texts by authors like Yeats and Gregory were interested in preserving the fantasy and fairy-faith of their subject

⁸Most prominently in 1925 with the publication of *A Vision*.

matter, Joyce sought instead to "convert [...] the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own" (Scholes and Litz, "Epiphanies and Epicleti" 250). Joyce's characters and situations are taken from the life, the banal, daily bread, that he had observed and documented around him during his time in Dublin rather than created in the romantic discourse of the Revival. The Revivalists actively sought a pure Irishness to write about, which, as Seamus Deane points out, they often found through artifice (Deane, *Celtic Revivals* 28-9); Joyce, while living in Ireland, stumbled over Irishness daily in his own experiences and those of the Irish around him.

The Revivalists insisted not only that the Celtic culture should be revived, but also—and perhaps more importantly and despite the later criticism of scholars like Deane—that it was still very much present in the minds and art of the Irish in profoundly evident and essential ways. The Revival was invested in salvaging a lost culture from what its proponents understood as a retrievable past. Towards this end, the texts of authors like Yeats and Gregory attempted to locate and champion instances of Celticity that were still apparent in their contemporary Ireland. For Yeats, "the echoes of ancient Ireland could still be heard" in the peasant songs of the West, the inherited Celtic folklore, and the writings of the modern poet Samuel Ferguson, who Yeats describes hyperbolically as "the most Celtic" poet of all time, "like some aged sea king sitting among the inland wheat and poppies—the savour of the sea about him and its strength" (qtd. in McCourt 25). According to Said, establishing this continuity is an important element in any colonized nation's nationalist movement:

The question of dating the resistance to imperialism in subject territories is crucial to both sides in how imperialism is seen. For the successful nationalist parties that led the struggle against European powers, legitimacy and cultural primacy depend on their asserting an unbroken

continuity leading to the first warriors who stood against the intrusive white man. (*Culture* 197)⁹

Yeats recognized the importance of the Revivalist movement at least appearing to have a direct connection to a precolonial Celtic culture, and he accordingly insists on enshrining Ferguson in his role as "sea king" and the Irish—especially those of the West—as "born into that ancient sect" (qtd. in McCourt 25). Yeats's invocation of this sea king imagery is an obvious reference to Manannán macLir, the Irish sea god, and representative as a link to Manannán's ancient sect, the premodern, precolonial Celts. Although Said's first resisters are "warriors" who perform their resistance through physical resistance and whose legacy would inform later acts of similar resistance, Yeats's project, as evidenced by literature and journalism as his chosen forms of resistance, is less interested in the use of force and more invested in achieving a separation through cultural and artistic means.

Yeats himself relates a story of Manannán in which the god saves a foundering ship by manifesting as "a flaming hand laid suddenly on the tiller" (qtd. in Foster 193). Manannán is not a figure of violent resistance. Instead, he is akin to the role of public figure that Muldoon identifies in the succession of Irish poets: a corrective agent that restores something lost *a la* Said's "poets and visionaries" who inspire a "reflexive moment of consciousness" that empowers colonized people "to assert the end of Europe's cultural claim to guide and/or instruct the non-European or non-mainland individual" (*Culture* 224). In the case of the Manannán story, the thing lost is control over the direction of a literal ship; in the case of Yeats and the Revivalists, the thing lost is control

⁹Though the quote above uses the stylized "white men" to describe the dominant term in colonialism, Said also recognizes that "Irish people can never be English any more than Cambodians or Algerians can be French. This it seems to me was always the first principle that a clear-cut and absolute hierarchical distinction should remain constant between ruler and ruled, whether or not the latter is white" (*Culture* 228).

over the direction of Irish culture and identity formation. In both cases, violence is a non-factor.

Assigning the heritage of Manannán to the modernist poet Ferguson serves two purposes: it establishes an unbroken continuity that links a figure of modernity to the pre-colonial tradition of the Celtic Bard and it forwards a narrative of salvation as contained in that continuity. Ferguson (and, by extension, the king-maker Yeats) acts as the flaming hand to save the foundering Irish ship of state by providing, per Said's prescription, a link of continuity through the great famine and back to the bardic tradition of precolonial times.

Joyce, on the other hand, seems to reject this idea of a continuously present Celtic spirit, writing that "[t]he ancient national spirit that spoke throughout the centuries through the mouths of fabulous seers, wandering minstrels, and Jacobin poets has vanished from the world with the death of James Clarence Mangan" (*Occasional* 125). Joyce goes on to note that the denial that the blood of Celtic history was no longer running through the veins of Irish culture makes it "vain to boast" of complex Irish literary works, mythology, and technologies (such as textile production and exportation) that "date back to a time when England was still an uncivilized country [...] ancient Ireland is dead" (*Occasional* 125). This is where Joyce breaks with the Revivalists: both aim to reassert the importance of a 'lost' culture, to, as Benedict Anderson writes, "transform[...] fatality [into] re-generation," to establish "links between the dead and the yet unborn" (11). Joyce believes that, though vestiges of myriad premodern cultures remain in modern Ireland, any wholly premodern, precolonial Celtic identity is not so much irretrievably lost but simply a figment of the nationalist imagination. The Revival's

goal of cultural restoration, founded on the belief of the continuous and unadulterated presence of that culture in Ireland, thus seems impossible; however, Joyce's texts do offer a way to integrate that apparently dead culture with modernity.

Despite his criticism of the Revival's insistence on restoring a pure Celtic identity, which Joyce claims died with Mangan, elements of the Revivalist program do seem to correspond with Joyce's own ideas. Ancient Ireland was indisputably producing advanced cultural artifacts (artistic texts and textiles) that were then distributed across the continent; summoning the specter of that culture therefore confers a note of primacy similar to Said's figures of first resistance. I have already identified Joyce's devotion to Irish liberation, but the Revivalist method of doing so seemed impossible to him. If the present Irish were only truly Irish if they lived according to a premodern mode of being, then that does imply a disconnect between the ancient Celts and the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century Irish. Joyce's modern Irish were "an immense woven fabric in which very different elements [were] mixed [...] in such a fabric, it is pointless searching for a thread that has remained pure, virgin and uninfluenced by other threads nearby" (*Occasional* 118). The Revivalists are proposing what Anderson calls an "imagined community," one that overwrites the actual differences that exist in amongst a nation's population with a projected "deep, horizontal kinship" founded in a pure Irish identity (6, 7). Joyce's primary critique of the Revivalist insistence on Irish purity is that there simply isn't such a thing, nor, as discussed above, was there ever.

As Joyce's familiarity with Celtic mythology demonstrates, the Revivalists' discourse did serve to restore to popular currency the mythological themes of the ancient Celts; however, the primitive identity that the Revival championed only aided "the

consolidation of the British Empire" by answering its need to "justify that Empire as an expression of the most advanced state of civilization" (Garrigan-Mattar 5). Although this was not its aim, the Celtic Revival's ultimate effect was to contribute to the creation of a primitive/civilized, premodern/modern binomial that, through the justification of comparative anthropology, reinforced and affirmed the British colonial project in Ireland.

As Chapters Two and Three describe, much of Joyce's political, personal, and fictional writing refuses to separate Irish identity from modernity. Joyce instead depicts Irishness as a hybrid identity that offers a way to break from the tradition of regressively-minded loss narratives of the Revival. Joyce rescues the lost culture championed by the Revivalists (and pronounced dead by Joyce) by relocating it from a romanticized, inaccessible past to the apparent realities of a setting of the modern present. Although this relocation implies problems of colonial teleology and homogeneity, Joyce felt that it was the only appropriate way for Ireland to move beyond what he refers to as its status as the "country destined to be the eternal caricature of the serious world" (*Occasional* 120). The Celtic mythology of the Revivalists' primitive discourse was dead; however, in his short story "The Dead," Joyce would reconnect Irishness to its mythological past not by capitulating to the primitivism of the Revival but by bringing it into conversation with a form of Irish identity that the Revival had previously eschewed: the modern Irish.

CHAPTER TWO: JOYCEAN ENGAGEMENTS WITH COLONIALISM
AND NATIONALISM

His nurse had taught him Irish and shaped his rude imagination by the broken lights of Irish myth. He stood toward the myth upon which no individual mind had ever drawn out a line of beauty and to its unwieldy tales that divided themselves as they moved down the the cycles in the same attitude as towards the Roman catholic religion, the attitude of a dull witted loyal serf.

—*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (210)¹⁰

This chapter focuses on the work, themes, and ideology of the Revival as they are treated in Joyce's own journalism, correspondence, and literature in order to establish parallels between Ireland's modern socio-political environment, Joyce's own biography, and Gabriel Conroy's status as an unconscious or even "reluctant [imperial] patriarch" in "The Dead" (Free 278, 286). Although many authors, thinkers, and publishers contributed to the body of Revivalist discourse, this chapter will concern itself primarily with James Clarence Mangan and W. B. Yeats as representatives who Joyce identifies as the last living voice of Celticism (Mangan) and the figure widely recognized as the Revival's later steward (Yeats).

In language that he would later give to Stephen Dedalus, Joyce describes Mangan in 1902 as "a type of his race," but goes on to note of this racial type that "[h]istory

¹⁰This language is taken almost wholesale from a 1907 lecture Joyce delivered about James Clarence Mangan: "He inherits the latest and worst part of a tradition upon which no divine hand as drawn out the line of demarcation, a tradition which dissolves and divides against itself as it moves down the cycles" (*Occasional* 136-7).

encloses him so straitly that even his fiery moments do not set him free from it" (*Occasional* 59). This poet, trapped by history, is the same poet that Joyce identifies as the last true link to the lost Irish past. Here as elsewhere, Joyce's opinion is that the result of the Revival program is a paralysis that longs for what is lost, Celticity, while neglecting what is present, modernity. Mangan, like the other Revivalists, has trapped himself in a history that, as multiple critics have demonstrated¹¹, contributes to the "nativist and radical nationalisms that produce" an Other for the imperial self, thereby maintaining the tyranny of history from which both Joyce and Stephen famously hope to awaken (Said, *Culture* 214).

The Irish experience of modernity leading up to the Celtic Revival had been a negative one; however, Joyce believed that the Revivalist program of eschewing the modern in favor of an imagined premodern had only exacerbated Ireland's unfortunate position. Mangan is just another in a string of Irish public figures who Joyce describes as "insist[ing] on [...] history or the denial of reality" (*Occasional* 59). Joyce's project is to break from this pattern and realize a modern Irish identity freed from its confining loss narratives that create a divided Irish nation and, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, a colonizable, primitive Other. In order to address the latter issue, Joyce re-appropriates the same traditional Irish mythology that he believes is trapping the Revivalists in the cycle of colonial historiography in order to attempt a reunification of divided Ireland.

Yeats's version of Revivalism in particular provides Joyce with a major point of departure from the Revivalist modernists for this project; it had a similar aim of

¹¹Cf Garrigan-Mattar's *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* and Gregory Castle's *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive*, plus the myriad texts by critics like Maria McGarrity, Claire A. Culleton, Elizabeth Gilmartin, and Justin Carville, etc., who have built on Garrigan-Mattar and Castle.

combining the disparate halves of Irish identity—despite the fact that much of his early work set about creating that very division. Regardless, in his own autobiography, Yeats writes:

We had in Ireland imaginative stories, which the uneducated classes knew and even sang, and might we not make those stories current among the educated classes, rediscovering for the work's sake what I have called "the applied arts of literature" [...] and at last, it might be, so deepen the political passion of the nation that all, artist and poet, craftsman and day-laborer would accept a common design. (*Autobiographies* 167)

This declaration implies that Yeats's idea of a "common design" of Irish identity is one that omits the culture of the "educated classes," which are, ostensibly, the modern Irish. The stories are not actually "current" among these classes, so their exposure to the stories would constitute the rediscovery that Yeats prescribes. This locates a sense of Irish purity in the non-modern, which essentially excludes the modern element of Ireland as realized in Dublin and the more metropolitan-minded regions that Yeats characterizes as being afflicted with a "leprosy of the modern" (qtd. in McCourt 21). For Yeats and the other Revivalists, a rejection of the modern in Irish identity is an important step in the process of affirming a latent, premodern Celticity.

