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Molly Keane's other Ireland

Capone, Gerry Joe, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1995

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A

MOLLY KEANE'S OTHER IRELAND

by

GERRY J. CAPONE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1995

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Jane Marcus — Chair of Examining Committee

23 September 1994 — Date

Executive Officer

Catherine McKenna

Jacqueline Di Silva

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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Foreword

In 1981, Molly Keane broke her twenty year writer's silence, and at 77 published **Good Behavior**, a novel which not only succeeded with the reading public but, some 55 years after the publication of her first novel **Young Entry**, finally received the recognition of literary critics. This was an opening that the feminist Virago Press welcomed, and over the next few years, it re-published all of Keane's novels, two of which, **The Rising Tide** and **Conversation Piece**, had been best sellers in the 1930s. Apart from Keane's "idiosyncratic use of the unreliable narrator" in **Good Behavior** and its "bright, tough, merciless style," what drew the attention of Virago editor, Polly Devlin, and Keane's new critics, to her earlier, more vibrant work was its "absorbing, elegantly written" and "stunning" descriptions of place, its outstanding, if crisscrossed, women characters, and its "darker raw meanings." To new readers Keane was a "bewitching writer," "upright and spirited." Her Tolstoyan studies of the hunt in **Mad Puppetstown** (1935) and **Taking Chances** (1929) were, for example, thought to be remarkably vivid, as were the character studies of willful women in **The Rising Tide** (1937), and the shadowy undercurrents in **Full House** (1935) and **Devoted Ladies** (1934). So whether Keane's "masterpiece" was an "abrupt phenomenon" or not, she had achieved a re-

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visioning of her novels and, finally, the beginnings of a well-deserved, serious critical evaluation. That the critical attention was limited to a minority sector of the literary and academic establishments was far less important than that the process of inclusion (reviews in academic journals and now a few essays) had begun.

Molly Keane grew up in a typical Anglo-Irish house, large and isolated, where horses and hunting were the only expression of life in an otherwise cold and coded world. She wrote (her self-mythology maintains) dispassionately, horses being her first love, to expand her allowance. She wrote all eleven of her early novels under the pseudonym M.J. Farrell (the name of a pub she often passed), to protect herself from her "sporting friends," and from those others inside the Castle, to whom she was the "disloyal Anglo." A great success in the London theatre of the early forties (her **Spring Meeting** was directed by John Gielgud), she nonetheless felt uneasy about its artificiality, and left it, upon her husband's death, for her and his beloved Ireland. Although she remains an active writer today (**Queen Lear**, her latest novel, was published in 1988), she still makes no claim to any literary appreciation and refuses to call herself a writer: " I don't understand anything about my writing," she told Polly Devlin, who in turn wrote in her **Two Days in Aragon** Preface: "She did not mean to be a writer, never mind a social historian, and claims not to have set out to do anything other than to escape the bonds

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of typical Anglo-Irish gentry life..." in which children and servants were ignored.

Despite her ingenuous claims that she was neither an artist nor a social critic, this dissertation will claim her for both fields. The focus of my dissertation will be upon Keane's Irish answer to modes of control exercised by the Anglo-Irish Big House. How do interpersonal relationships that exist between the characters, terrain, nature, and culture of Keane's world, oppose the imperial frame of dominance and submission? I will ask. Isn't Anglo-Ireland, with its Pale, its laws, its racial status, its hierarchical patterns, and its reliable dichotomies, what Ireland is not? How does Irishness reveal and measure Anglo-Ireland, or observe the intersection between oppression and solidarity? And how is it subversive on behalf of Keane's imprisoned characters? My goals in writing from this perspective will be, first, to discover the presence, subjectivity, and agency of Irish identity in Keane's novels, second, to encourage discussion of, and recuperate the reputation of, Keane's work, and third, to join in that growing community of feminist cultural critics who, in regard to Ireland, have begun to map out the clear distinctions between Irish reality and Anglo-Irish hegemony, both historical and literary.

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Molly Keane's novels at first appear to depict Big House Anglo-Ireland in its golden twilight, with its handsome family mansions, dashing riders, panoramic hunts, and rolling good times. Her hospitable Edwardian households seem well-behaved and civilized, as attached to their properties and portraits, to their routines and regulations, and to their sporting and soldiering, as they are to their English traditions. But Keane's self-generated world seems to be on the wane. She is not really nostalgic. Writing from her position inside the Ascendancy, she says what she can about it, and some of what she wants to say about it. For her work contains undercurrents which can be as critical as they are dark. An odd, seemingly senseless, modernist style ruffles the surfaces of this traditional realist writer, expressing a counter content and meaning to the "country" which shapes, situates, and colors her work. Aware that few aspects of her life are free of Anglo-Ireland's power, and that the world that judges her is the one that, for good or for evil, is of her, Keane must set it down as she experiences it. Anglo-Ireland is her writer's place; wanted yet unwanted, inseparable yet separate, safe but repressive, lovable yet imprisoning.

Keane's Big-House Anglo-Ireland is a maze. Restraining, segregating, and undisclosing, it bypasses culture and community. The perspective it offers is not enough, for body or mind, its corridors busy and leading nowhere. Its "ruthless benignancy" and "choking atmosphere"

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are what Keane's characters often endure. Their sacrificed lives inside these singular edifices, their attempted "breakouts" or "breakaways", and also their attachment to its symmetrical achievements are Keane's central concerns. She senses that Anglo-Ireland's rubric of "good behavior" at once separates its planted houses from Ireland, while offering seductive rewards to its own cohort. She understands the inescapability of Castle cocoon. And she knows that "Proper Authority" is consolidated, despite Anglo-Ireland's falling status in the period in which her novels are set. Her inmates, thus, have no great clue about their own needs and desires. When they can't go forward, they go backward. They sense the rare air of outside, but breathe the rarified air of inside. Keane can push them, but only so far, for she writes less from escape than from experience.

To foster movement, however, Keane relies on two pivotal sources: her own woman's identity and Irish identity. Both perspectives deserve attention, but this work will accentuate the latter. However, perhaps more to the point is the natural alliance that exists between them. From under the British Crown, both lay claims to public and private space, and to some form of history and culture. In the natural course of things, their identities merge into a critical stance. They value what their superiors devalue; flexibility, vitality, and humor become bits of dissent. Keane's roguish daughters, for instance, join with their

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Irish servant chums in "animosity toward authority," forever questioning what is institutionally forbidden. More people and place oriented, they share in a mutual enlightenment about their own immediate environment. Whether the key to this is their commonality or their hidden humanity, their alliance is as persistent as their identities. And whether through chance and change, motion and motive, or vibes and vanities, most of Keane's prisoners inch away from their mirror-eyed nation.

Keane's adherence to Irish forms, implicit and explicit, to counter the life sentences imposed under Anglo rule, arise in all possible ways throughout her work, but we can gather and summarize them here under natural, cultural, societal, and personal headings. Descriptions of Ireland itself, its island terrain of sea and mountain scape, of grass, bog and woodlands, are integral to every Keane novel. Her animate world, colonially suppressed along with the whole Gaelic system in the seventeenth century, is the pulse (what the bodran is to Irish music) of the world she creates. Rarely does she present anything natural but in its relational form, unowned and unprized. Nature itself is the most direct manifestation of Ireland inside Anglo-Ireland, and Keane uses it as a foil to restraint. Her renowned hunt scenes depend upon it, as do the rhythmic expressions of her heroines, as does her own fertile imagination. In its largeness, she uses it as a foil to Anglo-Irish restraint. And her ever changing topography and

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sundry weathers are as existent as the selves it helps to create. Keane's unabashed embrace of nature is emphatically Irish and emphatically liberating.

Her use of outsider characters, whether they be artists, actors, foreigners, cosmopolitans, or lesbians who make a cultural impact on her static world, is also unambiguously Irish. Each one of them is either Irish, foreign or, if English, of Irish sympathy. Once inside the pearly gates of an Anglo-Irish estate, they wrack the havoc of the Irish. Their danger lies in their high visibility, in their worldly knowledge, incaution, and strong perceptions. In their speech, dress, and manner, they encourage insubordination, good behavior having no relevance to their lives. Whether sympathetic or viciously unkind, fading violets or amazons, bad lovers or good lovers, they leave tracks, make cracks, and generally put their Big House milieu on alert. Free from ties--especially to families--and mores, they defy long traditions, evoke fears and tears, and court big moments. Often odd and offbeat, often wily or wild, and always real enough, they appear, to their Big House hosts, to be irrational invaders. Like the Celtic goddesses, they represent a kind of refusal, their victories being less certain, however, than Anglo-Ireland's intransigence.

The literal presence of the Irish in Keane's Anglo-Irish novels, seen in an unseeing world, and surprisingly whole in a fragmenting world, is an irreplaceable fact and

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equation in all her major novels. **Mad Puppetstown** and **Taking Chances** arguably her two best novels, breathe an Irish air, and rock in Irish intents. Servants break their stereotype, are complicatedly human, and boast big roles in the former; while cabin-dwelling Catholics take the number of their Big House neighbors in the latter. In these, as well as in other Keane novels, risings inside the Pale reflect risings outside it. In **Two Days in Aragon**, written in tribute to her dead husband's Republicanism, Keane's Irish become a political imperative. Significant here is the actual torching of a Big House (her prior ones had been spared) by sympathetic, and even undaunted, Republican troops. Potent Irish presences: suicide and suicidal domestics, starved servants, violated chambermaids, audacious and persistent poachers, haunting ghosts, Sinn Feiners of loud and quiet stripe, and a gay monk populate Keane's work. Alliances between servants and Anglo-Irish daughters, nannies, and old aunts abound. Moreover, such Irish images as that of the gypsy, heathen, ferret, and donkey cart, which dot her novels, meet at Irish crossroads. If this conjunction is hidden, it nevertheless represents the only true society in Keane's spacious estates.

Keane's principal body images are as un-English as her nature images. Her free woman's body is neither treasure, nor scene, nor fidelity or infidelity; it is rather interactive, and uninhibited. Whether she approves of her sense of the body as expressly casual, or expressly in

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motion, is arguable, but it no doubt speaks the language of the rebel, aligning itself more with nature (yielding to horses and woodlands, for example), than with men. Inside Big House strictures, its ease is a momentary reprieve from self-consciousness, and self-obsession. The freedom of her women in and from clothes risks and sometimes achieves visibility in a setting which scarcely invites revelation. Women on horseback, their bodies as grips, riding the current, are liberated beings, in touch with body and mind as entities . Her emphasis on bones, on bones that move, on knees, elbows, and hips suggests a similar self-assurance and engagedness. Riding time, dancing time, river time is Irish music time, ceaseless, stopless. And those of Keane's characters who express themselves largely through their bodies have an affinity for servants, gypsies, and the Irish people which is approvingly returned. (Her uptight characters invariably align themselves with British respectability.) Perhaps Keane's embodied figures are like Morgane, the Celtic goddess, who, stomping the seashore, surfing on hooves, enjoined strength and life.