Sinéad Garrigan-Mattar identifies this tendency when she writes that the Revivalist movement that Yeats's work informed and affected "began to idealize the primitive Irish not because of their natural conformity to the standards of contemporary civilization but because of their natural defiance of them" (18). This tendency "rendered much in their work inimical to a nationalism that consistently relied upon romantically primitivist self-images to sustain [the Revival's] exclusivist politics" (18, 19). Although she is referring primarily to the exclusion of mainland and British modernity, the effect of exclusion Garrigan-Mattar describes also extends to a large portion of the Irish

population: the modernized Gabriel Conroys of Ireland. There's little wonder that Gabriel, as a Dubliner, would feel excluded by the Revivalist construction of Irish identity.

Yeats describes his common design for an Irish identity as something that must be rediscovered, something that was lost and exists in a salvageable past, waiting for a poet archaeologist to excavate and repatriate it in an act of cultural restoration. Joyce, in "The Dead" and elsewhere, eschews the artistic necromancy of the Revival. Although he does often have recourse to the same body of mythology that the Revivalists were excavating, his rediscoveries are not reproduced in their original mythological contexts.¹² They are instead re-appropriations of the Gaelic mythology behind Revivalist texts like "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel" and *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. Joyce's texts re-present the themes, figures, and events from the mythological source material in modern socio-political settings and with modern characters and situations. Although undercurrents of Irish (and Hebraic and Greek) mythology inform much of his writing, those undercurrents are themselves transported from their original mythological contexts into events culled from the life Joyce observed and documented in modern Ireland.

Joyce's devotion to the realities of modernity is also represented in his politics. As Joyce wrote to Stanislaus concerning his (qualified) support for Arthur Griffith and the

¹²It should be noted, though, that the Revivalists did not represent the myths with complete fidelity. Although she is not the only one to effect such redactions, the myths and texts re-presented by Lady Gregory are especially emblematic of this; she would often bowdlerize them, glossing over certain unflattering details or replacing the instances of vigorous sexuality often depicted in Irish mythology with censored, romanticized versions. According to Maria Tymoczko, her version of "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel" is one notable exception, possibly because it only features the kind of violence and masculine assertiveness that she glorifies in *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* and the Revival glorifies more generally in the games of the Gaelic Athletics Association (227-8). Joyce was probably familiar with both Gregory's translation and one published by Richard Irvine Best in the *United Irishman* 24-31 in January 1903, either one of which contained ample information to enable his appropriation of the story in "The Dead," as delineated by John V. Kelleher.

Sinn Féin movement, "so far as my knowledge of Irish affairs goes, he was the first person in Ireland to revive the separatist idea on modern lines" (*Letters II* 167). This is one indication of many that, while being critical of its tactical glorification of premodernity and its aestheticization of nationalist politics, Joyce was still very supportive of the nationalist movement of the Revival.

While developing his personal understanding of the complex socio-political situation that would later underwrite major works like "The Dead," *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce proposed to publish a book of his own articles and lectures on Irish politics and history. As scholar Kevin Barry notes, "Joyce's proposed volume rearranges the sequence of his Triestine articles in order to emphasize their insistence on Irish autonomy and the inadequacies of such Home Rule as was offered by Westminster" (Barry x). In those lectures and articles, Joyce describes the effect of English colonialism on Ireland:

Ireland is poor because English laws destroyed the industries of the country [...] because, in the years in which the potato crop failed, the negligence of the English government left the flower of the people to die of hunger; because, while the country is becoming depopulated [...] government and public officials pocket huge sums for doing little or nothing. (*Occasional* 199-120)

As is evident in his Triestine writings, Joyce was invested in Irish emancipation; however, he sought it along "modern lines" and in accordance with what the socio-cultural geography of Ireland actually was at the time. Joyce's texts seem to insist that any nationalist movement must include both the traditional Celtic culture championed by the Revival and the modern culture of Dublin and the other urbanized areas of Ireland. Anything less than this would be insufficient, either self-identifying as a primitive Other to the imperial British self or attempting to become the provincial facsimile of the

imperial subject.

The Revival's tendency to locate Irish identity in a tradition of loss narratives depicting an irretrievable past is one that, rather than refuting and challenging this narrative, reinforces and re-inscribes it. As Adorno writes, "[w]e will not have come to terms with the past until the causes of what happened are no longer active. Only because those causes live on does the spell of the past remain unbroken to this day" (qtd. In Boheemen-Saaf 10).

The program of Revivalist primitivism glorifies the premodern precisely because it is a rejection of modernity, which Joyce sees as a potentially empowering force for Ireland. This denial of the modern element of Irish society ensures that the "causes of what happened" remain active because Ireland will remain incapable of competing economically (qtd. in Boheemen-Saaf 10). They promote a version of colonial resistance that "encloses [them] so straitly that even [their] fiery moments do not set [them] free from it" (*Occasional* 59). Although Griffith's program offends his socialistic sensibilities, Joyce recognizes the role that capitalist economics play in colonial subjugation: "Of course I see that [*Sinn Féin* policies'] success would be to substitute Irish for English capital but no one, I suppose, denies that capitalism is a stage of progress" (*Letters II* 187). Each new recognition of Irish identity as existing in an irretrievably lost culture (that, of course, only came into existence with the advent of its revival) is an insistence on reliving this loss by denying the possibility of addressing its causes through modernization, thereby re-inflicting the causes of colonial domination. The missing, irretrievable piece of essential identity effaced by colonialism is re-affirmed each time as being gone, and the traumatic loss is relived. To address this, Joyce used texts like "The

Dead" to appropriate Celtic mythology as an informing element of modernist fiction.

At the center of this process of appropriation is Joyce's idea of *epiklesis*, a religious rite that "transform[s] the consecrated water of bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ" (Scholes and Litz, "Epiphanies and Epicleti" 250). Joyce related it to Stanislaus as a process that will "convert [...] the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own" (Joyce qtd. in Scholes and Litz, "Epiphanies and Epicleti" 250). In his 1900 essay "Ibsen's New Drama," Joyce praised Ibsen's similar technique, which no doubt served as a model for his own *epiklesis*: "Ibsen has chosen the average lives in their uncompromising truth for the groundwork of all his later plays" (*Occasional* 45). This praise, along with his refusal to Grant Richards to "alter in the presentment [...] what he has seen and heard" in *Dubliners* (*Letters I* 134) and the autobiographical source of so much of his fiction indicate an insistence that art be grounded in representing as accurately as possible the immediate realities of a modern present. In much of his work, Joyce uses an undercurrent of premodern or ancient mythology to transubstantiate the mundane and banal existence of modernity into an aesthetic artifact. It becomes itself a text whose relevance extends beyond its immediate situation, transcending the limited scope of the author's experience. Rather than force modern Ireland back into the romanticized past by means of Yeats's Revivalist primitivism (and into the colonial binomial that such a primitive classification implies), Joyce intends his *epicleti* to offer a way to escape the paralytic influence of Ireland's past while still acknowledging and embracing vestiges of it: "The Irish nation's desire to create its own civilization is not so much the desire of a young nation wishing to link itself to Europe's concert, but the desire by an ancient nation to renew in a modern form

the glories of a past civilization" (*Occasional* 111). This point is revisited in a comparison between the aisling as it appears in Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen," Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, and Joyce's "The Dead" in Chapter Three. The remainder of this chapter will be a survey of different Celtic mythology that Joyce has appropriated in "The Dead," and the effect this has in setting up Gabriel Conroy as a modern patriarch of imperial complicity.

"The Dead" is a strong but subtle early indication of the more explicit resistance *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* would later mount against the Revivalist tradition of Irish loss narratives and the subsequent paralysis that they inspire. Christine van Boheemen-Saaf writes of *Finnegans Wake* that it is "an attempt to 'solve' the problem of incommensurability of colonial thinking," which she defines as

the symptom of the fact that hegemonic western thought is unable to think of difference in other terms than as 'otherness'; or, in other words, that origin, in order for sense to be preserved, must always be singular and preferably self-identical rather than hybrid or syncretic. (164)

Beginning with "The Dead," Joyce's texts pursue a movement towards hybridity and away from the exclusionary and self-effacing primitivism of the Revival.

Vincent Cheng elaborates on this concept of self-effacement through exclusionary identity formation in his discussion of *Dubliners* by framing it with one of Joyce's own terms: the gratefully oppressed.¹³ Cheng writes of the gratefully oppressed that "here the colonized have internalized the values of the colonizer, cheering the activities of the colonial masters and becoming consensual slaves" (Cheng, *Joyce* 105). Grateful oppression is an internalized system of colonial domination that creates a pattern of re-

¹³The term is taken from "After the Race," where the assembled Dubliners "raised the cheer of the gratefully oppressed" while watching representatives of colonial powers race machines resplendent with the technology of modernity (*Dubliners* 42).

inscription similar to Pierre Bourdieu's "*paradox of doxa*," in which the "dominated apply to what dominates them schemes that are the product of domination [...] their acts of *cognition* are, inevitably, acts of *recognition*" that represent an ongoing ratification of the ideology of the ruling class (*Masculine Domination* 13).

Cheng further pursues this thread in his postcolonial reading of *Ulysses*: "for Stephen and his fellow Irishmen imperial history[']s [...] oppressive presence and hegemonic, discursive terminology is written all over the face of Ireland and its cultural constructions, and thus forms the hour-by-hour subtext and context of all their thoughts and experiences" (Cheng, *Joyce* 169). Though almost all of the party-goers are complicit in this process, Gabriel, as the party's patriarch and by dint of the unequal amount of influence his interior subjectivity wields over the free indirect discourse narrative form of the story, is the focal point of imperial reproduction. Gabriel is mentioned explicitly in the "Aeolus" episode of *Ulysses*; however, a gibing couplet exchanged between two other characters in that episode might be used to better understand Gabriel's complicity with empire: "*'Twas rank and fame that tempted thee, / 'Twas empire charmed thy heart*" (*Ulysses* 130). As Kate Morkan later says of the socially aggressive Anglo-Irish Mr. Browne, "Browne is everywhere" (*Dubliners* 206). The same can be said of Gabriel, whose imperial pretensions inform nearly all aspects of the story's narration. Gabriel is the local enforcer of imperial systems of domination, a status reflected in his dress, holiday destinations, and discerning taste in literature.

From the moment of his arrival at the party, Gabriel is well aware that the other guests' "grade of culture differed from his," and he anxiously tries to ensure that the other party-goers are aware of that difference (*Dubliners* 179). Lily, the care-taker's daughter, is

the first person to greet Gabriel. The young woman's uncultured pronunciation of Conroy as Con-er-roy elicits a display of patronizing mirth: "Gabriel smiled at the three syllables she had given his surname" (*Dubliners* 177). Both Lily's mispronunciation and Gabriel's response are indicative of Gabriel's social standing among the modern Dubliners. As Kelleher notes, the tri-syllabic name conjures the ghost of the Celtic High King of Tara, Conaire, the name from which the Anglicized 'Connery' descends (419). This name implies high socio-political standing, reflecting the ambitions of Gabriel's mother and maternal grandfather and the prestigious positions in public life that Gabriel's father and now Gabriel himself enjoy. Equating Gabriel purely with the Celtic patriarch Conaire is a tempting reading, but Kelleher also notes that the name Conroy is not related to Conaire—it is merely reflective of it when pronounced creatively. Gabriel's surname is descended from the Irish name *Cú Roí*, not Conaire (419). He is the 'high king' of the Misses Morkan's annual dinner, but Gabriel Conroy is not the namesake of the High King of Ireland. This subtle deviation from what is otherwise, as Kelleher shows, a remarkably faithful reproduction of myriad elements of "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel" in "The Dead" suggests that Gabriel is something different than the purely Celtic Conaire, whose story is a staple of the Celtic Revival. Gabriel is the modern Dubliner, complicit with empire, and occupying the dominant position in the localized imperial hierarchy. Gabriel's patronizing smile as a reaction to Lily's mispronunciation betrays his awareness of his dominant position, if not an awareness of the implications of its compromised nature, an ignorance that will later manifest during a conversation with a Celtic Revivalist and fellow University instructor, Molly Ivors.