3

My interest in Keane's work first began when I read **Mad Puppetstown**. The color and activity, the contact with common life, the riding scenes, the Republican sympathy, and the resonance between the Chevington children, and their bright Irish servants, so moved me that I set out to read all of Keane's work. This included the ten novels of the

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1928-50 period and the three published in the 1980s; her three 1940s plays; a scant number of interviews; the Prefaces to the Virago editions of the novels; and the rare critical piece. My readings of other Irish women novelists, Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien, Julia O'Faolain, and particularly Jennifer Johnston and Kathleen Thurston, helped me in my assessment of Keane's work, especially in terms of the Big House as nation and its effects on women. I have also been studying Irish history and culture to provide a wider context for my interest in feminist cultural studies.

My project is influenced by and written in response to the writings of a number of literary critics who share my theoretical position. David Cairns' and Shaun Richards' **Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture** (1988), use cultural criticism as a vantage point to measure the partial, distorted, and flawed view of the Irish in English and Anglo-Irish literature. Taking a more architectural approach, University of Caen writers Josette Leray, Guy Fehlmann, and Jacques Emprin in colleague Jacqueline Genet's **The Big House in Ireland: Representation and Reality** (1991) support this view. A similar position is taken by Patrick Rafroidi and Raymonde Popot in **The Irish Novel in Our Time** (1975) but they link the above perspective to feminism and can thus open their discussion to Irish literature itself. Pertinent essays in Karen R. Lawrence's **Decolonizing Tradition: New Views on Twentieth Century "British" Literary Canons**, explore the concept of and the

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consciousness of, the emerging Irish woman writer. Ann Owen Weekes in **Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition** has perceptively placed Anglo-Irish women novelists in the Gaelic tradition in literature. They belong there because their affiliations and meanings are quite simply more Irish than English. Essays in **Ireland's Field Day**, by Declan Kibert and Seamus Dean, distinguishing Anglo-Irish and Irish literary presentation, have also been helpful. Among other cultural critics whose views on Ireland and/or Irish women I find compatible for my own interpretive strategies are Louise deSalvo (**Territories of the Voice**), and James Turner (**The Politics of Landscape.**)

Molly Keane has received little critical attention, and even less from a cultural/political point of view. However, Bridget O'Toole's essay in **Across a Roaring Hill**, and Vera Kreilkamp's in **The Massachusetts Review**, on the relationship between Keane's Big Houses and those of other Irish women novelists past and present, are suggestive. For the rest, I am essentially relying on my own process, one which allows me to see, for example, the patriarchal frame of Keane's Big House, the political/sexual understructure behind her allusions to escape and imprisonment, the snobbery and racism inherent in her England's domination of Ireland, and the role of "behavior," a large concept in Keane, and mothers, in upholding this power. I am not only at one with the critics mentioned above, but I am indebted to the Anglo-Irish novelist Jennifer Johnson--Ann Weekes places her in

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the Gaelic tradition-- whose work parallels Keane's; to Rosamond Jacob whose unknown gem **The Troubled House** is subversive on behalf of Irish women; and to Brendan Behan who in his personal works and papers made barbed comments on the invisibility of the Irish in Anglo-Irish literature.

I must say here that Keane's knowledge of the Big House doesn't emerge simply from her own life experiences. It naturally belongs to a continuous Irish literary tradition which begins in 1800 with Maria Edgeworth's **Castle Rackrent**, and includes such novels as Somerville and Ross's **The Big House of Inver**, George Moore's **Drama in Muslim**, and Elizebeth Bowen's **The Last September**. This remarkable tradition, of course, critiques the colonial Big House as arrogant, dispossessing, and doomed to decay and extinction. Inevitably (if only by implication) it is anti-patriarchal in its assessment of the male ideology which informs its bleak power and marooned structures. And just as inevitably this tradition must include a native Irish methodolology if its judgements are to stand. It is no accident then that the Irish Big House literary tradition which persists to this day contains more that its share of Anglo-Irish women writers (Edgeworth, Somerville, Ross, Bowen, Jacob, Johnston, and Keane), nor that these women write in a similar vein as their Irish women counterparts. Out of their common world, these writers make uncomfortable connections about the maiming outlook of their bittersweet homes. And collectively, they have been in the fore in

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criticism of the Big House (or Britain's) twin domination of Ireland and women.

I am saying that Molly Keane fits better under this mantle than under that of the literary revival of Yeats-Lady Gregory-Synge-Russell. Her self-parody, cutting wit, class positioning, and unkindly look at social facades; her ironic perception, and her lucid relationship to the terrain can best be cross-mapped to the earlier women writers of the Big House tradition. Her cruel Queens (distorted mothers), epitomized by Lady Charlotte of **The Rising Tide**, may be referenced to the grand-scale mothers in that same tradition. And her dishonoring of patriarchalism with its entrapments, and its contempt, also align her to this body of writers.

So, one of my purposes is to join the community of exchange (the audience of equals I envision) which is establishing a relationship between Irish women writers and the criticism of Britain's colonial and neo-colonial presence in Ireland. Recognizing an Anglo-Irish writer's Irish identification is to more clearly identify her critique of Big House politics. My point is that the connection between the oppression of Ireland and women must be recognized if one is to understand and name both forms of bondage dealt out by patriarchal socialization.

What I have to add to the emerging corpus of Irish cultural writers is the seriousness and depth of a full length study, which is so committed to a distinct Irish

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reality as to adopt it as a primary critical tool in assessing a novelist's work. To my knowledge, no study of an Irish writer has made any but partial use of this perspective. The fact that I am studying an Anglo-Irish writer in Irish terms should accentuate the further perceptions that accrue in a lengthy evaluation.

I might also add here a short defense of my use of the designation "Irish." The term "Anglo-Irish" was coined by nineteenth century Catholic rebels in order to lay claim to the heretofore shared term" Irish." It was finally apparent that the vast cultural, political, and historical differences existing between the two had to be acknowledged. For the Irish and English traditions had been in conflict since the British invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century. This war on the Irish was, of course, intensified in the seventeenth century, and won when the Penal Laws were effected and the Gaelic system, for all intents and purposes, was destroyed. The British stripped the Gaels of their language, culture, history, and land. It outlawed their bards, pipers, priests, and healers. The Gaels' song-like solidarity with creation vanished with the Saxon smile. Irish identity itself was forced underground or killed off. Ireland became an occupied land in which eviction, exile, and de-population were the order of the day. The Castle, the Curragh, and Trinity College became the isolated symbols of its demise. Ireland's vision had to front the wall of order; its poetry and harp the wall of censorship; its

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spiritualness the wall of hierarchy; and its history the wall of tradition. The English in Ireland were identical to the English in India; since Cromwell, the view that White rules Black in Ireland had been no exaggeration. "Irish" then is a signification which calls into question Anglo-Ireland's non-relationship to Ireland in ways, though inexact, are useful to my study of Molly Keane.

4

A few more particulars about Molly Keane and her work deserve at least a brief comment. Her estranged relationship with her mother who, in her various aspects is transcribed into all her works, is important. A poet of sentiment, her mother reserved little sentiment for her daughter. She was cold and removed, and had little regard for young Molly's journey in life. She answered her daughter's crying needs and thirst for knowledge with that very institution of motherhood that later dominated Molly's fiction. By making discussion taboo, and by stymieing affection, she effectively cut her daughter out of her life. What Molly envisioned for them was locked up in her mother's self-imposed control, or buried in her rhymes about the Irish folk. So Molly inscribed her as the Keeper mother in her novels, the Keeper of rules, conduct, objects, economy, children--especially less valuable girl children, who were later to become the cheated, kicking, and floundering daughters of Molly's novels. Molly, herself one of these roguish offspring, tried to fill the void her mother left in

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her with another world of possibilities, one of which, in **Good Behavior**, was matricide.

Keane's more tangible kinship was to Ireland. No Catholic, Joycean inferiority complex smothered her very real sense of place. Nor did any colonizer's regret, her husband's Republicanism having deepened her feelings of connection to Ireland. Instead, Ireland was a primary tie, eliciting from her strong feelings, attachments, and thoughts. Ireland for her was life all around her, unclaimed, resistant life; it was a fertile world and as a writer she would let it sing. Her words of uplift, of protest, of laughter, of horses and hunts (the horse was once central to Gaelic culture) were Ireland. She knew Ireland inside, above, and outside the Pale. Exiled from one Ireland she may have been, but not from her bigger, greener, sometimes older and sadder Ireland, which was the one she wrote.

Today, Molly Keane at ninety-plus, is still writing. In a fairly recent novel and in a steady flow of magazine pieces, she continues to caricature English characters, describe the atmosphere of the Big House life of her youth and, in general, engage in the denial of the fittest. She somehow manages to maintain her idiosyncratic, screwy, de-centered writing style, as well as her contact with the realities of literature, while diagnosing an ailing society. She is more amazed than overwhelmed by all the attention she is getting, especially from women fans and critics who wish

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to paint her life. Asked the question "Are you a feminist?" she did not claim to be, but said she was much in support of those "tearaways," the outspoken young women, acting to free themselves from every form of bondage.

5

My dissertation's intent then is to observe the other Ireland in Keane's fiction. This Ireland may cross the Pale in history's guise as servants, Sinn Feiners or poachers but manifests itself more compellingly in Keane's own fusion of art and actuality. Her imagination is a conduit for all that lives and moves in the greater world around her. So many of her meanings, metaphors, and intuitions merge with Irish reality. Her trust in ordinary landscape, in physicality, and in passion, are noticeably outside Anglo-Ireland. Her bent for dance, jazz, impropriety, offbeat and natural humor, for fairies and ghosts, and her pleasure in the leveling of experience and connections, are together more suggestive of Gaelic than Anglo-Irish literature.