One indication of Gabriel's awareness manifests in his cultivation of certain

cultural artifacts in order to bolster his standing as a beneficiary of modern empire. The reader's attention is directed often to some aspect of Gabriel's aesthetic, intellectual, or pecuniary dominance, especially in situations where his position of patriarchal or intellectual superiority has been shaken in some way. When Lily, the care-taker's daughter, responds "with great bitterness" to a question Gabriel poses, he is momentarily unnerved: "Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes" (*Dubliners* 178). The question itself was related to the possibility of Lily marrying, that is, entering into a cultural institution representative of the masculist patriarchy that Gabriel's identity is invested in reproducing. Her challenge of masculinity—"the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (*Dubliners* 178)—is a challenge of that system of hegemony, and therefore of Gabriel's dominance. When he leaves the young woman's presence, Gabriel attempts to re-assert his superiority by appealing to its most basic form in modern capitalism: money. "Then he rapidly took a coin from his pocket. —O Lily, he said, thrusting it into her hands, it's Christmastime, isn't it? Just...here's a little..." (*Dubliners* 178). Lily protests, perhaps trying to maintain the space of uncertainty she managed to inspire in the masculist imperial social hierarchy: "O no, sir! cried the girl, following him. Really, sir, I wouldn't take it" (*Dubliners* 178). Gabriel is dismissive, though, replying that it is "Christmas-time! Christmas-time!" while "waving his hand to her in deprecation" (*Dubliners* 178). Lily, having been reminded by Gabriel's coin of her appropriate role in the recognitive hierarchy, can only respond according to her social station: "[t]he girl, seeing that he had gained the stairs, called out after him: —Well thank you, sir" (*Dubliners* 178-9). Gabriel

has regained her submission (she called him sir—twice!—and was forced to petition him in acknowledgment both of his gift and of the social debt that accepting it implies) through the application of money and is anxious to leave on what he must consider a successful reassertion of his superiority. Still, his position of dominance was challenged, and, even after buying her submission, Lily's comment continues to "cast a gloom over him which he tried to dispel by arranging his cuffs and the bows of his tie" (*Dubliners* 179). Gabriel seeks solace, perhaps unwittingly, in material and cultural cues of hierarchy like money and clothing in order to maintain his patriarchal position as local enforcer of imperial hierarchy; however, his over-attention to these cues are themselves a symptom of doubt of his own superiority.

The drunkard Freddy Malins provides a useful affirmation for Gabriel in this regard. Malins's clothing serves as a reminder of his slovenliness, while his drinking and over-enthusiastic outbursts cast him as an uncivilized, unrefined Irish caricature. Malins has confirmed the Misses Morkan's apprehensions and arrived at least partially drunk, and this despite "his poor mother [making] him taking the pledge" of sobriety on New Year's Eve, mere days before (*Dubliners* 185). The drunk, while being offered a "good glass of lemonade just to buck [him] up," is prompted by another guest to execute a "mechanical readjustment" of "a disarray in his dress" (*Dubliners* 185). Malins is oblivious to the disarray until it is pointed out to him—an ignorance that Gabriel, with his careful cultivation of ideological signifiers and constant attention to maintaining a perfect exhibition of them, would unlikely fall victim to. Malins is a Caliban caricature of the drunk Irishman, an ignorant, low-culture slob whose ambitions do not extend beyond operating a "little Christmas-card shop" during the holiday season (*Dubliners* 217).

Malins is incapable of even this modest endeavor without borrowing money in the amount of £1, the imperially charged 'sovereign,' from the imperial patriarch Gabriel. Kate and Julia Morkan receive similarly dismissive treatment, being described simply as "plainly dressed," which contrasts with the "bright gilt rims" of Gabriel's glasses and his lustrous "patent-leather shoes" (*Dubliners* 179, 178) and whom he sees as "only two ignorant old women" (*Dubliners* 192). Gabriel's relatively high quality of dress, his dispensations of money, and his dismissive attitude of the others' "grade of culture" reflects his dominant position as an agent of patriarchy (*Dubliners* 179).

Molly Ivors's Revivalist character is established by the fact that "she did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device" (*Dubliners* 187). As Terrence Brown notes of the significance of the dress's high neckline, "Individuals who espoused the separatist cause and the Irish Ireland movement were often notably puritanical in sexual matters, which may account for Miss Ivors's modest evening wear" (Brown 309). This attitude towards sexuality is also apparent in Lady Gregory's translations of Celtic texts (Tymoczko 227), suggesting an additional link between Miss Ivors and the discourse of the Revivalists.

As an activist nationalist operating along the binomial lines of pro- or anti-Union, Miss Ivors, perhaps playfully, takes issue with Gabriel's practice of publishing reviews in the *Daily Express*, a newspaper with decidedly pro-Union overtones that underscore Gabriel's unconscious collusion with and replication of imperial ideology.¹⁴ Not only does he write for a "West Briton" (or Unionist) publication (*Dubliners* 188), but the latest review, which is also the one that Miss Ivors had seen, is on the poetry of Robert

¹⁴For a description of the Unionist publication practices of the *Daily Express*, see Tymoczko (238-9).

Browning, an English poet. Throughout the story, Gabriel worries that a Browning quote he had included in his dinner speech "would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they could recognize from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better" (*Dubliners* 179). His first alternative is itself a form of imported culture that is so ingrained in Irish history by localized acts of re-cognition that it has, ostensibly, become accessible to any Dubliner.¹⁵ This assumed familiarity is another sign of the extent to which the modern Dubliner has become gratefully oppressed, and it is indicative of Joyce's insistence that the fact of the premodern/modern binomial inflicts paralysis on either term.

Joyce himself served a short tenure writing reviews for the *Daily Express*, during which he wrote unflattering copy describing *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish* by Lady Gregory¹⁶; *Poems and Ballads* by William Rooney, a Revivalist and nationalist who *Sinn Féin* founder Arthur Griffith described as "the greatest Irishman I have known or expect to know" and who self-stylized in Irish as *Fear na Muintire* (Man of the People); and *Today and Tomorrow in Ireland* by Stephen Gwynn, yet another Revivalist voice (*Occasional* xv-xvii).

Given his initial surprise at Miss Ivors's politicization of them, Gabriel's reviews are less self-reflexive than Joyce's. Joyce exhibits a strong awareness of the politics at play in the literature he reviewed, lamenting, in a review of the posthumous publication

¹⁵*Hamlet* is so ingrained in the Irish collectivity that John Eglinton, the fictionalization of *Dana* editor W. K. Magee in *Ulysses*, jokes that "an actress played Hamlet for the fourhundredandeighth time las night in Dublin" (*Ulysses* 198). Such a high number of so unusual a casting choice indicates that the play has been produced, with a more traditionally sexed lead, far more often.

¹⁶In *Ulysses*, the irrepressible Buck Mulligan describes a similar review Stephen Dedalus wrote of a Lady Gregory text: "O you inquisitionnal drunken jew jesuit! She gets you a job on the paper and then you go and slate her drivel to Jaysus. Couldn't you do the Yeats touch?" (*Ulysses* 216).

of Rooney's collected verse, the extent to which "the region of literature is assailed so fiercely by the enthusiast and the doctrinaire" (*Occasional* 61).¹⁷ Joyce readily recognizes, but (perhaps hypocritically) does not agree with, the presence of political activism in literature; Gabriel, however, does not—even when dealing with an author, Tennyson, who caricatures the same masculist politics of sexual domination that he would later reproduce at the Gresham Hotel. As Gabriel's encounters with the women throughout "The Dead" show, Joyce is as hard on the figures of modernity who are not critical of their own position as he is on the Revivalists who deny modernity's place in Ireland. "The Dead" does not treat Gabriel kindly while forcing him to consider his exclusionary identity.

It is not until he is confronted by Miss Ivors during a dance called lancers—a fitting title, considering Gabriel's understanding of the encounter as being an aggressive interrogation—that the political implications of literary discourse, the socio-cultural mechanisms that, as Pierre Bourdieu writes, decide "what does and does not deserve to be preserved, admired, and transmitted," occur to him (*Field* 102). To Miss Ivors's suggestion that he should be ashamed of himself, Gabriel dumbly asks, "Why should I be ashamed of myself," while "blinking his eyes and trying to smile" (*Dubliners* 188). Gabriel is so immersed in the position of the native intellectual that, when that identity is directly challenged, he is reduced to displaying the blank expression of an agency-less, identity-less doll. Miss Ivors continues her unexpected attack: "Well I'm ashamed of you," said Miss Ivors frankly. To think you'd write for a rag like that. I didn't think you were a

¹⁷In this review, Joyce describes Rooney's poetic style as "studiously mean" (*Occasional* 61) a phrase which he would later develop into the "style of scrupulous meanness" in which he composed *Dubliners* (Scholes and Litz, "Evidence" 262). For more on this, see Gottfried.

West Briton" (*Dubliners* 188). This inspires a "look of perplexity" on Gabriel's face, who begins an abortive consideration of Miss Ivors's implications by considering the money at stake, "fifteen shillings" (*Dubliners* 188). As with the other instances of money in the text, these shillings are a monetized form of empire and support Miss Ivors's implication that he is literally selling out his country and cultural heritage by writing for them. Furthermore, Miss Ivors is correct about the newspaper's, and Gabriel's, general position as either pro- or anti-Union. The *Daily Express*, when understood through this binary, is a pro-Union publication that devotes many more column inches to British art, literature, and culture than it does to the corresponding elements of the Revivalist movement. It is no wonder, then, that Gabriel immediately diminishes the money's importance by retreating to the comfort of what he understands as politically neutral literary artifacts:

The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry check. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. [...] He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they had been friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers; he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. (*Dubliners* 188)

Gabriel prefers dealing with the submissive—if prone to occasional "back answers" (*Dubliners* 176)—Lily, the drunkard Malins, and the grandstanding Protestant Mr. Browne, whose promotion of Julia Morkan after her singing ("Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery!" [*Dubliners* 193]) and vocal support of Gabriel during his dinner speech ("No, no! said Mr. Browne" in response to Gabriel's false modesty [*Dubliners* 202]) indicate that he simply wants to be associated with whatever is socially beneficial. Gabriel, when confronted by his equal in education (at the Protestant "Royal University" [*Dubliners* 187]), intelligence, and social prestige (fellow teacher), Gabriel's shroud of

superiority is dispelled and he becomes blank: a blinking, smiling doll. He is ignorant of the political implications of his own position, yet he still relies on positioning himself according to their hierarchy to establish his identity.

Gabriel's ignorance is such that, when he heatedly tells Molly Ivors "I'm sick of my own country, sick of it," it is unclear if he is refuting all of Ireland, the West as championed by Revivalist discourse, or simply lashing out in confused frustration at this challenge to his patriarchal authority (*Dubliners* 189). After all, she had "call[ed] him a West Briton in front of people [...] She had tried to make him look ridiculous in front of people," which, as indicated by his mental repetition, is a heavy blow for someone as consciously aware of socially constructed hierarchy as Gabriel has proven to be (*Dubliners* 190).

In the same conversation, when Gabriel insists "that Irish is not [his] language" (*Dubliners* 189), he represents sentiments Joyce expressed in a 1906 letter to his brother Stanislaus: "If the Irish programme did not insist on the Irish language I suppose I could call myself a nationalist. As it is, I am content to recognise myself an exile" (*Letters II* 187). Gabriel speaks English, the language of modernity (which is also the language of empire), just as Joyce does. Given their history as instructors with at least passing fluency in multiple languages, it is unlikely that either Joyce or Gabriel would have significant difficulty in acquiring another; however, learning Gaelic would have presented a significant barrier to Joyce in his production of art. As Michael Levenson notes, Joyce's "words were his laboring instruments; the prospect of learning Irish to become a Gaelic writer must have been scarcely imaginable" (169-70). Few authors have achieved the stylistic mastery that Joyce has in any single language, let alone multiple languages, so

his failure to invest in learning anything more than a small amount of incidental Gaelic might be excused on the lines of artistic pursuit; however, Joyce also proved himself a capable linguist, and his refusal to develop even a passing familiarity with Gaelic may reflect his own ambitions for success. This was possibly a financial decision, but more likely related to a prejudice for the progressive, for the modern and the civilized, which Joyce himself often displayed and Gabriel Conroy would reproduce, albeit less critically. Joyce's tendency toward the progressive also likely influenced his preference for Continental literature, another trait he shares with Gabriel. English in colonial Ireland was the language of modernity, and restricting himself to Gaelic would render Joyce's work unintelligible to a Continental, modernized audience save for a handful of German and French Celtologists.

As evinced in a September 1905 letter sent to his brother Stanislaus, Joyce was well familiar with the contributions that the Gaelic-speaking Celtologists had made to Irish identity: "I will got to Paris where, I believe, there is a person by the name of Anatole France much admired by a Celtic philologist by the name of Goodbetterbest and I'll say to him 'Respected master, is this pen pointed enough?'" (*Letters II* 110). Goodbetterbest is a psuedonym for Richard Irvine Best, Assistant Director of the National Library of Ireland from 1904-23. Best translated the French Celtologist H. d'Arbois de Jubainville's *Le cycle mythologique irlandais et la mythologie celtique* (*The Irish Mythological Cycle*) in 1903 (*Letters II* 110 n. 2). This translation was published in the *United Irishmen*, Arthur Griffith's paper, which Joyce had sent to him on the Continent whenever possible as "it is the only newspaper of any pretension in Ireland" (*Letters II* 158). Stanislaus evidently did not share Joyce's enthusiasm for the paper or the

Sinn Féin movement that its publisher spearheaded; however, James supported their economic mode of resistance to colonialism, if not their Revivalist leanings: "I believe that its policy would benefit Ireland very much. Of course so far as any intellectual interest is concerned it is hopelessly deaf" (*Letters II* 158). Joyce remained steadfast in his resistance to the Gaelic language throughout his life.

It is no surprise that Stanislaus would disapprove of the *United Irishman* completely: unlike his older brother, Stanislaus did not share the paper's socialist leanings¹⁸, nor did he approve of the mix of Revivalist and Celtologist writings that constitute the bulk of its intellectual interest. James shared only the second reservation, precisely because the *United Irishman* "carried regular features meant to inculcate in its readers an Irish patriotic history, to expose them to pre-Christian Irish myth, and to acquaint them with some principal texts of early Irish literature" (Tymoczko 232). This body of literature includes Celtologist texts like Best's "The Old Irish Bardic Tales," a text that, like many other Revivalist texts, was based on *Le cycle mythologique irlandais et la mythologie celtique*, also published serially in the *United Irishman*.

Maria Tymoczko's *The Irish Ulysses* demonstrates throughout that Joyce was unabashed in taking advantage of the wealth of Celtic material published in the *United Irishman*, but that he still viewed it as promoting an Irish identity too reductive to justify its intellectual interests. This is partly due to the control that the Celtologists of the Continent exercised over the Revivalist constructions of Irish identity, as evidenced by the influence of *Le cycle mythologique irlandais* on Revivalist literature.

¹⁸Stanislaus writes in *My Brother's Keeper* that "At Trieste he still called himself a socialist. This political attitude of his I considered inconsequent in an artist. [...] nor did I follow him in his approval of Sinn Féin" (qtd. in Tymoczko 232).

In the same conversation with Miss Ivors, Gabriel also reveals that he exiles himself once a year to the Continent on a cycling tour "partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change," which illustrates both his alienation from and even apparent hostility towards the nationalist agenda of the Gaelic League (*Dubliners* 189). When asked by Miss Ivors why he doesn't study his own language, Gabriel declares: "Well [...] if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language" (*Dubliners* 189). The languages he travels "to keep in touch with" are, specifically, German, French, and Belgian (or possibly Flemish), notably the same three countries that take top honors in the titular race of "After the Race" (*Dubliners* 189, 42). These three countries are tied up with modern industry (Germany, which only contributed a placing car in "After the Race"—the driver was Belgian) and empire (France and Belgium). In "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages," Joyce makes special mention of Belgian colonialism as a contemporary model of the form: "A conqueror cannot be amateurish, and what England did in Ireland over the centuries is no different than what the Belgians are doing today in the Congo Free State" (*Occasional* 119). Given this reference to the Congo Free State and the global state of events in colonialism at the time, it is likely that Joyce, his contemporary audience, and the erudite Miss Ivors would understand Belgian as an imperial language and therefore symbolic of empire. Gabriel, apparently, does not.

Gabriel's interest in French also evokes instances of imperial colonialism; however, mentioning France in this context also evokes Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, a figure whom Gabriel unwittingly invokes while fantasizing about escaping the party following his unpleasant interaction with Miss Ivors: "How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then

through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!" (*Dubliners* 192). Given Wellington's biography, Gabriel may be invoking the Duke in unconscious support of his desire to distance himself from Ireland. As Terence Brown writes in his notes for *Dubliners*, "Wellington was born in Dublin but refused to consider himself as Irish, famously declaring that to be born in a stable does not make one a horse" (Brown 311). Wellington left Dublin to make his fame on the Continent by defeating the French emperor Napoleon in, of course, Belgium. Germany, Belgium, and France are all emblematic of the Continental powers of colonialism and modernity that constitute the central term for the "judgments and hierarchical distinctions between what is central [...] and what is marginal" (Cheng, *Empire* 349). By aligning himself with these languages rather than Irish, Gabriel is aligning himself with modernity and empire and solidifying his social position as the urbane professor.

Gabriel's insistence on social superiority is congenital. His late mother, Ellen Morkan, Julia and Kate's "serious and matronly sister," moved to Monkstown from the less-reputable Stoney Batter by dint of marriage (*Dubliners* 186). Her upward mobility through marriage, the grandiose names given her sons,¹⁹ her "sensib[ility] of the dignity of family life," and her resistance to Gabriel's marriage to the merely "country cute" Gretta have given cause for critics since Ellmann and Kelleher to comment on the Southeastern trending of successive generations of the Morkan family (*Dubliners* 186,

¹⁹Gabriel's name is itself a hybrid of Anglican Christianity and Irish mythology: Gabriel, the Christian archangel, and Conroy, the tangential link to Conaire.

187). Ellen hopes that eventually her children or their children will live in "the social haven of the 'Kingstown Dalkey line'" (Kelleher 424). Gabriel has failed to effect such a move; however, given his insistence on observing British and Continental cultural customs, Gabriel may be read as having gone farther Southeast—all the way to the metropolitan center of mainland, modern Europe itself—leaving the provincial Ireland behind in spirit if not in body. Through the targeted importation and affectation of Continental and British culture, Gabriel contributes to the connections between Ireland and empire, colonialism, and modernity. Maria McGarrity and Claire A. Culleton call this "the performativity of Ireland's internal primitive ideologies," which reinforces the judgments of primitive and civilized inherent in the structure of British colonialism (Introduction 3). Gabriel's role as modern imperial agent is the affirming metric against which the exculsory Revivalists measure their primitivizing project.

In this way, Gabriel might best be understood as Franz Fanon's "townsman." He "dresses like the [colonizer]; he speaks the [colonizer's] language, works with him, sometimes even lives in the same district" in an effort "to turn colonial exploitation to his account" (Fanon 112). Gabriel's modern affectations recreate and impose the "dominant order, structure, and distinctions" of colonial hierarchy (Cheng, *Empire* 349). Gabriel's family has long exhibited these pretensions of imperial mimicry, valuing the culture of the colonial power over that of the precolonial population to strengthen their own social position by aligning themselves with empire.

Gabriel's own congenital acts of re-cognition are best described by his pastiche anecdote concerning his maternal grandfather. Gabriel refers to his grandfather, Patrick Morkan, as "a very pompous old gentleman" in a bit of condescending, belittling comedy

that doubles as a possibly unintentional reference to the apparent social ambitions of his family (*Dubliners* 208). Gabriel's anecdote imagines that "one fine day the old gentleman thought he'd like to drive out with the quality to a military review in the park" on Johnny, the horse that constitutes the engine for the Morkan family starch mill (*Dubliners* 207). Patrick's ambitions of social mobility are interrupted, though, when Johnny "came in sight of King Billy's statue: and, whether he fell in love with the horse King Billy sits on or whether he thought he was back again in the mill, anyhow he began to walk round the statue" (*Dubliners* 208). This anecdote highlights the pattern of circular paralysis that Gabriel's life unwittingly describes, a recursive loop in which he attends the same party every year, performs the same role as patriarch of the Morkan family, and is unable to recognize his own complicity in reproducing the colonial forces, as represented by the statue of the Protestant King William, that Joyce identifies as having caused so much damage to Ireland. The position Gabriel occupies in Dublin society only serves to strengthen what Joyce viewed as the negative presence of colonialism.

His maternal grandfather's misadventure on Johnny and his mother's ambitious marriage are only two examples of Gabriel's familial desire to align a personal identity with colonial authority in order to reap the benefits of the ideological distinctions of empire. T. J. Conroy, Gabriel's father, is an additional indicator of what Gabriel's role in Irish public life might be. T. J. worked at "the Port and Docks," an institution whose aim was, literally, to import and export cultural and material artifacts (*Dubliners* 179). Kelleher describes this position as "good indeed, for the Port and Docks Board was very much an Anglo-Irish preserve" (424). Gabriel's matriculation at the Protestant Royal University suggests the same imperial collaboration as T. J.'s position on the Port and

Docks Board since, despite being Catholic, they were both able to profit from Anglo institutions.

In a letter to Stanislaus in 1906, Joyce reveals his awareness of the Board's economic importance:

[Arthur Griffith, leader of Sinn Féin and publisher of *The United Irishman*] said in one of his articles that it cost a Danish merchant less to send butter to Christiania and then by sea to London than it costs an Irish merchant to send his from Mullingar to Dublin. A great deal of his programme perhaps is absurd but at least it tries to inaugurate some commercial life for Ireland. (*Letters II* 167)

Perhaps the Ireland of the early twentieth century was not yet ready to export goods that it could not even efficiently move across the island to a port, but, in "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages," Joyce notes that "[i]t would be interesting [...] to see the economic consequences of the appearance of a rival, bilingual, republican, self-centered, and enterprising island next to England, with its own commercial fleet and its ambassadors in every port throughout the world" (*Occasional* 125). The commercial fleet and diplomatic access to every port hold great stock for Joyce's project of liberation. Since Joyce's ultimate goal is the production of Irish capital, a shipping program robust enough to export goods is required.

Joyce believed that the first step towards reversing the flow of colonial dominance was to create a national, modernized economic framework on which the Irish could then establish a self-sustaining, self-serving, and internationally commercial industry. In the letter to Stanislaus, dated late 1906, Joyce writes that Sinn Féin's policies' "success would be to substitute Irish for English capital but no one, I suppose, denies that capitalism is a stage of progress" (*Letters II* 187). Joyce witnessed the effects of modernity on the mainland, which was enjoying relative prosperity compared to the recently famine-

stricken Ireland, and he believed that only through embracing practical solutions like Arthur Griffith's could Ireland ever truly come into its own. The reason that Joyce favored at least some of Griffith's ideas over the Revivalist program is that the Celtic Revival and the exclusionary atmosphere that it fostered were simply "educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred" (Joyce qtd. in Cheng, *Joyce* 192) without offering a practical approach towards economic solvency and, through the substitution of "Irish for English capital," national sovereignty (*Letters II* 187).

Joyce was not yet writing "The Dead" in February 1907, having been "put off" of it by the riots at the Abbey Theatre ²⁰; however, he was obviously in the process of compiling notes and material while developing these ideas. Given the amount of stock he puts in Griffith's aim "to inaugurate some commercial life for Ireland," T. J. Conroy's position on the Ports and Docks Board is no accident. Joyce positions international economics, as realized in the image of the sea, formerly the path of cultural and martial invasion, as a means by which Ireland might regain sovereignty.

Through the cues of familial ambition, personal affectations of modernity, the rejection of the premodern, ignorance of Revivalist nationalism, unconscious collaboration with empire, juxtaposition to Miss Ivors, and mythological appropriations of Celtic mythology like "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel," "The Dead" establishes Gabriel Conroy as the ideal modern Dubliner. Chapter three demonstrates how, having established a binomial dialectic between civilized and primitive, modern and premodern,

²⁰The riots were caused by the performance of a Synge play, *The Playboy of the Western World*. "The phrase that caused it was, in Joyce's misquotation, 'If all the girls in Mayo were standing before me in their shifts.' On this he commented, dryly, 'wonderful vision'" (Ellmann 239). Joyce wrote to Stanislaus on February 11, 1907 of the riots: "I feel like a man in a house who hears a row in the street and voices he knows shouting but can't get out to see what the hell is going on. It has put me off the story I was 'going to write'--to wit, *The Dead*" (*Letters II* 212).