This dissertation, finally, is organized in two parts: the first three chapters examine the Big House as a psychic and social prison; the five remaining chapters observe the Irish-inspired attempts to dispel its shadows, to evade, elude, and break out of its dead set atmosphere. The maze of section one represents the power of a still unbroken English Ascendancy, its male architecture of mind and building overshadowing its inmates, discouraging simple human contact and, in general, enclosing life. The Big

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House is England, single, alone, and separate from the reality it dominates. I use the prison metaphor to express a sense of over-control, and a too ordered sense of the world. The maze is British territory and all that goes with it, from good behavior to state garrisons, from croquet to the Dublin Horse Show; from a bottle of port to "a bottle of Sexual Ecstasy." Its power, its life sentences, the surrogates it leaves in charge of its disintegrating estates, are the subject of these opening chapters. Part two presents the many-sided material response, from roguery to Republicanism, from Gaelic identification to prisoner wisdom, and from personally provided images and feelings, to mutuality. My creative purpose in these five chapters is thus to discover the slightly subversive form which, for example, stumbling rebellion, cowgirl passion, and moving earthiness take vis-a-vis the external standards of an intransigent institution.

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Chapter One: "The Maze"

> Since James I. granted lands in Ireland to a soldiering Sorrier there have been Sorriers at Sorristown. Eleven generations of the breed have ridden and fished and shot over the land granted to their ancestors. (5, **Taking Chances**)

> John looked over the room at a picture of Mad Harry Bird, his great-great grandfather. Even Lawrence, with all his urbanity, had not contrived to make Mad Harry's portrait the respectable pompous and elegant portrait of a gentleman that it should have been. Mad Harry had not jumped into the Rhine... He had confined his eccentricities to beating his wives, torturing cats, and keeping his daughters' heads shaved like billiard balls... (141, **Full House**)

> His wooden leg and alternations to its contrivances sent him oftener, and for longer times, to London, where the Dorises and Dianas, Gladuses and Enids, and the two Joyces took their glad toll.... The outings and matings were immaterial, unconfessed, accomplished within a code of manners. Papa's love affairs were run on his own terms. Divorce was something Mummie must never be asked to imagine. (73, **Good Behavior**)

> Mrs. Brock looked round the room. Foxes' masks (neatly labelled: FOUND----KILLED----THE POINT----THE DATE---) were grouped, memories of glorious moments, on the walls. Some stood out sharply on their wooden shields, small pricked ears and deathly snarls; others hung down on faked leather couples, ears back, tongues lolling and curling. All the pictures were of fox-hunting, foxhounds, or masters of foxhounds. (34, **Good Behavior**)

This chapter constructs the closed social world of Molly Keane's novels. Keane's world of characters, scenes, and events is slyly cut to Anglo-Irish standards. Her world is a maze of civilization, its social arrangements built on the patterned disparities of sex, nationality, and class.

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This chapter examines the manifestations of hierarchy as they appear in her novels. It looks at the divisions between men and women, English and Irish, and master and servant, which underlie Big House social relations. It will also emphasize the power of tradition in her world, especially in regard to its hollow family forms. Men, absent or subtly present in Keane's declining Big Houses, are observed in cracked mirrors to be the rulers, sexual agents, and bearers of violence, who control the social arrangements inside her fictional world.

The metaphor behind these discussions, however, will be the maze itself. What is a maze? An Anglo-Irish maze is, for this study, a managed enclosure for its own denizens. Its object is to restrain forward movement, to side-track and baffle through closure and unintelligibility. Its means is a private house, offering as few contacts with the outside world as it does angles of resistance. A maze is an inside place, lying protectively within Anglo-Ireland's historical Pale. It can suggest a game, a puzzle, or when it wishes to, a Hotel Paradise, safe, clean, orderly, sporting familiar diversions of fishing, tennis, and riding. Happy endings are not foreign to its scripts, and as a reliable friend, it serves to suspend the unknown. But then again a maze can suggest lostness, helplessness, and the suspension of life.

Laws, customs, land, language, and war have consolidated the maze. These are more implied than

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implicated in Keane's novels, but past criminality against servants and women is laid bare in such works as **Full House** (1935) and **Two Days in Aragon** (1941). The psychological deprivation endemic within the maze, however, is the kind of personal diminishment conclusively rendered in Keane's work. Daughters, wives, guests, old aunts and, of course staffs of Irish servants, are all subject to a limited cultural radius offering inescapable forms of corrective restraint. **Taking Chances** (1929), **The Rising Tide** (1937), and **Good Behavior** (1981), other novels bearing darker implications, will also be appraised in this regard.

"'Roguey loved Roguey best of all'"

"Lucky Roguey!" Jer thought, "lucky d-dog!" Sir Ralph (Roguey) Sorrier, the passive villain of **Taking Chances**, and the latest weak remnant in a line of Sorriers who "rode straight, shot straight, drank hard," "dallied with their tenants' daughters," and ruled Sorristown to reflect the Anglo-Irish world they served, is dead. He is a victim, like his father before him, of a riding accident, or more truly of his own obstinacy. For the old fatal horse that Roguey "purchases" from the Irish tenant whose sister he ruins is his death. And now what Roguey bequeathes--to Jer, his untoward younger brother and to Maeve, his forsaken sister--is what his father left him, a maze bearing all the same resonances of imprisoned bodies and minds. For no whirlwind blows out Sir Ralph's stifling atmosphere or his disastrous influence, and his death and memory evoke only

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envy and depression for Jer. That "slap yourself, Jer" refrain persists just as loudly in Jer's ears as the English-coupled traditions that upheld his elder brother's reign. Jer still stammers and wheezes because the so-called "last male Sorrier" endures, his portrait now added to that gallery of "simpering and frowning" ancestors which secure Sorristown's walls.

Jer does try, at least once during Roguey's rule, to seriously confront his intransigent brother. It is when he has to impart to him the news of the horrid consequences of his sexual rapacity; and doesn't wince:

> "I'm telling you, damn you. Your beastly bastard's a deformity, and your girl's dying. Is that plain enough for you? There is the end of your dirty rotten ways.... You swine." (203)

But his angry sobs are met with an Inheritor's indifference: "Suddenly [Roguey's] breeding came to his rescue. Generations of his sort had done as they pleased" (205). He tries again but the sight of strong, handsome Roguey's turning to jelly at his dire moment is pitiful to Jer, who recalls how averting his own eyes once from writhing circus snakes only intensified his horror:

> Looking behind him into all the ranks of eyes that saw what he could not look at, he was conscious of a reflected horror so great as to sicken him. It was worse than looking at the real thing.... Now, his eyes on Roguey's face, Jer knew exactly the same feeling (205).

And what are a "neurotic" brother's reproofs, as intense as a female's, to Roguey, whose inescapable Saxon ease and arrogance must finally absorb them. However, the fear that

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the news might counterfeit his image before his newly possessed wife does force from him a glimpse of evil:

> Roguey stared before him solemnly, repeating with intense feeling, almost with tears, the fact that he was a gentleman. The thought comforted him and sustained him. On the strength of it he mixed himself another drink... (241)

Roguey, in typical Sourier fashion, destroys Jerry Conroy's sister, scorns her family, and instead of producing that standard good-looking Irish bastard, "that persisted astonishingly in the county," crops a female monster. His superior Sorrier status seems to assure his immunity from Conroy's petty threats. His boast that "that swine Conroy would not bring him down," seems to be backed by the fact that the Irish squalor has always been kept from his family's threshold. The Irish to him, who from time immemorial dwelt on Sorrier land, are objects for the recreation room, the remnant of a conquered race.

But as it turns out, these unspeakable Conroys are made of a more stubborn material than Roguey bargains for. Having lost his horse nerve in several "nasty spills," and full of "horse-buck," he is vulnerable to Jerry Conroy's "gift" horses. The "sticks" and "dirty brutes," which elicite from him nothing but laughter have, in the end, come to be a tribute to the irremediable hard fact of Irish will. For it is one more "bad ride" on a blistered horse which wrights on the coiling presence of an obdurate Anglo-Irishman.

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That the snake devours itself, however, is no moment of self-revelation for Jer whose response to it is a "numb-minded" suppression of self-conscious laughter:

> Jer could muster no feeling save a dreadful feeling of surprise. A waywardness possessed his whole mind. Above and beyond all it was important not to laugh. To laugh would shock Jerry Conroy so much (266).

Nor is Roguey's just death any consolation to Roguey's scrappy Irish tenant, Jerry Conroy. He and his family, the "Irish swine" from the mountains, wrest some measure of revenge from their arrogant neighbors, but the Conroy's status at Sorristown remains "Irish;" the end of one "proud foolish man" unable to change that. Roguey's life-abridging edicts persist at Sorristown because his bloodlines outstrip his death.

Maeve, Jer's sister, can make even less distinction than he between life before Roguey's death and after. Having "made Roguey a king" and an "unshaken idol," and possessing an "unfathomable singleness of spirit," she can't cross him out of her life. For her, Sir Ralph's hubris is inseparable from Sorristown's rightness. If Mary, her bridesmaid guest from London, and the unexpected future wife of both Roguey and her fiance, Roley Fountain, twists and turns this loyalty, in the most provocative way possible, Maeve must still remain faithful to Roguey's compelling mastery and order. For Mary's gateway to freedom, is not only abhorrent to her "sweet, fair, and happy" nature, but impossible. She can't even bring herself to believe that a

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woman as stunningly alive and attractive as Mary is a match for her love-sick, bounder of a brother. Mary, to her, is not "a fit mate for any man so nearly peerless as Roguey"(104). But "if Roguey desired her it was right and fitting that he should have what he wanted" (104). She lobbies on his behalf long before her discovery of Rowley's passionate interest in Mary. Maeve, in short, can only win now if Roguey wins, but underneath she can entertain small confidence in any such victory. With Mary Fuller as the prize, Maeve can only grow more brittle. Both men, Roguey of Sorristown, and Rowley of Castle Fountain, may get Mary, and what will she get? An alley-cat fight with Mary.

Mary is the enemy. She is just as blameful to her as Roguey is blameless. Even Rowley goes scot free for falling for Mary: he is missing in her tight-focused inquisitorial picture of Mary burning for **her** sin: "But she did not for a moment see Rowley tied by Mary's side to expiate his share of their sin" (236). Maeve is so "mazed out," and so taken in by her brother's stature and her lover's ploys that she can't see that her bout with Mary is a set-up in which, in the last round, she is bound to lose brother, lover, and self.

Maeve, groping about in Roguey's tiresome maze, has found herself in a world of a million tomorrows, called Sorristown. It is her identification with this proper house which keeps her from love's golden gates. She is as ignorant of Roley's intentions as he is of his own. Her

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loyalty has meant worldlessness, her faith imprisonment. She thus succumbs to a life that is less dispellable than Jer's. Her worship for authority and her contempt for Mary's freedom have left her restless, viewless, and less whole. Roguey's death marks no change: as an object of Jer's lip twitching longings-- "It was indecent he knew, but he could not stop thinking of the times in store for Maeve and himself together in Sorristown" (269)-- and strummings about "two together" days, her status sinks further. Jer cannot shed his inheritance-- "He was very like many of the dark-faced, duck-bodied Sorrier ancestors whose portraits made the dining room such a gloomy place" (18).-- and she will have to bolster his febrile reign just as she did Roguey's. Without Roland, without Mary Fuller, without any allies, she has become as separate and repetitious as Sorristown itself.

If Maeve's life confirms the Big House as a prison, Mary's criticizes it. Her fearless assessment of Roguey strikes as much at his male peers and forbears as at him. Roguey and Rowley, for instance present, as characters, a striking contrast; yet to Mary Fuller, their mutual lover, they are as confusingly similar as their names. Roguey and Rowley are to her like twin guard towers; one controls the maze's interior regions, the other, from his neighboring estate, patrols its boundaries.

But, of the two, Mary's nastier, unguiltier attacks are, of course, reserved for Roguey, "a barbaric figure in

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flaming pajamas," bumblingly aggressive, and spacious. He is a bloody bore inclined to "verbal diarrhea" and to "petulance." Even the gilded portraits redden over his dogged advances: "As he leaned towards her, all his dark-faced Sorrier forbears on the wall seemed to frown in awful unison" (41). To Mary, his approach means sheer isolation:

> Oceans of green carpet, islanded and rocked with much furniture, was between them, but she knew at once the certainty of Roguey's approach to her, to her only, and knew too that the same dim mood of loneliness which at dinner had nearly made her cry was again upon her. (43)

Entwined as she is in his fate, she understands that he "lacks something wholly," and that his life belongs to Sorristown's museum of "dim portraits." To her, the outsider, he stands for an "undefeatably repellent" house, the prison she had long suspected:

> Once, a lifetime ago , a mad girl had thought of curious inanimate things like Sorristown, and the feelings of people who just weren't--like Roguey and Jer, and Maeve even (227).

But unlike Maeve, she doesn't "care two hells" for annoying Roguey. She can confront his physical threat unflinchingly: "Don't touch me.... If you do, I'll--I'll kill you with my two hands" (243). For nothing at Sorristown is real to Mary and she can eschew the same social conditioning which makes it a maze-like walk through for Maeve.

But Roguey, more obtuse than ignorant, sees Mary as an object that he'd love to fully own:

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> But argument was far, far from Roguey's mind. To get the car and take her away and have her by himself was all he asked, ever. The moments when he slammed the door on her white fur back, leaving behind all the people whom she charmed so excessively, and who came even superficially between them, were the moments he prized highest among all their hours together (191-2).

In the company of his lark, Maeve, or his prey, Lizzie Conroy, she is the "tiger he'd like to tame." The "fierce fulfillment" he finds in hunting, horses, and hounds, translates to a "savage" greed to possess Mary. And Mary, left in the void by the Maeve-Rowley marriage, becomes a child-wife to a husband who would protect her from the world and from his own dirty business, "the dark, sickening things that had come out of [his] careless philandering" (227) with the Conroys. Little does he know that his sex life is as transparent to Mary as is his non-life. She says to herself, or rather to a photograph of her Englishn boyfriend: "I think this Roguey person looks stuffed.... So do you, and you all want the same **one** thing."(36) Unable to win Mary over,

> "'Go to bed," she said; "you've been making a swine of yourself." She looked over at the door of his dressing-room, and Roguey, like a rated pup, walked across towards it and shut it carefully behind him (243).

Roguey is alone, alone with the Conroy business, and as alone as a child:

> Never had Roguey imagined such loneliness and shame of spirit as were his that night...
> Later, his poor mazed head shoved into his pillow, and her dog pushing warmly against his shoulders, Roguey slept, unhappily" (243).

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Only Rowley keeps Mary from packing up (though she has no "back home,") and leaving. She can conceive of his love, be fired by his contact, and endlessly meet him in her dreams.

> Women had loved Rowley helplessly; men delighted in his friendship; dogs gave him the same helpless surrender as women; and the worse horse had the most wholesome respect for his ways (10).

But her passion for him is more wanting than it is understandable. In Mary's own words Rowley is "only simple and sullen." Drawing quietly on his status and looks, Roley Fountain can, like Roguey, act the lover. He too is the man of honor: "Rowley's study, a charming place, its dull walls crowded with old prints: admirals of the fleet, ships, horses and hunting scenes..." (168) In Jer's words, Rowley is "strangely limited," polished in manner but unsure in matter. His momentary grasp that Rowley is as remote from Mary as he is from his own lowly self, is telling. For although Mary knows that Rowley loves her, she must wonder "to what end"? "All his life given to her could never make a blank of those three months of hell he'd given her, too" (229). It is Rowley who drives Mary to ask: "Just why was it so appallingly difficult to get what one really wants from life?... Selfish swine, men were." (190) "It's his not caring about me that makes me feel cheap, dirt cheap" (213). And this is the same Rowley who from his superior status would, in his words, "teach Maeve passion."

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Mary does expose Rowley as effectively as she does Roguey, but her declamations are less daunting, and more under the wraps of his romantic image, and prestige. In any case, she eludes the games of both men because neither the one nor the other can answer her embodied passion. In sum, she belongs to neither man, nor to their Big House maze. Rowley has to give up Castle Fountain to have her, and Mary escapes Sorristown, if not unscarred, at least with her identity intact. Like the Irish Conroys, who she tacitly backs, she stands outside and in opposition to, all that these permanent Residences represent.

"An Unending Delusion"

Silverue, the landlocked, patrician house in **Full House** is best viewed through the rehabilitation of John Bird, its heir. John has just returned home from an asylum, to his recluse father, Julian, and to his hummingbird mother, Lady Olivia Bird. He is unsettled, his spirit bereft, and Silverue is no answer. Soon after the initial relief of being home, John is "cursing" his family's utter lack of percipience, its pathos, and its "bloody tact?"

> John was broken and embittered, but he wanted no kindness... All these frightful helping hands--it was too much after everything else (74).

His mother's "seething maternal instincts" suffocate him; and in the presence of his sister's "kind friends," he's "fatigued by his own gaiety and unreality." But most critically, John abhors both the family madness, which is part of his own tissue;

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> John looked over the room at a picture of Mad Harry Bird, his great-great grandfather. Even Lawrence, with all his urbanity, had not contrived to make Mad Harry's portrait the respectable pompous and elegant portrait of a gentleman that it should have been. (141)

> John did not care much for looking at Mad Harry. His portrait gave one a bad feeling of his extreme power and loneliness. A really bad feeling. One might be one of his three poor daughters as one looked at it, and in any case one was his great-great grandson, of his blood and name (142).

and its deviate, imprisoning cruelty epitomized in Mad Harry himself who beat his wives, kept "his daughters' heads shaved like billiard balls," and tortured cats. His Aunt's suicide must (even if suppressed **in him**) also be a point of unease: "They had called it a nervous breakdown when poor Aunt Alice had turned on the gas."

But John is a man. He's of Anglo-Irish descent. And he's confident that his fate bears none of the finality of Silverue's female victims. He also understands that his touch of madness is dispellable, that his unstable state entails loss of authority, and that the boundaries of saneness and safety are as much his birthright as Silverue's. The promise of "his blood and name," the power that his forbears can put into him, might alone cast out the "seven devils" that have plagued his youth. Through his own self-restoration, he can restore Silverue to its "right breeding," and save all its present inmates from its "grimness," "grief," and "sorrow."

But who's going to deliver him? Who's going to recognize his son's perogative? Isn't Silverue with "its

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narrrow steep beauty and unkind inward-looking eyes" as tortuous a place for him as for his sister Sheena and past Bird daughters, dividing him from "all he has a right to ask of life?" How does someone so poorly grooved, so self-absorbed, so past feeling and knowing, excise himself from this bad patch called madness? Who is to guide him? Who is to confirm his manhood, and "restore to him his proper confidence and arrogance in life?" (281)

Enter Eliza, the adoring friend, the artist, and most importantly, the outsider. She has been his father's confidante, and she will be his miracle worker. She is lively, worldly, intrepid, and level-headed enough to empower his breakout. And she is generous, appreciative, and sympathetic enough to secure his shaky emotions. She draws him out, appeals to his inner self, listens to him to his melancholic heart's content, and even accomodates his "sudden lust" into the bargain. She offers him all the world he needs despite the fact that, as a guest of Silverue, her own world has been severly circumscribed. In fact, Eliza' timely appearance at Silverue becomes so tied to her mission there as to make John's sanity a ransom for her departure.

What Eliza does is make of John Bird a "complete person" again. Under her wings, John is resurrected in a recognizably male form. She not only releases him from the family lunacy, but from all the things he associates with being mad, like weakness, contention, and the female sex.

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John, now at his level best, graduates to a higher social stratum. He is no longer Silverue's servant, the dark outsider, the angel of light, or the androgyne. Manhood is his new conceit. Reborn, he is even independent of his maker, Eliza, who being a woman, must accept these natural things. In fact, Eliza's one-soul, one-body devotion to him has rendered her own absence. "She knew how little John would need her now. There was nothing in it for her," (285) the cure having "left her at times a little dismayed and almost at a loss" (281). "Love, of course was out of the question" (209). The Bird cruelty towards, and their diseased view of, women, whether an expression of madness or the badge of sanity, hasn't changed. John Bird has stepped up from Eliza's life-saving arms to the bold handshake of the Anglo-Irish Master. He is more aloof now, and more alone for his power. His devils have been cast out with his disease, leaving his conscience unoppressed. "The work of restoration was indeed completed"(289). He is the well-reared son, consolidated, and ready for authority. And in the end, Eliza can say to Julian, "'Look, John's your child and he went mad.... He has more strenth and vitality and charm than ever he had before'" (299).

John's revival of the Bird line is also a boost for his ineffectual father. Julian is ruled by the same impulse to manhood as his son. He is "part of the Home and Children." But a sexual indiscretion of his wife (when lately married, "though not so lately as to have retained much interest in

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him") has left him with a wound, which runs deeper than anything inflictable from outside, and which must, on behalf of Bird blood, remain secret. On leave from life, he is an inflexibly remote man, "obstinate and insolent and set apart to himself." He is an "entirely defined man" whose room "filled with old German novels, volumes of Ruskin," and "ungainly hordes" of old furniture, is "his Sanctum." "He [can] make everybody pity him." "He never [gives] back for he never [allows] himself to take. He [is] mean about taking"(32). A "preposterously thin" man, he is satisfied with minimal patrician interests like "Heraldry and Cattle Breeding." Ireland to him is where he breeds his herd of Kerry and Dexter cattle, shoots snipe, and fishes for "salmon and sea trout." He is proud and indifferent. Even the portrait of Mad Harry hanging in his room for years doesn't importune him. It's true that he intimates a certain need for Eliza's attention, but so wearily, and sometimes like a weasel.