West Briton and Revivalist, "The Dead" proceeds to deconstruct that false binomial through a modernized appropriation of two artifacts of Celtic mythology, the sovereignty goddess archetype and its subcategory the aisling's *spéirbhean*.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOVEREIGNTY GODDESS AND THE AISLING IN “THE
DEAD”

And maybe the woman you follow is no better.
But everything glittering is beautiful,
everything new is bright, everything far is fair,
everything lacking is lovely, everything customary is sour,
everything familiar is neglected,
until all knowledge be known.

Colman, "The Only Jealousy of Emer"
Trans. John Montague

Contrahit orator, variant in carmine vates.
(The orator summarizes; the poet/prophets transform in their
verses.)

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (194)

"The Dead" is a heavily allusive text, pregnant with parallels drawn from Celtic mythology that are radically altered from the original source material by being recast in a context of modernity. Referring to the Latin epigraph above as a model, I argue that Joyce's texts are suggestive not of an orator figure, one who simply summarizes or retells that which has come before, but a poet/prophet, a figure who transforms through telling or retelling, who re-presents material that has been transformed by the visionary artist. Gabriel Conroy's interactions with women throughout "The Dead" and the inclusion of the song "The Lass of Aughrim" indicate yet another parallel to Celtic mythology, that of the sovereignty goddess and, more specifically, the aisling's *spéirbhean*. As the aisling is

a particularized form of the sovereignty goddess tradition, an exploration of the history and implications of the latter is necessary to illustrate how Joyce has appropriated it and what the effect of such an appropriation has been.

According to Proinsius Mac Cana, the sovereignty goddess is an anthropomorphic conceptualization of Ireland as a woman who "symbolized not only the soil and substance of [Ireland's] territory, but also the spiritual and legal dominion which the king exercised over it, in other words his sovereignty" (92). By offering herself in sexual or matrimonial union with an aspiring leader, the sovereignty goddess is in effect authorizing that man's rule through a ritual of sacral kingship.

Maria Tymoczko calls the sovereignty goddess tradition of Ireland "one of the oldest and most pervasive patterns of Irish myth," because it informs a reading of one of Ireland's foundational texts, *The Book of Invasions*, constituting a link to a period that not only precedes British imperialism but establishes the bedrock for the myriad stratified layers of cultures and peoples that have contributed to Irish culture: "The idea of a great mother is not particularly Indo-European in character; it may be a legacy of the pre-Indo-European peoples of the British Isles, deriving from the Neolithic people and their descendants who became assimilated with, and left lasting marks on, the Celts in the British Isles" (Tymoczko 98). The sovereignty tradition is a direct link to Ireland's Celtic past, before the influence of empire and its religions, before the invading waves of Vikings, Normans, Tudors, and Cromwellians. The sovereignty tradition actually precedes any cultural space, being "primarily concerned with the prosperity of the land: its fertility, its animal life," though it can also embody a native culture (Mac Cana 92). "When it is conceived as a political unit," the sovereignty goddess is also concerned with

the land's "security against external forces" (92). Given the Celtic Revivalists' insistence on maintaining the link to a pre-colonial Celtic culture, the natural landscape of Ireland, and the "first warriors who stood against the intrusive" colonizers (Said, *Culture* 197), figures like Mangan and Yeats were eager to reproduce the Sovereignty mythological tradition. From a postcolonial perspective, the Sovereignty goddess tradition represents a way that the Revivalists might advance all of their cultural and political aims at once.

The sovereignty tradition is also one that unifies the disparate nature goddesses of Celtic mythology. As Mac Cana notes, the act of assigning sovereignty or "sacral kingship [...] is the factor that integrates [the different iterations of Celtic goddesses] into a single unity" (92). Each unique representation of feminized Ireland as realized "in all the various epiphanies of the Celtic goddess" share that ultimate ability to grant sacral kingship, to authorize a king or, as Joyce's work and letters would later suggest, a politically-minded poet (93). The legitimacy that all Irish sovereignty goddesses offer is the authorization to speak for Erin, which is a right claimed by Irish poets and authors since Amergin and an important element of Said's "poets and visionaries," who inaugurate the process of decolonization by establishing an "awareness of European and Western culture *as imperialism*" (Said, *Culture* 224).

The *aisling* is a Celtic story form that invokes the sovereignty goddess tradition in a specific way. The *aisling's* sovereignty goddess figure is the *spéirbhean*, or "sky woman," and her role is not to confer sacral kingship or protect a geographic space; rather, the *spéirbhean* inspires hope or induces action in reclaiming a lost Ireland. The *aisling* is a form of dream-vision poetry in which the *spéirbhean*, an embodiment of the territory of Ireland, appears to the narrator, who is typically asleep or in the process of

falling asleep at the poem's outset. The sleep is preceded by a state of "misery or uncertainty," an anxiety that is then calmed during the dream by the *spéirbhean's* declaration or prophecy (O'Donoghue 422). This prophecy takes the form of a promise that some redeeming figure, usually a lost monarch or warrior, will return to Ireland to set the nation free. For example, one of the most well known aislings, "*Mac an Cheannaí*," translates literally to "The Redeemer's Son," a nod to both the Christian spirituality of the Irish and the "unredeemed" political state of the nation, with the metaphorical "son" of the redeemer figuratively suggesting the literal political redemption of Ireland.

The aisling as a poetic and narrative form was originally circulated in Ireland before the medieval continental dream-vision poets. Two of the earliest known examples, *Aisling Oengus* and *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, date to the eleventh century—almost 200 years in advance of *The Romance of the Rose* and 300 years before the *Divine Comedy* (420). The dominant form of Irish poetry during these times was undoubtedly Bardic; however, by the ascension of James I in 1601, the complex tradition of Bardic poetry had disappeared and was replaced by a far less technical poetry. The aisling tradition re-surfaced shortly after 1601 to fill the artistic void left by the absent Bardic tradition and address the new historical situation of Ireland as a colonized land of lost sovereignty (422-423).

The woman symbolizing Ireland in the sovereignty goddess tradition archetype is strong, assertive, and possessed of a potent sexuality. The *spéirbhean* of the aisling, on the other hand, is a passive, beautiful young woman with little or no say in what befalls her. She is often depicted as sexualized, but it is a tragic, fallen sexuality and carries the implications of sexual violence. One scholar of the Irish poetic tradition, Bernard

O'Donoghue, describes the *aisling* as a form of "poetic wish fulfillment" and a "nostalgic expression of bitter regret for a past age of cultural strength" (422, 423). This is evident in the most famous *aisling* of the form's most famous practitioner, Aodhagán Ó Rathaille's "*Gile na Gile*." In "*Gile na Gile*," the *spéirbhean* is initially described in superlative terms, as witnessed by two translations, one by the proto-Revivalist Mangan:

The Brightest of the Bright met me on my path so lonely
The Crystal of all Crystals was her flashing dark-blue eye;
Melodious more than music was her spoken language only;
And glorious were her cheeks, of a brilliant crimson dye, (Ó Rathaille,
[*Aisling*] np)

and another by the contemporary Irish poet, Seamus Heaney:

Brightening brightness, alone on the road, she appears,
Crystalline crystal and sparkle of blue in green eyes,
Sweetness of sweetness in her unembittered young voice
and a high color dawning behind the pearl of her face. ("The Glamoured"
131)

In both instances of these translations of "*Gile na Gile*," the *spéirbhean* appears alone and physically perfect, embodying a romanticized Irish geography of the premodern, precolonial past that recalls Ireland before all of the negative events of its modern history.

In a note accompanying his translation, Seamus Heaney writes that "[p]olitically, the *aisling* kept alive the hope of a Stuart restoration which would renew the fortunes of a native Irish. Symbolically, this is expressed in the ancient form of a dream encounter in which the poet meets a beautiful woman in some lonely place" ("The Glamoured" 132).

The lonely place in which the poet meets the *spéirbhean* is indicative of an implied commitment of fidelity to the poet narrator by the *spéirbhean*. This commitment is belied by the *spéirbhean's* abandoning the narrator for, alternately "a clown" (Ó Rathaille, [Aisling] np) or a "thick-witted boor" ("The Glamoured" 131). Heaney's translation

achieves the strongest effect of helplessness both for the narrator and the *spéirbhean*:

A gang of thick louts were shouting loud insults and jeering
 And a curly-headed coven in fits of sniggers and sneers:
 Next thing I was taken and cruelly shackled in fetters
 As the breasts of the maiden were groped by a thick-witted boor. ("The
 Glamoured" 131)

Since the narrator is, ostensibly, Irish and the *spéirbhean* is part of the sovereignty goddess tradition, the implication is that she is initially offering herself in an act of sacral kingship to the dreamer; however, unlike the traditional, premodern take on the sovereignty goddess, the aisling's *spéirbhean* has no say over whom she gives herself to: rather than reward strength, her sexual favor is plunder for the strong to take as they will. The key element delineating the *spéirbhean* from other sovereignty goddess figures, then, is agency: the original sovereignty goddess archetype rewards a strong, masculine presence with authority to rule by consensually conferring sexual favor on him; the aisling's fallen *spéirbhean*, however, no longer has say over who she rewards with her sexuality. The sovereignty figure of the aisling focuses the reader's attention on an implied loss: an irretrievable past in which Ireland enjoyed cultural supremacy and could exercise its own sovereignty.

The bardic, pre-colonial Ireland Joyce conjures in his lecture "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages" is an excellent example of this golden age that the Revivalists hope to rekindle. As this chapter will show, both the Revivalists and Joyce resort to the aisling story as a vehicle to excite a national movement and solidify an Irish identity. The Revivalists' use of the aisling corresponds with Ó Rathaille's in that it equates Irish sovereignty with the lost sexuality of a young woman. Whereas in "The Dead," Joyce's modernist appropriation of both the aisling story and the sovereignty goddess tradition

refocuses Irish identity construction in the modern present, and he pointedly acknowledges this appropriation by introducing the song "The Lass of Aughrim."

"The Lass of Aughrim" is a song that describes the fate of a young, rural Irish woman who was seduced or raped by the Anglo-Irish Lord Gregory, depending on the version,²¹ impregnated, and later left to die with her newborn child in the rain while pleading for Gregory's help. Multiple versions of the song have been documented, some laying the blame for the lass's death on Gregory's mother, who—despite Gregory's fondness for the young woman—did not want a rural woman of low birth associated with the family's name. This is an attractive reading of the song's implications in "The Dead" since, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, Gabriel is himself a "reluctant patriarch" (Free 278), in unconscious collusion with imperial hegemony. Gabriel's mother's classification of Gretta Conroy as "country cute" (*Dubliners* 187) and her own ambitious marriage to advance the family name suggest that Ellen Morkan, like Lord Gregory's mother, was also canny of the negative effect that an impolitic marriage might have on the family's social standing. Regardless of the version of the song implied, the sexual politics of domination at play in the song still apply. In "Empire and Patriarchy in 'The Dead,'" Cheng expands these politics to the national level in his reading of "The Lass" through a historical consideration of the place it describes: Aughrim.

On July 12, 1690, King William's Protestants defeated the Irish papists in The Battle of the Boyne. This victory is celebrated by Protestants as the decisive victory of the war; however, the Jacobites at the time considered it a minor setback, with the true

²¹Given the charged aggression with which Gabriel's later lust for Gretta is described, it is hard to imagine that Joyce imagined a benign seduction while deciding to include this particular song in the story.

defeat of the Irish coming a year later on the fields of Aughrim (Cheng, "Empire" 358). The battle at Aughrim resulted in the fall of the Stuart line, as represented by the Catholic James II, and the loss of hope for Jacobite politics. The "native Irish aristocracy fled—and were ever afterwards known as the wild geese," the Protestant interests took hold of Ireland and instituted the genocidal Penal Laws, "and dreams of redress got transferred into poetry" (Heaney, "The Glamoured" 132). As this history demonstrates, "The Lass of Aughrim" is an *aisling* whose inclusion in "The Dead" indicates

a set of carefully designed parallels between conqueror and conquered, between imperial oppressor and colonized victim, in which Aughrim, its Lass, Gretta, and Michael Furey in the rain all merge into a composite image of the loss of the Irish soul and autonomy to the imperial masters. (Cheng, "Empire" 359)

This lack of autonomy and the resulting entrapment in objectification is the same symptom that differentiates the *spéirbhean* from the sovereignty goddess archetype, which points to the *aisling* story as key for unlocking the two final scenes of "The Dead": the attempted seduction at the Gresham Hotel and Gabriel's final epiphany.