For if the exposure of his tormenting secret is to happen, it will be through an outsider, a meddler, a woman. And Eliza is most apt to open that too painful, never-healing wound of his. In her attempt to save his daughter Sheena's marriage, Eliza must confirm, on behalf of the fiance's protective (from the unseemliness of dementia) Big House family, Sheena's unlawful daughter status. Having reluctantly revealed his ghastly secret, she painfully loses the trust of one more unstable Bird. Julian, sore loser

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though he is, is in turn emboldened by his son's princely ascension, and sulkily cuffs Eliza for her unforgivable interference. Julian's "love" for Eliza, like John's, is as transparent and full of imposture as his manhood.

> She had defeated Silverue twice now and this time at the cost of Julian's trust. But then his trust in her existed no more than his love, Eliza remembered. He had not loved Eliza nor trusted her.... She was losing nothing real, only a false and precious conceit which had failed her very often (304).

Eliza knows in advance that Julian "will condemn her for his undoing," but his sudden lack of kindness now seems bottomless to her. Just as she saves John to lose John, she saves Sheena to lose Julian. Sheena's Big House fiance, to whom belongs the spoils of Eliza's disclosure, offers through his silence just one more degree of exclusion. But then what can one expect from a soldier for the Crown, bearing the same rights of manhood as John and Julian, and capable of calling his future wife a "little ass", a "tart" and "bitch?" Silverue is an exacerbatingly acrostic world, at bottom unchanged, and absent of response and gratitude.

Finally, to cap off this Babel of male/class privilege, John's victory over Silverue also wins the endearment of his sane, seven-year old brother, Markie, a little man oozing with self-confidence and natural ego, : "To a large extent he was aware of his own power and used it cruelly or gently," (17) all the time thinking himself of "immense importance." Despite his vulgarity, Sheena thinks him "quite perfect," and Eliza and his governess "worship him."

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Mark, on the other hand, "has real disregard for them all. "He has a savage sense of Mark, Mark only" (139). Of course, John's admiration of him is unceasing. Once "healed, secure, and self-established," "Markie and Silverue were the things John minded about" (282). John, Julian, and Markie are a triumvirate, peers in a peerless Big House environment, in which even their treasured English guest falls prisoner. The self-crowded "full house" these traditional Bird men inhabit is a disembodying prison house to all who are other.

"Sunk in Inertia"

The true nobility of **The Rising Tide** lies deep in the shadows of its successive Queens. Although one gets the picture of a quailing Lord French-McGrath looking up at a glowering woman, Lady Charlotte's compulsory rule at Garonlea is grafted not to her own will and persona, but to "Property and Title." And her daughter-in-law's determination to transform Garonlea is thwarted by this same unseen hand. For Garonlea, the great ancestral house of the French-McGrath's is obviously privy to some powerful and terrible past, one which its champion and antagonist, the seasoned Lady Charlotte and modern Cynthia, absorb and war over. Cynthia wants to defeat its brooding air; and the mistress, in direct contact with its aura, authority, and ghosts, clings to it. The strife is in vain, however, because neither woman is a match for this engulfing "monster," Garonlea.

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Ambrose French-McGrath, Charlotte's subservient spouse does, however, make a difference. He, who like Julian and John Bird, has all the credit of Anglo-Ireland behind him, exudes power like a kind of age-old bust. What he brings to Garonlea need not originate with his puttering patriarchal stance. "Sad dog," as he is, Lord Ambrose's pedigree is still compelling. His diddling and palavering, for instance, can sometimes mask his cruelty; his wife, being known to the reader as "mean but not so mean as her husband." And he remains "touchingly proud of his house and lands." His huge mansion with its vulgar architecture still exemplifies the arrogance of gentlemen in service of the King. As does its expansive surrounding countryside, which is famed for its fishing, hare-breeding, punting, and other grand sports of the land class. But, most importantly, Lord Ambrose grasps what his wife doesn't, that the strategies for maintaining Garonlea's worldly position are buried deep behind its thick castle walls.

Lady Charlotte French-McGrath is Queen of her husband's castle. Raised in the Anglo-Irish scheme of things, with a "terrifying pride of race," she has asorbs its traditions, and is trained to advance, through respectability, the family line. She knows how to mother, to discipline, and to inculcate the rituals of the status quo. Her loyalties to Ambrose's world are as unexamined by her as are the narrow perimeters it assigns her. As her sinecure husband wanes in active authority, she wears the hat with remarkable

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conviction. Using a panoply of patterned messages, mothering influences, and resonant lessons, she demands "unquestioned obedience" and strict compliance from her four tractable daughters. Her correctness even exceeds her husband's wishes: "Proper Authority seemed to him at times so cruel if so necessary a weapon in dealing with the young"(46).

If this "shocking despot" is complicit with the values and practices of the primary estate she serves, Cynthia, her successor, whose husband dies in the Great War, is sharply inclined against anything associated with Garonlea. Given the scarce power meted out to her, Cynthia's attempt to transform this time-honored mansion, is spirited. But she has to contend not only with its ubiquitous ghosts, considerably stirred by the recent tallying in the Lady Charlotte factor, but with two of its living counterparts, her reactionary and hostile son Simon, the heir of Garonlea, and her "insultingly possessive" lover Gerald. Simon rigourously supports Big House sovereignty while Gerald, the big-time American businessman, is enthralled by it. While Cynthia, herself a daughter of white Ireland, is not without her own hierarchical impulse, evidenced in her callous treatment of her children, she is hardly in its clutch. Thus, despite Cynthia's viable and willful plans, she must feel the strain and denial which adheres to her renovation attempts. She, like her predecessor, has privilege, but

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insufficient vision to counter the inevitability of Garonlea:.

> What is there that can be told about Garonlea and the evil that can bear on a place through want of happiness. Or even of a will toward happiness ....Thus was Garonlea affected beyond its native melancholy by these gloomy McGraths who had lived there such a dreadfully long time (16).

Garonlea's brooding spirit truly overwhelms both its true and false queen. Queen Cynthia does dispel a portion of the "native melancholy" at Garonlea, but she is not ready for this Leviathan, and must return to her human-scale Rathglass.

"Constructing a Delusion"

The men who surround Aroon St.Charles, the naive, ungainly daughter, manipulated spinster, and unreliable narrator of **Good Behavior**, are calculated, as inheritors of Anglo-Irish patriarchal society, to advance its incremental aggression. Their sprawling estate, Temple Alice, may, through poor management, be on the skids, but Major St. Charles, Aroon's papa, Hubert, her beloved brother, and Richard, her brother's confidant, (or, to the reader, lover) are hardly bereft of male prowess. They share a langauage, sex, and color that make Temple Alice a psychic prison to those not of their caste. Their knowledge and secrets are not Aroon's, nor is their humor. As family representatives, they set the presumptive tone within the pockmarked walls of Temple Alice, slinking in and out of its incestuous, and "dead but well-preserved air." Anglos and patriarchs, they

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assume an ease of command, which leaves unquestioned their privileged gentry status, and their misogyny:

> Papa's love affairs were run on his own terms. Divorce was something that Mummie must never be asked to imagine. She was his escape, his freedom. Temple Alice was an island where a strange swan nested, a swan who never sang the fabled song before her many deaths (73).

Their ascribing to Mummie, whose life--useless to anyone at Temple Alice--has closed over her (she paints all day in a cold basement "studio"), mean-spirited economies and social trappings; and to Mrs. Brock, the governess who commits suicide under their tenure, too much license, is further proof of their hypocritical and swaggering stance.

These comrades are surely the most blameless of actors. They make war, court danger, prey for sex, hunt, and roam the world. Papa, wounded in the Great War, is not only privy to a nest of sex attendants, but as a one-legged veterarn, watches his manly stock rise on the home front. Behaviorally foolproof, he won't deprive himself of sex even in the aftermath of a stroke. Rose, his Irish nurse, sexy, sassy, and useful to him in every way, and under whose bed sheets he dies, sees to that. Sick, but not sinful, his covert authoritarianism, and conformism functioning effectively, he looms large inside his small, maze-like empire. He can rise above life's dross, and no one at Temple Alice can question his jolly existence.

Hubert, Aroon's brother, is a handsome, and brilliant Cambridge prepster who owes his manly coming of age to the

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lavish attention of nursing nuns. Indulgence follows his short life. But he is "unbearably demanding" himself, and a bit of a nag. He is a tough rider to hounds and a superb horse-breaker. As a swank, he finds Aroon useful as an "escape and salvation from the girls who besiege him." And his father thinks the world of him:

> Papa loved Hubert, loved him in a silent, vain, satisfied way. Hubert was admirable to him in the deepest sense. He rode beautifully... he was a good shot... He was all that Papa's friends most approved, and all that Papa wished for in a son. (78).

As to Richard, "everything came his way," "glamour circling him about, he pitched it to its lowest key." Tall and princely, he seems to rise out of Stoke Charity, the great English house of the Massingham's, on symmetry and grace. He attends the flappers' balls of the rich and famous and the Dublin Horse Show. One thinks of him with "royal friends". Aroon is as awestruck by him:

> I was appalled when I met the present Richard. In him I saw the embodiment of all the young men who had paralysed me into the maintentance of a silence broken only at rare intervals by some vicious platitudes.... The right family, the right school, the right regiment had all been his. I was stunned between fear and admiration. He was brown...lean and hard...he had ridden the winner of Grand Military.... How could I think of a word worthy of his attention? (85)

But, like his peers at Temple Alice, his sensitivity seems killed off; his social distinction being no barrier to his joining their mockery of women. As the driver in a high speed crash, in which Hubert is killed, he promptly runs off on long hunting safaris in South Africa and Kenya. And once

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he writes a letter to Aroon which to her is a mostly disappointing "catalogue of trophies,"

> I read a page totalling the heads and horns of the game he had shot, measurements complete.... Then I read of the hospitality in the nearly stately homes of the settlers... And in all the letter there was not a word to link him with me. Not a word about Hubert, only this total recall of heads and horns and fish and birds and buffalo and draft foxhounds that hunted lynx. 'Yours ever, Richard,' it ended (134-5).

Aroon begs the question for all three men when she senses that Richard has "no human side."

Papa, Hubert, and Richard are negative actors in the lives of Temple Alice's inmates. Under their rule, the housed, women and servants, the domesticated and the domestics, are bound to the drone-like life to which they are accustomed. They are society; their family, Aroon and Mummie, are soap opera. That Aroon, an embittered "Irish" crone, can be made into a spectacle and a joke by these men, speaks loudly of the restricted realm they represent. She is their own pet "Pig," "Piglet," and "Pig-wig," with whom their exchanges are most often prurient. To them, this "fiercely shy" virgin, with an inferiority complex as big as her frame, and surrendering bosoms that mark her mean and narrow place in life, is a feast for their sportsman's appetite. Their betrayal of her, like their betrayal of her governess, Mrs. Brock, is an occasion of entertainment and mockery. Aroon's one forlorn love affair is a no more than a trick played on her by Hubert to conceal his homosexual relationship with Richard. "As I leaned beside [Richard],

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the ache of pride and shyness drove me into the farthest depths of silence"(85). "I was a joke again.... I was something for them to talk about"(86). Aroon is an exhibition to the men of Temple Alice, a home body whose coachable talents, and artless wit, they reward with slurring flattery and attention. However, she is never to be taken seriously, and her submissiveness is equivalent to house arrest. Like her mother, that blackened heart, self-imprisoned in a musty celler studio, painting her "hideous angular poses" of the servants, she too is kept in the dark, identityless, and alone.

Bound to similar fates, no one living under these Anglo patriarchs is permitted one step outward or inward to each other. Mrs. Brock's suicide is an object lesson for all. "We all denied her" the "crazy old ass," after the sea had "swallowed her up". She had stepped over the erected boundaries both at Stoke Charity and at Temple Alice, her illicit passion and poetry being "a dangerous secret" to her adolescent charges. But like her, Aroon and Mummie are crippled by Temple Alice's codes. Papa can delegate more family authority to his gratifying menial Rose--she flouts her influence and is almost a co-conspirator-- than to Aroon or Mummie combined; while Mummie is separate from Aroon by virtue of her being Papa's stuffed swan. (Richard's calling Aroon "Atom" hearkens to her atomization). Just as Mrs. Brock's only claim to attention was her "gift" at finding lost household items, and Mummie's her dedication to Papa's

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will, Aroon's might be her flattering yes-chant to Papa; "My dependence on him had nothing to do with sense or reason" (129). Mrs. Brock, Aroon, and Mrs. St. Charles, ill sorted women living at odds, and thrown into the breech, bear the same self-enclosed life which abdicates desire and judgement. Powerless and baffled, Temple Alice is their anti-community in which even a furled paralytic is sovereign. That Aroon, instead of Mummie, inherits Papa's house, only rubs in this travesty; and a fatal dish of rabbit mousse prepared for her hated Mummie some years later is, of course, no antidote to the cruel lineage which is Temple Alice.

"Little Caesar"

It's true that most of Keane's Big House owners are dead, debilitated, or non-functional as fathers. However, all of her male characters, including her actual or eternal toddlers, express many of the aspects of the installed Anglo patriarch. No matter how bland, weak or indifferent, no matter how selfish, cruel, spoiled or manipulative, they are alas "real" men. Julian Slaney, the heir of Owlbeg, in **Loving Without Tears**, is a case in point. He returns home after a abbreviated tour of duty with the RAF, and immediately assumes an influence there out of all proportion to his frayed abilities. Angel, his mother, one of Keane's most commanding and hard-edged figures who, upon the death of her spouse, has almost single-handedly restored, Owlbeg to its greatest grandeur, must acquiesce to his position as

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heir. Her mammoth work threatens to become an epitaph at the mere whim of her listless, babied, unhinged son. The way she knows men is the way she fears their unilateral decisions:

> There seemed to be an extravagant quantity of male shoulders and tweed coats glutting the room. Some men do this. Their masculinity possesses too much of the atmosphere. Angel grudged this freedom. Not consciously, but because so many frailer importances had taken the place of men in her own life--and taken it while she was too young (34).

There is humor in this mother-son relationship: Julian is the technician who "would rather mend a clock than make love to Lauren Bacall;" but the pattern of privilege holds. He, like John Bird in **Full House**, is being nursed back to stability by a woman who, once having served his purpose, will be forgotten. Sally is Julian's Eliza:

> She had found him, shaken and uncertain. She had made him whole again... One certain job in the shifting muck of war. She was here with him for as long as he needed her (19).

To Angel, ulterior motives aside, her RAF pilot son with his "row of medals and citations" is "a six year old:" "Julian put down his mug [of milk] with the luscious sigh of a full little boy" (107). Sally, world-experienced, and unhesitant, concurs. She "feels agonizingly adult and far away." Yet Julien at-war, is at war at home too. He can become "an angry policeman" with Tiddley (his future wife), a sore loser with Sally, and a young upstart to his mother. "The unanswerable arrogance of his youth shook her confidence." He was "smothering her clear purposes" and

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shrinking her years of happy effort into "drear unimportance." "Quite suddenly she feared for all her triumphs and successes" (157). This is **his** space. As nonchalant as he may be about it, this little empire, which looms larger for him than the war arena, is his for the wishing.

"The Sordid Corridors"

Two Days in Aragon offers the most upfront indictment of Big House hegemony. Aragon, the ancestral mansion of the Fox family, now being run, ironically, by its ambitious governess Nan O'Neill Fox, the Irish daughter of a Fox concubine, is exposed for its horrific treatment of its Irish servants, and for its internment of its own aberrant family members. Fox servants, throughout the course of its oppressive history have been subject to sexual and domestic exploitation, torture, and infanticide. The sex/violence bond of colonial power is obvious here. Many of these hapless victims have literally been quartered in the dark, moldy-wet basement of a House which drips with license. Servants are shoved into hierarchical posts which commissions them to lord it over and abuse the rest of the staff. Slick Fox masters, for instance, recruit eager female help to conduct all the business their "love" crimes entail, from pimping to infanticide. Nan O'Neill Fox's own mother, who "had been slave to an upper housemaid," who possessed "a couple of satellites" of her own, documents this system and her own "preferential" treatment within it:

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"Because I was so neat, see now, and pretty and fit to about the ladies. 'Where's Goldilocks?' Mrs. Fox would say, imagine. Old Ann Daily would take the strap to me if I pulled a curl out under my cap, ah, she knew right enough. I'm telling you, Dymphania, hide your looks, child, hide your beauty from the gentry. It's a snap-trap on your own leg, now look, pet, for it's more than the mistress will see it."

There were noddings and whisperings and tales of childbeds in far corners of the big house, and pale heavy-breasted girls dragging themselves again about their work. Ah, Ann Daly was a whack-hand at any business like that, and the river is handy for any little things that you wouldn't want to be keeping. "Dear, dear, she'd say, and aren't you lucky? Another cat for the river, she'd say, and she'd laugh, she'd glory in it, t'was like a medicine to her.... The young gentlemen were very great with Ann. She had a bedpost filled with pieces of gold they gave her, and one way and another she served them well" (108).

Nan's mother was lucky enough to be matched with the Irish gate-keeper and sent by Sir Hubert into the permanent exile of the mountain hinterlands from which she came. But these Fox fellows, the glory of old and new Aragon, had, she knew, a dangerous half-life of which her daughter (Nan), who was being sent to put herself forward at Aragon, had to be forewarned. For Master Hubert, Nan's father, and Ann Daly's favorite down in steerage, was but one Fox among many:

"Master Hubert was [Ann's] pet, Master Hubert was a bold unruly boy. God help me, he was... Oh, child, mind yourself now on a November evening when the lamps be scarce on the long passages. No delay, Dymphania, but to get about your work and down to the company in the servant's hall... Light child, light's the thing. You wouldn't know where you'd be in the dark, indeed. You wouldn't rightly know, what you'd be doing... 'Child' Master Hubert called me always because he never could remember my name...
"Ah, child, never do what I did. Never get yourself caught like that. You'll never know peace after. Your father is a kind man and a good man, but I knew too much before I married him to be happy after" (108-109).

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Nan has come too expensively to follow her mother's commonplace road of betrayal. She has to be more than a lure to Aragon's "insolent" squires:

> "You're the only child I have, Dymphania, and I'm proud you are, and proud you should be of your breeding, and ever good to your poor mother, for you cost her a lot. Ah well, my sports was finished when I came up here on the heather with the lonely grouse" (109).

Nan Fox O'Neill is determined to have a Fox destiny. And Aragon, is the inside-the-Pale circuit she wishes to travel. No sooner is she awarded a housekeeper position than she is pinned by Hugh Fox, "her Master and her half-cousin."

> He was the consummation and the end of all that Aragon stood for to Nan. Pale, fine, long-handed, narrow-eyed, like all their common ancestry. A soft thick mouth, and soft thick hair, weak and demanding and enchanting, the very counterpart for her strength and generosity (114).

Nan is struck by Hugh's passion but will not let it ruin her chance of winning Aragon. Recalling her mother's admonitions about Fox men, she keeps her mind on the prize:

> She was fond of Mrs. Fox and saw nothing to despise in her because her husband's love had wandered. Under the circumstances it was not so very surprising. Nan knew it took a super-woman to hold a Fox true to her, that was Nan's outlook really. There were Fox's in the world and other people. There was Aragon in the world and other places (116).

Nevertheless, Nan's final rejection of Hugh Fox crushes her. She feels suddenly "alone in her house, alone in body and spirit," and thoroughly embittered. "She would live to hurt somebody for this terrible wrong she had done herself. She would twist a revenge out of life yet" (119). She makes

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a Faustian pact with Aragon after "this glorious calamity." In exchange for empathy and memory, she gets to control Aragon. Foregoing her outward gaze, she denies her personal history, and her Irishness. Hugh's death after a hunting accident consolidates this single vision.

> Little by little Nan had achieved the ruling of Aragon. There was no coarseness or violence shown in the methods by which her opponents were weeded out. Slowly, and one by one they went, and with their going, her power over the rest tightened its grip (123).

She commands her staff of obliging Irish servants and virtually locks up Aunt Pigeon. Her lovelessness feeds a sleek will, wired to Aragon.

> She was no imitation lady, Nan. She was a person to whom, in he own right, order and beauty and an earned and duly valued luxury belonged. Her cruelty belonged to the same streak of luxury (175).

She's its true inflexible servant, and its "Queen," "strong, frightening, and hard," separate but powerful.

When the presiding (from wall frames) Fox ghosts commence and appear on her behalf, she is thrilled with this sign of approval from the venerable family heads. But she isn't nearly so enheartened by the **other** Aragon ghosts who grace her with their appearance:

> But there were other ghosts at Aragon not quite so happy. Were the girls such as Ann Daly had dealt with (and many a one before her) coming back with their wrongs, a crazed haunting of the beautiful house where they had been coaxed or forced to wickedness and where babies' bones were little and green scattered skeletons on the river bottom? (122).