Hints of romantic frustration run throughout Joyce's later, less well-known work and incomplete work, *Giacomo Joyce*, which operates in the same tradition of unattainability as the *aisling* story and suggests Joyce's use of myth in exploring the dynamics of desire excited by his student, the sexually inaccessible Amalia Popper. Richard Ellmann describes this notebook, and the poems it inspired, as "The melancholy of the lover who anticipates his own failure" (347). In this reading, the narrator of the *Giacomo* journal and poems is a more astute version of Gabriel; though he doesn't anticipate it, the latter fails to sexually possess Gretta at the Gresham Hotel. Much of the imagery and action of these poetic pieces mimics the conventions of sexuality in the *aisling* tradition, which, according to Bernard O'Donoghue, "is invariably a male-centered

form in which the woman, even when she is accorded a kind of discursive power, is always the object of the poem" (430). The objectified *spéirbhean's* lack of autonomy is also evident in descriptions of Amalia Popper in *Giacomo Joyce*, who is described as "[s]mall witless helpless [with] thin breath," and who, when attempting to perform a simple action of dressing, "cannot: no, she cannot. She moves backwards towards me mutely. I raise my arms to help her: her arms fall" (7). Like the *spéirbhean*, the Popper of *Giacomo Joyce* is only capable of mute appeals that lead, ultimately, to disappointment.

These same themes repeat in James Clarence Mangan's aisling poem "Dark Rosaleen," which Joyce was familiar with as evidenced by its mention in a 1902 essay he wrote about the poet (*Occasional* 57). Since the poem holds such a high place in Mangan's work, it can be assumed that it influenced Joyce who, during a 1907 lecture on the poet's life that draws heavily on the 1902 essay, praises Mangan as "the most distinguished poet of the Celtic world" (*Occasional* 130). Joyce's close familiarity with and appreciation of the poem can be safely assumed, especially in so far as its themes reappear throughout Joyce's fiction.

As Kelleher observes, one aspect of Joyce's re-appropriation of Celtic mythology is that he often presents it in such a way that the connections are somewhat obscure or that the circumstances and/or outcomes of the source material have been altered (420). The sovereignty goddess and aisling traditions undergo similar alterations during their appropriation in Joyce's work. Maria Tymoczko identifies modified strains of the sovereignty goddess running throughout *Ulysses*, focusing mostly on Molly Bloom and old Gummy Granny, and Layne Parish Craig later identifies a series of sovereignty goddess figures with aisling traits in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, including

Stephen's seabird girl and the Ballyhoura hills peasant girl, noting that Stephen understands these sovereignty goddess-inspired women "as crystalizations of the forces then shaping his identity" (70). The women in *Portrait* remain the blank media for epiphanic moments used in the aisling story, simply projections of patriarchal identity formation. Craig goes on to note that:

The female characters Stephen encounters in the fifth chapter of *A Portrait* are revealed not as provincial, harmless patriots but as figures whose hold over Stephen causes him to succumb to a symbolic power, based on Celtic mytho-history, that determines the selection of Irish leaders, effectively influencing the legitimacy of Stephen's ambitions. (72)

Craig identifies these appropriations of the sovereignty goddess tradition as a clear indication in Joyce's literary works of "the connection of sex with the calling to a particular destiny" and that "sexual success with specific female figures confirms a heroic man's claim to leadership" (80). Although I argue that Craig misreads the seabird girl as a sovereignty goddess figure when she is more appropriately classified as a *spéirbhean* from the aisling story; her description of these two encounters is a useful model to establish an approach to the sovereignty goddess as it appears in "The Dead." Echoes of this sexual/sacral authorization that can only be granted by feminine submission are also evident in Joyce's correspondence, particularly with his wife. On September 5, 1909, Joyce writes to Nora:

Guide me, my saint, my angel. Lead me forward. Everything that is noble and exalted and deep and true and moving in what I write comes, I believe, from you. O take me into your soul of souls and then I will become indeed the poet of my race. I feel this, Nora, as a I write it. My body soon will penetrate into yours, O that my soul could too! O that I could nestle in your womb like a child born of your flesh and blood, be fed by your blood, sleep in the warm secret gloom of your body. (*Letters II* 248)

Joyce's treatment of authorization here echoes that of his *küntslerroman* hero, Stephen,

whose seabird girl experience is also one of bodily submission resulting in an aesthetic epiphany. In the episode, Stephen watches a young woman standing in the surf, her legs bared, and they share a moment of mutual recognition in which both seem to yield to the other: "when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze [...] Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call" (*Portrait* 186).

Craig points out the elements of the *spéirbhean* here: "this exalted language, even as it positions Stephen as a disciple of artistic inspiration, does not provide the wading girl with a subjective consciousness or even a physical body" (70). The sovereignty goddess at the center of the seabird girl episode is mutely objectified and possibly just a construction of Stephen's imagination. This lack of autonomy suggests the aisling story's *spéirbhean* rather than a more assertive sovereignty goddess. Stephen goes on to experience the scene in language similar to what Joyce had earlier written to Nora: "He felt [...] the earth below him, the earth that had borne him, had taken him to her breast" (*Portrait* 187). The seabird girl's "sufferance of his gaze" is, to Stephen, an act of sexual submission and motherly acceptance that results in artistic affirmation. If this is, as Craig claims, part of "a paradigm of rejection and acceptance that closely echoes the sovereignty-goddess myth tradition," then its counterpart of rejection follows immediately thereafter in Chapter Five, the previously mentioned Ballyhoura hills girl.

The Ballyhoura hills girl had offered herself to Stephen's friend, the young nationalist Davin, one night while Davin was walking home from a hurling match through the countryside. The young man approached a lone cottage to ask for water, and the cottage's soul inhabitant was a young woman, who invites Davin to "*Come in and*

stay the night here. You've no call to be frightened. There's no one in it but ourselves" (*Portrait* 198, Joyce's italics). Davin sensed that she was pregnant, and, when she answered the door, her hair was down and "her breast and her shoulders were bare" (*Portrait* 197). The fecundity implied by possible pregnancy, the state of undress and loose hair, and her outright proposition of Davin are three characteristics indicative of the archetype of the sovereignty goddess tradition, the one not fettered by the modern strictures of colonialism's "curly-haired coven" of "thick-witted boors" (Heany, "The Glamoured" 331).

The fact that this sovereignty goddess has chosen the peasant Davin is troubling for Stephen, since his artistic ambitions are at odds with the Davin's revivalist nationalism. Although considerations of who the sovereign goddess chooses will come into play in my reading of "The Dead," the fact that the Ballyhoura hills girl was able to choose at all indicates her difference from Stephen's objectified *spéirbhean* on the beach. The Ballyhoura hills girl, by exercising this autonomy, has proven herself to exist as a proper sovereignty goddess figure, not an agency-less *spéirbhean*.

Stephen's encounter with the bird girl *spéirbhean* follows the loss narrative pattern of the *aisling* story. The epiphany that it inspires fails him, and the novel's subsequent sections (and his later situation in *Ulysses*) find him lost in convoluted theories of artistic aesthetics and cultural nationalism, with his only solution being exile to the continent: "Away! Away!" (*Portrait* 275). The imagery of his modes for effecting exile mirrors that of the true sovereignty goddess, the Ballyhoura hills girl: "The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships [...] are held out to say: We are alone. Come" (*Portrait* 275). They are inviting; they

choose him rather than he them. Stephen's desire for this active invitation suggests that, in order to achieve a lasting change through epiphanic moments of inspiration, he requires a sovereignty goddess figure, rather than an agency-less *spéirbhean*.

Gabriel's experience of the sovereignty goddess tradition in "The Dead" ends without achieving such a definite resolution. This ambiguous non-resolution of "The Dead" has excited nearly all commentators who engage with the the story's climax to posit a what-comes-next scenario. I propose that the ambiguity Joyce has written into the story establishes a liminal space whereby action might be effected, with the only hint being Gabriel's new consciousness of Ireland and his twin urges to "set out on his journey west" and "pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion" (*Dubliners* 223). Certain stories in the collection share a similarly unresolved ending, one where the main character has a realization about him or herself and is left in the midst of that realization, with no narrative progression past the moment of epiphany. For Gabriel, it is when he observes his image in "the cheval looking glass" (217), a sight he reflects upon shortly thereafter:

A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. (219-20)

This moment is similar to the epiphany of the young romantic in "Araby." A moment of self-realization depicts the boy looking not into a lit glass, but into a darkness reminiscent of Yeats's "proper dark": "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (*Dubliners* 35). The boy from "Araby" and Gabriel both achieve a vision of themselves that is both painfully

negative. Gabriel's story does not end there; the young romantic's does. Although this self-realization is a crucible moment for the boy, the narrative does not follow him beyond his new self-awareness, which, given the position "Araby" occupies as the last of the stories of childhood, represents a pivotal transition from childhood to adolescence. The catalyst for the boy's epiphany is the death of his idealized, romantic love for what Cheng refers to as a "Gaelic Madonna" in an apparent reversal of Gabriel's later epiphany (*Joyce* 100). During his initial, worshipful infatuation, the boy is ensconced in a sacred space: "One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house" (*Dubliners* 31). The only sound that penetrates this quiet space of old spirituality is rain. Although his other senses were beginning to fail him, he "heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. [...] I was thankful that I could see so little." The passage continues, "All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring *O love! O love!*" (31). In the later scene of the boy's epiphany, these images of pure, spiritual, transcending love are replaced by a base version. The sound of the rain falling becomes "money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins," and the repeated mantra of "*O love!*" becomes a string of pointless small talk between two boys and a girl, speaking in "English accents" (35). The "Gaelic Madonna" of his love becomes, by the story's end a promiscuous, "cheap flirt" (*Joyce* 100).

This transformation from Gaelic Madonna to promiscuous flirt recalls the sovereignty goddess's replacement by the *aisling's* *spéirbhean*. It also mimics the transformation of the *spéirbhean* itself over the course of "*Gile na Gile*," who, after the

narrator "hurtled and hurled" on a journey "Over keshes and marshes and mosses and treacherous moors" for her, transforms from the superlative "Brightening brightness" to a promiscuous woman having her "breasts [...] groped by a thick-witted boor" (Heaney, "The Glamoured" 131). Though the narrative in "Araby" does not follow the boy beyond this final epiphany, it does establish a turn where his understanding of love as a sacred, romantic ritual becomes the base sexuality of a vain creature, a transformation achieved by the *aisling* story and its sexually objectified *spéirbhean*.

Although writings such as *Giacomo Joyce* use the sovereignty goddess or the *spéirbhean* as a sexual object, the *aisling* of "The Dead" proposes an eventual challenge to sexual objectification by denying the possibility of anticipated sexual dominance at the Gresham Hotel. Vincent J. Cheng writes that Gabriel's final epiphany (which I suggest is preceded by an *aisling* experience but caused by a reassertion of the sovereignty goddess archetype) results in the loss of "his patriarchal and imperialistic urge for mastery, dominion, colonization, and hierarchy" (361). Unlike other sovereignty goddess stories, where the goddess chooses the sacral king and offers herself willingly to him, the *aisling's* traditional form is couched in terms of masculist sexual dominance of the *spéirbhean*. Joyce refutes this masculist feature of the *aisling* by complicating the relations of dominance at the Gresham Hotel.

In the final scene of the story, Gretta Conroy reveals that her "strange mood" was precipitated by the memory of a dead love, a boy named Michael Furey who, Gretta believes, died for her (*Dubliners* 220). Gretta has previously given her love to another, a young peasant who was employed in the gas works and likely had little future outside of this peasant life. The urbane instructor, collector of continental and modern affectations,

has been defeated by the shade of a long-dead peasant boy: "A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world" (*Dubliners* 220).²² Much as Stephen bitterly imagines the Ballyhoura hills girl offering herself to a peasant nationalist, a champion of the premodern Revival, Gabriel is incredulous that "a dull witted [...] serf" should still have such an effect on his wife while he was feeling such intense emotion and sexual desire for her (Craig 76).