These are not the self-aggrandizing spirits of the Fox portraits, certifying their victories and tromboning their

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sentiments, but rather specific ghosts, up from the tunnelled servant quarters, who speak the precise words of her mother's stories, and in a knowing tongue which Mrs. Fox herself can confirm. "'It must be burnt,' Mrs. Fox had exclaimed. It must be burnt immediately," (193) she insisted, referring to the Sadean chamber in the basement of Aragon, equipped with the instruments of torture, where past Fox masters had satisfied their lust.

But Nan, more Fox than Mrs. Fox, can turn from Aragon's maimed and deformed, and from these all too familiar and pesky ghosts as if from a personal inconvenience. "Nan passed off the knowing of these things with a shrug--such things were" (122). Doesn't Aragon's equilibrium tiresomely rest on everything these ghosts are not? Besides, Aragon's singuarity, its priviledge, requires a ton of work, and she can bury herself in that. Yet these spooks co-habiting of Aragon is unsettling to a half-O'Neill, and portentous. They and their original tormenters "plunge into her present," their influence "sometimes strong and violent...from hard deaths." The accumulative stillness of Nan's domain just might be at risk. Nan has no power of exile or exorcism. And should their grating presence, which hints at unmarked graves, become a screech, it might signal fire to the Fenians.

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Chapter Two: "Life Sentences"

> As we lived on at Temple Alice a ceiling cornice would fall or a dog would die, those would be the interest and tragedies to mark passing time. And as time passed there would be new devices invented and contrived for my restriction and humiliation...I could imagine no escape from them or from myself... (237, **Good Behavior**)

> For once she saw her life as her life was--a rotten wooden whistle into which she might puff wind endlessly till she died. There was no note of music in it for her blowing. She felt as wicked as a dog and as weak as a bruised snake; weak and poisonous. But her fangs were choked in dust. The wheels of all happiness passed endlessly across her. Again she was a house that had no light and no fire. (284, **Devoted Ladies**)

> Hop, hop, from place to place, like a newly-caged bird. Tap on the window...She only wanted the feeling that someone knew where she was, it was a link with outer things, this waving and pretending. (226, **Two Days in Aragon**)

Elizabeth Bowen has called Irish Big Houses "islands" set "deep in trees at the end of long avenues" (19, **Bowen's Court**). For Molly Keane, these islands, cut off from the fabric of the world, are prisons. And the inmates who populate them, the most confined of whom are women, are the subject of this chapter. Through their marked deprivation of a cultural and social environment, these family members, and governesses, are best positioned to expose Big House reality. They are women whose lives have been bypassed and phased out, women who are old when young and childish when old, and women who have experienced the fewest opportunities

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in their assigned domiciles for outward involvement. None are mothers. Most of them are called after birds or animals. Some are associated with Black slavery. All must bear the alone-ness of the Big House itself. Aunt Pidgie of **Two Days in Aragon** is literally locked behind "iron nursery bars." All are starving, some in actual fact. Deprived of heterogeneous content, most of them live at the edge of madness. More stir-crazy perhaps than her fellow prisoners, Aroon St. Charles commits matricide. Mrs. Brock in **Good Behavior** and Piggy in **Devoted Ladies** turn to suicide, while others consider it.

Sentenced for life, these women don't think about real escape, let alone fantasize it, and thus serve as object lessons for what one may not try, or become. The cruel shocks many of them undergo in their brief encounters with reality, the subsequent solitary confinement, the tightening of the screws with age, and the progressive disembodiment, all serve effectively to insure good behavior in the ranks. Mrs. Brock, that "crazy old ass" of a governess whose life is to be allowed to be "swallowed up by the sea," can be as persecuted and denied by her screws as by her own young charge, Aroon, who is sentenced by the same Authority as she. The truth is that all of Keane's inmates, disobeying or obeying, passing their time in love sop, thankless caring, and self-absorbed tasks, are injured by a general closure of the dynamics of life, which is a central process of the Big House.

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"Good Behavior"

In **Good Behavior**, Aroon St. Charles is detained in an Anglo-Irish cell called Temple Alice. Home life is her sentence, but she is judged incapable of knowing her crime, or its circumstances. Trapped in the foreground of her life, she can have personal experiences but no perspective. While the men of Temple Alice can run off to their barracks world of war and sex, join in African safaris, or enjoy the privilege of a Cambridge education, Aroon is left behind in their stunting estate, where, deprived of adventure, rage, and resilience, she lives on sensation, accommodation, and routine. Like the servant, Rose, who has a "nurse's freedom" to rub Papa's "heels" and "bottom," she functions for, clings to, and extols her glorious Papa's needs. She depends on his flattering approval and, generally beguiled by his magical rule, she's shut off from knowing that Temple Alice is his island. That he creates a divisive household in which women brawl with, or cower from, one another is lost on her. That Aroon finds her Papa's debasement of his devitalized wife understandable, and that, as sturdy as she herself is, she can be "cowed by the stunning authority" of a temporary nurse, is proof of the his wedge's effect. As is the fact that Rose is as much a lackey to Papa's "needs" as she is an antagonist to Mummie's and Aroon's.

Aroon simply has no subject status under the paternal ethos which runs Temple Alice. Held behind the bars of Rules, the stripes of Good Behavior, she is as unaware of

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the social system that fashions her, as she is of the richer realities outside it. Allowed no contact with real people with real emotions, she feels especially obligated to the men who frighten and freeze her, and limit her to her body. They initiate things, even her dancing, which she loves, but associates as much with the Negro condition-- "There were the evenings when we danced in the nearly dark drawing room, one oil lamp poised in a Negro's hand near the wind-up gramophone'(94)-- as with jazz. But their capacities are not hers. She is a failure on their playgrounds, in their beds-- "I arranged and rearranged myself on the pillows; a nesting swan is beautiful too"(106)--and on their hunting grounds. And that she might be ladylike is laughable. Her tall, oversized body is taboo, her chastity a joke. Exposed to their eyes but not to the world's, she holds back, trapped and deprived of human contact, content to brace the ceilings of Temple Alice.

Aroon's single breakout attempt is bathed in promise. She awaits her tryst with marvelous Richard, as if it will release her into and out of her body:

> Alone now I unhooked my gold dress and let it fall sumptuously round my feet. I unhooked my deep bust bodice too, and my bosoms puffed out at me as though filled with proven yeast, alas. No matter. Flat in bed, I would be more like a swan on water. Leaning towards my glorified eyes in the mirror I could have kissed my image (105).

But Richard's entry signals a soberer emotional wave:

> In the moment before he came in I owned the world. The moment after he came in, a kind of practical reality subdued my mood. He came across my bed and sat down...

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> I got an odd feeling that he was nearly laughing. It didn't seem right to me (106).

Instead of ravishment, Aroon hears "I really must not touch you." She is too sheltered, and too inexperienced with the finesse of love, to even consider Richard's sexual sway, but she is hardly baffled by an overworked joke. Her brother's arrangement of this meeting is pure trickery and hypocrisy. "I felt cherished and defrauded"(107). Richard's "tremendously tidy" make-up gift of "rose geranium for the bath" quaintly addressed to "Pig, Pig-Wig, Piglet," only rekindles a love, the object of which she cannot **know**. His future gifts can only elicit from her, her remembrance of the scheme behind their game notwithstanding--

> I stood outside the door with a dreadful brimming glass in my hand. Inside the room I heard ... laughter that expressed their relief from some tension and left me an outsider. Puzzled and anxious I sat on in my bedroom , sipping at the disgustingly powerful gin... Soon the gin overcame my pain, but not my mistrust in happiness... I felt dry, set for ever in my place as daughter of the house, unmarried daughter (96).

--the equatable judgment that "he holds her too dear" to dishonor her with "that thing men do." This is the comfortable hypothesis of a virgin who has no one to reveal her self-distrust to; and of someone who hasn't a clue that Richard is her brother's lover.

Aroon's faith in Temple Alice is as indicative of her imprisonment as is her lack of faith in her own body. Although both overcrowd her interior map, her body is the house glumly felt. By her own perception, her Rubenesque physique is a straightjacket. Whether dancing ("she loved

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to dance") jogging along the seacoast, or standing she is painfully self-aware of her body. She fears, for instance, that Rose might glimpse her limbering up for the charleston and think her the "Fat Lady in the Peepshow." At a hunt ball, she feels so self-conscious that she ends up "shut for hours in some lavatory" or chattering "hysterically with the unwanted, like [herself]" (77). And although she makes a valiant effort to put her dressmaker's backhanded compliment, "wouldn't you make a massive statue" in the best light, her image of her body as "walloping round, a great half-naked creature," discourages that. It's not that she can't laugh at herself: Blink's pointed reference to "natural thinness" elicits this response:

> ...under her veiled glance I felt my bosoms and bottom swelling up through my head. I was so conscious of their size and presence they could have toppled me off my legs (124).

Or that she can't be playful about her deviate body: when her ankle gives out after a drink or two, she feels "like a house falling" and is impressed that the men "know about handling bodies in all sizes." But her awkward, too tall, too much body, presents her with one more flaw and one more restriction.

> I stood there, some sort of animal, hopping lame, that had to be housed and cared for and put out of sight. Mummie looked at me with agonized distaste (241).

Aroon, in short, cannot see around herself, cannot see what's coming; and is ineligible for life and love.

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Worse, her elegant, censuring Mum seconds her negative premonitions. "My poor girl--don't lets talk about your size.... They say that whales can live for months on their own fat"...(180). Under her Mum's relentless economizing, Aroon's "enormous size... filled her mind like guilt." That her mother speaks from her own rejection and is merely parroting Temple Alice attitudes is no consolation for Aroon, whose life inside her ample body constitutes a severe form of under-nourishment.

Aroon understands herself to be fundamentally wrong. And she must touch bottom over and over again. While Mum is as remote, and begrudging as ever, Papa's mandates to submit arrive in ever new forms. His enthrallment with the Crowhurst sisters, for instance, sinks Aroon's spirit to an new low:

> The Crowhuurst sisters were almost identical twins; Nod and Blink were the baby names they still went by, although at that time they were...nearing middle age. Everybody was kind to them because they had no money, nothing but Good Old Blood... I cannot understand what Papa saw in them (81).
>
> His respect for them was like a bad taste in my mouth. This certainty was with me: where I had succumbed and failed, they would succeed and prosper.... In every way I was lessened and abandoned (128).