Later, as Gretta lies sleeping in the hotel bed, Gabriel ruminates more on the experience: "So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life" (*Dubliners* 222). Gabriel's passion and rage from earlier have cooled to a quiet, melancholic rationalism. He realizes that the past he was reviving in his mind during the moment when he observed Gretta on the stairs and then during the cab ride to the hotel is nothing more than a willfully inaccurate re-imagining of the past. The star-burst moments of their life together that he had collected are simply a romanticized, incomplete vision of that life. Gabriel bowdlerizes the years of marriage, writing out of their history the "years of their dull existence together and remember[ing] only their moments of ecstasy" (*Dubliners* 214).

This re-imagining begins at the close of the Misses Morkan's party when Gabriel is excited into a "riot of emotions" at the sight of his wife, Gretta Conroy, listening to a

²²Though Kelleher doesn't cite this passage in relation to "The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel," it does seem related. Conaire is only induced to break his *geise* (Kelleher uses the [apparently Polynesian] "tabus") by intervention from the entities of the fairy world, a host fitting Gabriel's description of "impalpable and vindictive being[s]," seeking revenge for a wrong visited on them by Conaire's maternal great-grandfather (Rolleston 155-170).

rendition of "The Lass of Aughrim" (*Dubliners* 222). Gabriel is "gazing up at his wife," who is unaware of the masculine gaze directed her way, casting her "as a symbol for something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude" (210). Despite his use of the subjunctive "were," Gabriel does become a painter over the subsequent pages, applying to Gretta his own memory-driven lust. The selective memories elicited by this moment of "distant music" form a corpus of romantic primitivism, with Gabriel, like the Revivalists, trying to escape a disagreeable present by invoking a carefully idealized past, one that denies the unwanted aspects of the remembered life in favor of the flattering, romanticized ones (210). Given that the episode is precipitated by Gabriel's denial of Gretta's autonomy, the narrative presents Gretta as a *spéirbhean* in this scene.

Gabriel's objectification of Gretta leads to instances of near violence, with Gabriel struggling to keep himself under control. The language describing Gabriel's passion closely resembles that in James Clarence Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen," an *aisling* that is alluded to in "Araby" when the object of the young romantic's idealization is referred to as Mangan's sister. Gabriel's "blood went bounding along his veins" (*Dubliners* 213), just as Mangan's narrator declares "O, there was lightning in my blood" (Mangan 793). Gabriel's "riot of emotion" peaks as they arrive at the Gresham Hotel, where "his arms were trembling with desire to seize her and only the stress of his nails against the palms of his hands held the wild impulse of his body in check" (*Dubliners* 215). In the hotel room, Gabriel is "in a fever of rage and desire," desperate to possess her, and appears on the verge of assaulting Gretta: "[i]f she would only turn to him or come to him of her own

accord! To take her as she was would be brutal" (217). Gabriel does not reject the idea of forcing himself on his wife, he simply realizes that it would be brutal. This adjective hardly befits Gabriel, who is perhaps better described as "all palaver" (178). The language of attempted possession is mirrored in "Dark Rosaleen," with each stanza repeating the refrain "My Dark Rosaleen! / My own Rosaleen!" (Mangan 792) amid a constant deluge of imperatives: "Your holy delicate white hands / Shall girdle me with steel," "You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers, / My Dark Rosaleen! / My fond Rosaleen! / You'll think of me through daylight hours, / My virgin flower, my flower of flowers"—the narrator goes on interminably (794). Both men express an ownership tinged with the threat of sexual violence over their respective 'loves'.

Gabriel is on a wild flight of sexually charged fancy: "he felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure" (*Dubliners* 215). Despite the fact that Gabriel has been constructing this romantic fantasy in his head and projecting his desire onto Gretta, he is certain that Gretta has accompanied him in her own mind. In the sovereignty goddess tradition, the goddess chooses the man; however, Gabriel is not allowing Gretta that option, and—as the escalating rhetoric indicates—the scene comes dangerously close to one of sexual coercion or outright violence: Gabriel "longed to be master of her strange mood" (217). Gabriel's disregard for Gretta's agency during the ride to the hotel suggests, like the seabird girl episode and the parallels with "Dark Rosaleen," that this is an example of the *aisling* story, with Gretta cast as the *spéirbhean*.

True to the form of the *aisling* narrative, Gabriel's raised hopes lead to disappointment when he is startled from his self-constructed dream-vision. Gretta reveals

that the source of her "strange mood" was the recollection of an old lover who Gretta believes died for her (*Dubliners* 217, 218, 220). Gabriel's ardor has moved through lust, "dull anger," humiliation, and now become a "vague terror [...] as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world" (217-8, 220). He is still conceiving the scene as a sexual tyrant; however, he has been bested by this mysterious force, similar to the brutal defilers groping the maiden's breasts in "The Glamoured." Gabriel's romantic overtures have failed, and the idealized past that he constructed during the cab ride to the Gresham proves as artificial and irretrievable as the cultural past of the Revivalists. Like the typical narrator of the *aisling* tradition as exemplified by Ó Rathaille's narrator in "*Gile na Gile*," Gabriel awakes from his sexually charged dream-vision feeling "doilbhir, duairc" ("gloomy, joyless") (qtd. in O'Donoghue 426).

It isn't until the final scene in the Gresham Hotel that Gabriel is inspired by Gretta to "approach that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead," a moment that corresponds with his realization that "the time had come for him to set out on his journey westward" (*Dubliners* 223). This inspiration only strikes him after his rational side has re-asserted itself. Declan Kiberd describes the civilized/primitive dichotomy of eighteenth century anthropological discourse as Anglo equaling "cautious, analytic, even cunning" and Irish equaling "passionate, careless, emotional" (317). For the majority of the story, Gabriel has been as Anglo as possible. He stewes over the interaction with Miss Ivors for most of the party, worries endlessly about his speech, and cautiously "hesitate[s] for a moment" before offering to walk Miss Ivors home (*Dubliners* 195). During the trip to the Gresham, he loses himself somewhat, revealing that even someone possessed of the

hyper-self-awareness of a modernist consciousness has a passionate Irish side, but his demeanor following the break in the narrative between the penultimate and ultimate scenes is reflective of that break: he has completely returned to his Anglo equanimity. He "looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and open mouth," features that previously in the story aroused him but now excite little or no passion (*Dubliners* 222). He calmly reflects on the enormity of what she has just revealed to him. All sense of possession over her is gone, and he begins to imagine her outside of the time he has known her: "as he thought of what she must have been then, in the time of her first girlish beauty, a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul" (222). By acknowledging her life apart from him, outside of his closed realm, Gabriel is belying the paralytic effect of his own, hyper-self-conscious subject-formation. As reflected in the story's narrative technique, free indirect discourse, all that Gabriel has been able to understand has been what he himself perceives and intuits. Ultimately, his paralysis is that he is stuck inside of his constructed self; the epiphany of Gretta's former love pulls him out, and prepares him for his "his journey westward" (223). In order to win the favor of Gretta, the sovereignty goddess of "The Dead," Gabriel must acknowledge the western element of Irish existence as embodied by the Galway peasant Michael Furey. Gretta hints at this requirement earlier in the story, when she encourages Gabriel to go on a trip to the West of Ireland. He refuses, and Gretta leaves his side after a curt remark to another party guest: "There's a nice husband for you" (191).

The association of journeying to the west, gaining the sovereignty goddess's approval, and approaching the land of the dead evokes the dead corpus of Ireland's past culture that the Gaelic Revivalists are trying to revive. "A few light taps upon the pane"

draw Gabriel's attention, and he realizes that "[i]t had begun to snow again" (223). The snow falling suggests the Celtic *ceo sídhe*, an otherworldly mist indicating the presence of the fairy world, the land of the dead. In this case, the *ceo sídhe* has brought with it, from Gretta's subjectivity to Gabriel's own, Michael Furey in "the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree" (223). Gabriel has internalized Gretta's memory of the boy, and he now feels himself "fading out into a grey impalpable world" (223). Gabriel, the modern Dubliner whose carefully cultivated, patriarchal subjectivity has affected almost every aspect of the story till now, is surrendering to this artifact of Celtic mythology.

As his consciousness travels across Ireland, he realizes that "snow is general all over Ireland" (223). Not only is it falling on Ireland's geographical landscape ("the treeless hills, falling softly on the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves"), it is also falling on the statuary of the The Liberator Dan O'Connell, an Irish hero; the victor at Boyne and Aughrim, King William (*Dubliners* 216, 208); the "Wellington Monument," which memorializes an Irish hero who preferred to associate with the English (192); the Protestant Royal University; the Catholic Trinity College (187, 209); "the palace of the Four Courts" (213); and Oughterard, "a village near Galway, in the West of Ireland (492 n. 220.32). In short, the snow or *ceo sídhe* covers all of the geographical and cultural features of Ireland. Gabriel's dissipation into the snowy landscape of Ireland is a metaphorical enactment of his entering into the other-worldly *ceo sídhe*, the last vestige of the pre-Milesian population of Ireland, the Danaans. In this view of Ireland, the distinctions between class, race, nation, and gender are effaced by a universal connection. As Joyce writes in "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages": "What

race or languages [...] can nowadays claim to be pure? No race has less right to make such a boast than the one presently inhabiting Ireland" (*Occasional* 118). According to this logic, the modern, Anglo-Irish like Gabriel are as much Irish, as much immersed in *ceo sídhe*, as are the premodern peasants of the West, a conclusion demonstrated in Gabriel's final epiphanic dream-vision experience. This is not an appeal to a lost Irish identity like the *aisling*; rather, it is the realization of the presence of an Irish identity inclusive of both the premodern that was supposedly lost and the modern that the Revivalists deny.

The inclusive politics in "The Dead" are "free from the patriotic myth promoted by the Irish citizen of the pub for whom community is defined and legitimated by a 'we' determined by race and nation" (Lamos 92), a definition akin to what Joyce laments as the Revival's insistence on "educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred" (Joyce qtd. in Cheng, *Joyce* 192). The citizen's patriotic myth-making is a direct commentary on the exclusionary Irish identity of the Revival, but Gabriel's ultimate experience of the sovereignty goddess suggests inclusiveness instead of divisive Revivalist or West Briton politics, prefiguring Bloom's philosophy that inclusiveness (or love for Bloom) can serve as "the basis for community, for a collectivity," or "a 'we' without a 'them'," a self not defined along the lines of a binomial dialectic (Lamos 92). Although "The Dead" presents this possibility of inclusive identity formation, there are indications of Gabriel's failure to realize such an identity.

In "The Dead," the final epiphany inspired by Joyce's appropriation of the sovereignty goddess archetype first appears to be a realization of the possibility of action, a re-affirmation of agency rather than the passive resignation of the traditional *aisling*.

Gabriel thinks, "better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age" (223). However, he immediately betrays his inability to capitalize on this agency when he perceives "[h]is own identity [...] fading out into a grey impalpable world," and later when "his soul swooned faintly as he heard the snow falling" (*Dubliners* 223). The epiphany offers the possibility for action on Gabriel's part, but he instead assumes a role of passivity, suggesting two implications: either he is surrendering his own carefully cultivated subject-formation to an external force, the sovereignty goddess; or he is, through his own passivity, acknowledging that the realization of a true Hibernian hybridity is not yet possible.

The latter reading is supported by the text's ambiguity; how can a sleeping sovereignty goddess award sacral kingship when the very act literally depends on her agency to perform it? Since the sexual ritual is neither literally nor figuratively consummated, the final epiphany of "The Dead" only manages to inaugurate the possibility that the earliest symbol of premodern Celtic mythology, the sovereignty goddess, might still be an informing element of Irish identity in Gabriel Conroy's decidedly modern life.

The story ends with Gabriel realizing the existence of a liminal space combining the civilized and the primitive, the ineluctably physical Ireland of the modern present and the other-worldly romance of the Revivalist's spirit world. This liminal space might end the paralysis of binomial dialectics in Ireland by disputing the insistence on purity of identity—be it the Revival's Gaelic Irishness of premodernity or Gabriel's British/Continental modernity. Read in this way, the story's famously ambiguous ending is one presenting a hopeful possibility of an inclusive form of Irish identity that Gabriel

Conroy and his Irish contemporaries—agents of modernity and Revivalists both—seem unable to accept yet. Still, by introducing a proper sovereignty goddess into a modern setting, Joyce has indicated that the loss narrative of the aisling story is no longer necessary. The modern and the premodern Irelands need no longer be at odds; "The Dead" creates an awareness that the two worlds may be reunited in a Hibernian hybridity that "renew[s] in a modern form the glories of a past civilization" (*Occasional* 111).

CONCLUSION

One thing alone seems clear to me. It is high time Ireland finished once and for all with failures. If it is truly capable of resurgence, then let it do so or else let it cover its head and decently descend into the grave forever. [...] though the Irish are eloquent, a revolution is not made from human breath, and Ireland has already had enough of compromises, misunderstandings, and misapprehensions. If it wants to finally put on the show for which we have waited so long, this time, let it be complete, full and definitive. [...] I, for one, am certain not to see the curtain rise, as I shall have already taken the last tram home.

“Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages” (126)

My beloved subjects, a new era is about to dawn. I, Bloom, tell you verily it is even now at hand. Yea, on the word of Bloom, he shall ere long enter into the golden city which is to be the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future.

Ulysses (194)

The advent of colonization in Ireland induced a crisis of identity that, since at least the seventeenth century, has resulted in a body of literary and cultural discourse engaged in a search for a model of Irish identity. This search often involves referencing precolonial culture to establish a framework for what it means to be truly, natively Irish. As a result, much of the movement associated with establishing an Irish identity in a colonial era privileges an irretrievably lost and artificially constructed premodern culture instead of understanding Irishness as an identity realizable in a modern present. Revivalist literature and ethnography establishes a counter-colonial awareness of non-Anglo Irishness; however, it also continually posits Irishness as something neither present

nor viable in the context of modernity. The Revivalist Irish identity is a primitive figure of Celticism, reinforcing the simian caricatures that Joyce laments in an uncollected letter as the only representation of Irish culture that the British and Continental media know, "the incapable and unbalanced cretins we read about in the leading articles in the *Standard* and the *Morning Post*" (qtd. in Barry xi).

Although he remains critical of a purely Celtic Irishness, Joyce doesn't simply suggest a purely modern identity as a solution. Instead, Irishness in Joyce's texts is an identity that refuses to privilege either term in the Revivalists' binomial of primitive and civilized. In Joyce's estimation, the identities of strictly Continental Irish like Gabriel, which are established by shunning the Irish West in favor of the culture of imported Continental modernity, are just as paralytic as the premodern Gaelic Irishness of the Celtic Revival, which is itself "an immense woven fabric in which very different elements are mixed" (*Occasional* 118). The Revivalist personae is insufficient because it "consign[s] the Celtic people to a realm of magic naturalism that is at the farthest remove from cultural and political power," denying them a voice in the international hierarchy and economy of modernity (Castle 49). On the other hand, the purely modern identity is insufficient because, according to Joyce, it would abandon an ancient civilization that "was a true centre of intellectualism and sanctity, that spread its culture and stimulating energy throughout the continent" (*Occasional* 108). Any solution to the 'Irish problem' must, for Joyce, somehow navigate an identity comprising these two poles in order to establish a Hibernian hybridity.

This thesis argues that, in "The Dead," Joyce does not achieve this identity formation in the person of Gabriel Conroy; rather, the text inaugurates a new cultural

space of possibles where that identity can be realized for the reader. Through Joyce's re-appropriation of literary artifacts of Irish mythology, the sovereignty goddess archetype and its subcategory, the *aisling*, "The Dead" creates an awareness of a possibly redemptive space that offers an end to the paralytic binomial of Irish identity formation. "The Dead" is not the celebration of an arrival at Irish identity but the realization of a point of departure from the restrictive modes of identity formation available to the modern Irish.

The ambiguity of Gabriel's final epiphany has been a staple of Joycean scholarship since at least Hugh Kenner's 1962 book *Dublin's Joyce*. This thesis does not seek to resolve that question of ambiguity; however, by documenting the intersection of Continental modernity and Gaelic primitivism in "The Dead," I demonstrate Joyce's belief that the paralytic cycle of Irish loss narratives, and the colonial dialectic that they help to create and perpetuate, could be potentially broken by bringing these two forms of inauthentic and exclusionary identity into conversation with each other. In "The Dead," Joyce has forged what Gregory Castle refers to as an "empowering anthropological fiction [...] capable, for good or ill, of inventing Irish souls" (183). Joyce would have been pleased by this assessment. In a letter to Grant Richards, Joyce writes, "I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country" (*Letters I* 62-3). Joyce's first step towards spiritual liberation takes place in "The Dead," where, with Gabriel Conroy's final epiphany, the text depicts Dubliners, a modernized group who were therefore largely denied the Revival's exclusive Irish identity, possibly joining the *ceo sídhe* and becoming the latest facet of the multivalent Celtic race. Yeats and the

Revivalists hoped to establish a continuity from the Celtic past to the Irish present by appealing to ancient culture; in the final epiphany of "The Dead," Joyce indicates the possibility that modern identity may be directly connected to that culture, removing the need for such an appeal but also suggesting the difficulties in realizing such an identity. In inaugurating this idea, "The Dead" prefigures Stephen's struggles with national identity and, much later, the introduction of two new sovereignty goddesses, the voluptuous Molly Bloom of *Ulysses* and the omnipresent Anna Livia Plurabelle of *Finnegans Wake*.

As the two above epigraphs suggest, Joyce himself was unsure if the outcome of unification, of a national identity based on an inclusion of all of Ireland rather than an exclusion of that deemed modern and non-Irish, would ever be possible. Instead, his texts effect a change in the Irish cultural space of possibles so that such a conversation can begin, a conversation that can now be traced through the work of later Irish authors like Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, and Seamus Deane.

Heaney's dream-vision poem "Station Island" presents Joyce himself as an Irish sovereignty figure who demonstrates a path towards creating a uniquely Irish literary identity. In the poem, the Joyce apparition appears to offer himself as a guide to Heaney's narrator: "Like a convalescent, I took the hand / stretched down from the jetty" (Heaney 92). However, there is a sense of ambiguity in Joyce's intention and ability to offer that guidance. The narrator takes Joyce's hand, "but whether to guide / or be guided I could not be certain // for the tall man in step at my side / seemed blind, though he walked straight as a rush / upon his ash plant, his eyes fixed straight ahead" (Heaney, *Station Island* 92). This ambiguity is reminiscent of the ambiguity of Gabriel's final epiphany, which refuses to clarify whether or not Gabriel eventually realizes his journey to the

West, instead simply presenting the reader with the possibility of such a journey. Unlike Joyce's short story, Heaney's poem immediately dispels any ambiguity by the description of Joyce's movement as straight ahead, purposeful, a man whose blindness may prevent him from seeing the ultimate destination but who is confident in his direction as assisted by his ash plant, a staple item in the mythology of the wandering Celtic Bard and a symbol of the artifacts of Celtic Revival with which Joyce's texts navigate modern Ireland.

The narrator then has his own epiphany, which manifests as Joyce existing in postmodern Ireland: "I knew him in the flesh / out there on the tarmac among the cars [...] suddenly he hit a litter basket / with his stick" (Heaney 92). Heaney's poem makes the reader bluntly aware of the continuity of Irish identity that "The Dead" merely alludes to when it depicts the modernist Joyce bringing the ash plant of the premodern Celtic Bard into literal contact with the poem's postmodern Ireland. This contact elicits a command from the Joycean sovereignty figure to "[t]ake off from here" and "let others wear the sackcloth and the ashes" (Heaney, *Station Island* 93). Joyce authorizes the narrator's escape from the sackcloth dress of Revivalist primitivism, an effect of British colonialism, and the ceremonial ashes of Catholicism, a different form of colonization that this thesis does not address. The location for this escape is the connection, which Joyce implies in texts like "The Dead," between the premodern, the modern, and, as the idea is implemented by future generations of Irish authors like Heaney, the postmodern.

In *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus laments to the British ethnographer Haines, "I am a servant of two masters [...] an English and an Italian. [...] And third there is who wants me for odd jobs" (20). As demonstrated in Joyce's correspondence and lectures, Stephen's

three masters represent the forces Joyce believed were then keeping the Irish gratefully oppressed: the British empire, the Catholic church, and the primitivism of Revivalist nationalism. The implication of Heaney's poem is that Joyce freed the Irish artist to pursue an identity beyond these nets; this freedom produces in the narrator a feeling "as if I had stepped into free space / alone with nothing that I had not known / already" (Heaney 93). This mirrors Paul Muldoon's "ideas of liminality and narthecality that are central [...] to the Irish experience" (Muldoon 5). The space is a transitional link in the space of cultural possibles, one that is undefined but that the Irish author is authorized to define (or birth, as Muldoon's "narthecality" implies) with that which he already knows: the premodern, modern, and postmodern elements of Irish experience and identity.

This idea of Joyce's effect on Irish identity construction surfaces again in Seamus Deane's 1995 addition to the Clarendon Lectures in English Literature, published later as *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Deane wonders if Joyce's use of ambiguity in search of a racial conscious is "the language of emancipation, or merely its phantom? Is it the language of the emancipated or is that merely its pretension?" (*Strange Country* 97). Deane's questions specifically address the closing soliloquies of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses* and Anna Livia Plurabelle in *Finnegans Wake*, but they apply equally well to Gabriel's earlier epiphany in "The Dead." Gabriel's "flickering existence," the "grey impalpable world," and the "faintly falling" snow are all elements of the phantom quality endemic in Joyce's canon, and the language describing them ephemeralizes not only the identities of Gabriel and the people across Ireland, but also the physical landscape of the island itself (*Dubliners* 223). As Deane writes, the act of "establishing a newly constituted version of national character [...] is consistently

mediated through a recourse to the phantasmal" because, as I claim, the new identity is not yet realizable in Joyce's modernity due to the nature of binomial identity construction at play in Revivalist discourse (*Strange Country* 97).

This is not the case when, nearly eighty years later, Heaney's "Station Island" replaces this phantasmal ambiguity with a series of very tangible, unambiguous, postmodern objects of a tourist site: asphalt streets, cars, and a litter basket. This postmodern world is placed in contact with the premodern and modern Ireland by an ash plant-wielding, modernist Joyce in an act that authorizes Heaney, as an Irish author, to take ownership of the artifacts of modernity and postmodernity, including what is perhaps the most invisible yet most prevalent element of Irish modernity, the English language.

In a more assertive evocation of Gabriel's response to the nationalist Miss Ivors when prompted to identify his language as Irish, Heaney's Joyce declares "Who cares [...] any more? The English language / belongs to us. You are raking at dead fires, // a waste of time for somebody your age. / That subject people stuff is a cod's game, / infantile, like your peasant pilgrimage" (Heaney 93). Not only does this Joyce as sovereignty goddess usher the Irish poet into a new personal age, he also speaks directly to Irish culture, whose age Joyce often cited in describing its admirable qualities. Furthermore, the poem suggests that the legacy of Joyce's work has established a space for authors like Heaney, Muldoon, and Deane to execute Amergin's original, premodern mandate without making the "peasant pilgrimage" to the West that Gabriel considers during his final epiphany. To paraphrase "The Dead," Irishness is general all over Ireland, and can be accessed without regards to geography. (Joyce himself even did so from his exile on the Continent.) The fictional Joyce goes on to tell Heaney's narrator that "You've listened long enough. Now

strike your note," and "it's time to swim // out on your own and fill the element / with signatures on your own frequency" (Heaney 93, 93-4). Heaney and the modern and postmodern authors who write in Joyce's wake now recognize that they not only speak for Erin in a postmodern world, but that the Erin for which they speak can only be realized by recognizing and accepting as Irish all the myriad cultures and events that have contributed to the nation's present state rather than insisting on one imagined community of pure Irishness. Although Joyce's work in texts like "The Dead" was originally the mere phantom of emancipation, it has become, in the hands of subsequent Irish authors, language that inaugurates a space where emancipation is eventually achieved.

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