Papa's "chuckling" over Aroon's ineptness around them adds to the insult: "He had used me and pulled me down, tumbling something truer than my vanity..." (129) His endorsement of Rose, whose behavior is unfathomable to a virgin like her, as his confidante, nurse, and masseur is especially galling

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> ...a despairing resentment invaded my acceptance of my powerless state as daughter of the house--a child of the house living in the grace and favour of unexplored obedience"(78).

Aroon's will is Papa's target: he (and his son) can be more if she's less. "To be needed and liked by two such popular characters as Papa and Hubert lent me an interest rather better than second hand" (164).

Aroon's inevitable resting spot between rebellion and self-surrender on Temple's battleground is good behavior. Here alone is she offered a certain degree of peace, protection, and unmolested freedom. But proper conduct takes her nowhere. It is the sentence of separation from life outside Temple Alice. She must reject the offer of the Catholic solicitor because he is "wrong" to her in every sense:

> In the cold hall I loomed to myself, a great creature within limitless suffering.... Within the hollow of cold and truth I gave up my dream, its core of fact, its wings of hope, shrivelling to absurdity; I knew that here stood the changeless me, the truly unwanted person (211)

The realization of its impersonality when placed flat up against Hubert's death, all but kills the "good person" off in her.

> Our good behavior went on and on, endless as the days. No one spoke of the pain we were sharing. Our discretion was almost complete. Although they feared to speak, Papa and Mummie spent more time together; but, far from comforting, they seemed to freeze each other deeper in misery (114).

Good behavior drags on but as nothing more than a cruel code:

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> We kept our heads above the morass, stifled screaming despairs only by the exercise of Good Behavior. Good Behavior shrivelled to nothing as a support in my insensate longing for Hubert and Richard... (191)

Fittingly, it is ill behavior that lessens, for Aroon, the disparity between conception and reality. It begins to give her a taste of her own identity:

> Tears are such rotten behavior, but a disgraceful warmth of ease followed them for me, and I knew purpose, and a power to fulfil it, actually belonging to me and nobody else. I was someone. I felt respect for myself and a sense of authority. I would dismiss Nurse... (168)

She, a nobody, through sour comments and dismissive actions, becomes a figure of woe. "Aroon" is a Gaelic term meaning "my love," but she is "dear" now only to herself and to her Irish name. Her inheritance of Temple Alice marks the end of her self-torture. But she too, like those she now whips into place, must perform within the strictures of an already ruined house. Though she alone can have her good behavior--

> I do know how to behave--believe me, because I know. I have always known. All my life so far I have done everything for the best reasons and the most unselfish motives. I have lived for the people dearest to me, and I am at a loss to know why their lives have been at times so perplexingly unhappy. I have given them so much. I have given them everything, all I know how to give--Papa, Hubert, Mummie (9-10).

and eat it too--at least when it comes to matricide and its aftermath:

> I picked Mummie's hand up out of the sick and put it down in a clean place . It was as limp as a dead duck's neck (6).

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"A Vulgar Betrayal"

Mrs. Brock, Aroon's cellmate at Temple Alice, doesn't outlive good behavior. As a governess, her reins are shorter, and as a prisoner, her pacing more rapid. She is a woman full of queer freedom and fear. Once married to a proper Englishman and having lived her own life in her own home, her first job venue, the illustrious Stoke Charity, doesn't answer. Its servant's quarters are intolerably confining. As she passes "through the door dividing the hall and its staircase from the other side of the house," she thinks about "generations of dogs, beaten and fed and cloistered in this family" (35). For her to "drag a living from the world" is one thing but to have to live under Rules and Rulers bedevils her sense of freedom. For she is a lover of poetry and music and stories, a widow, a woman, with needs and wants who has "conceived a senseless star-struck passion for Lady Grizel," her Mistress:

> Part of herself became Lady Grizel--she absorbed Lady Grizel and breathed her out into the air around herself, and the air around was a far less lonely place in consequence (20-21).

In the same vein, she is a siren to the Master's son,

> Now her throaty animal voice filled the whole air in the room... As the air throbbed round him, all, proper rules escaped Richard's control.... he forgot all the stiff-upper-lipmanship and threw himself, sobbing wildly, into her arms (32-3).

and is threatned with the sack.

> The whole affair was left in a polite miasma of unspokens suspicions, a net that held her helplessly ignorant and servile. Nothing had been stated, so what could she answer in this polite world? (36)

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Outmatching the greyness of her condition, she, the misfit, must move on. When she makes her "terrible decision" to present a cherished gift to Lady Grizel--

> Her slipper soles slapped gently along the black-and-white linoleum tiles of the schoolroom passage before sinking to carpeted silences when she had passed through the heavy door preserving the calm and distance of that other world in Stoke Charity (38-9).

--and enters upon a "different world" of this Lady's sumptuous bedroom, "a place uninvaded except for proper service and for love," she is thought "mad" for her special offering and is reminded of her morning train.

She passes on from this great English house to the dilapidated St. Charles estate. She has her day at Temple Alice, scoring several early successes, but the blighted air of Stoke Charity is present here to. Aroon and Hubert, like cousin Richard, are "transported by her tales" and inspired by "her methods" of "deceiving and defeating fear." She is indeed the same bird of Stoke, "fluttering and banging about in a world unknown to [them]," (61) widening their lives as she had Richard's, and with the same disastrous results. But here the passion she holds for Mr. St. Charles is more darkly strewn than the one she held for Lady Grizel. Her love becomes a path of contempt dead-ending in a sexual hoax. For to the "dirty old buck," Mr. St. Charles, his governess is no more than a sex privilege. Mrs. Brock, upon learning of the grossness of his arts, and getting not a syllable from him in response, rips up the hunting socks she is knitting for him, and goes into a "wild

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gloom." She warns Aroon off sex: "It's a thing men do, it's all they want to do, and you won't like it" (62). And in her pain of abandonment she turns her loathing on herself:

> ...Mrs. Brock changed before our eyes. We droned our way through our lessons; our exercise books went uncorrected; she played the piano for hours, and the sounds that came out of it were those of a wild, yearning animal (60-1).t

Unsaved, she breathes in the ocean, "her body, swollen almost to bursting the frilled bathing costume."

Mrs Brock's life sentence, however, doesn't end with her blank misery and her seaward suicide. "We had all forgotten Mrs. Brock; we never gave her a thought in those days--just a dead governess," (70) comments Aroon. But once on an outing with Richard and Hubert, the foaming sea itself dredges up her googly presence: "Her name had been buried under silences and unspoken questions for so long that mystery, like the sea, had swallowed her up" (90). Now, in retrospect, it is her own "peers," Richard, Hubert, and Aroon who, beyond the grave, deny and mock her. To them this "crazy old ass" "has to seem pathetic, [and] ridiculously sentimental." They drop "sly Hogarathian hints about her warped behavior." The boys excel in these charades, taking "to dressing and undressing her like a doll, like an effigy" (91). Yet Aroon admits that, although feeling frightened, she longs "to be a party of this violation:"

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> The game was like a dangerous secret betweeen the boys ... Everything I remembered was a denial and a betrayal of the other thing she was. But between us we almosrt called her into being. It was such fun sharing in her persecution (91).

Mrs Brock, like a sand portrait, is smoothed away, not to be recalled again till Papa's funeral when Wobbly Massingham mentions her to Aroon.

> "Then there was that governess--we sacked her.... Queer person. She found things."
> "Mrs Brock. She drowned herself."
> "Did she? Did she really? Sad. Then that footman, quite harmless of course, but we sacked him too"(226).

"No Exit"

Little Miss Parker of **Full House** is another dolefully interned governess. She is one of a "succession of robot instructesses" to have appeared at Silverue, that "house of sorrow." She is a more scrupulous creature than Miss Brock, far more eager to please, but is no less depressed. Her schoolroom cell is the only place she finds any relief from the burden of Silverue's past and its unkind present. She is everywhere cornered at Silverue by the images of its cruel self-involved patriarchs. And she's "conscious" that, after a series of nervous breakdowns, one Aunt Alice gassed herself. The sullen sadness at Silverue is like an "old truth made new to her" and she has an "overpowering sense that those who belonged to such a place could not escape from sharing in its sorrow..." (219)

But more critical is her own sentence of solitary confinement. Having "so little part" in the life of the Big House, she is eaten up by loneliness. To her favorite

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little charge, Markie, she serves more as a butt for jokes than as tutor. And the sensitive house guest, Eliza, is too busy knocking on Markie's brother's shell to notice hers. Only by her "bearded face," something she is "agonizingly sensitive about,"

> Not only was the beard still there (after the depilatory) in all its hated profusion, but now it sprouted from a malignant and poison-looking face (92).

and by her raison d'etre, time-consuming tasks, which are both a source of "furious enmity" and relief from pain, is she the least noticeable. No one or nothing lets her out. Interaction with persons and culture are not within her perimeters: "That was it, the loneliness, no other governess to speak to, no cinema..." and it was a "lonely part of Ireland to live in" (25). And worse, living with the Birds meant "one had nothing. One lived unobtrusively "betwixt and between the servants and the family. Nothing to give. Nothing given" (26). Having internalized all the houses's clever English Rules, she would stiffen in the presence of the Irish. She would rather cling "to her void with pathetic obstinacy" than even imagine contact with the staff. "Whitty, Lady Bird's maid, was quite a dear, but Miss Parker was terrified of any real intimacy with servants" (27).

Silverue translates into self-denial for Miss Parker. All her work for Markie is beyond her volition. She pleases him at the crack of his every need, shielding his budding

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life from any injury and discomfort, in return for sheepish gratitude, at best. That she "never feels inclined toward self-assertion," is all to Markie's benefit, but it can't help killing what's inside her. She would rather spoil another, and endure their willfulness, than speak for some little need of her own: "It was outside her conception of life to ask for what she wanted or to take what she wanted"(148). That she cannot say "no," that she "is completely unfree within herself" serves all the Birds of Silverue well.

But Miss Parker does prove to have an ear for herself. Her epiphany occurs on a solitary island where, dispensible in illness, she's been left by a day-party:

> ...Miss Parker felt a sense of bitterness coming over her. The boat was gone... And because she was for once without people she was less lonely. For it was the loneliness of being with people that Miss Parker knew about, not the divine aloneness of being by herself. She knew nothing at all about that.... ...she was... aware again of warmth and the exquisite comfort of pain ceasing....
> Into the emptiness of [her] body and spirit this thin air was coming. And yet it could not. She was too impossible. She knew too little of any possibility in life. She had never been gay. She had never been wanton.... Soon she knew it was late.... She sat on the beach, an expectant she-seal. And she knew reality, thinking herself forgotten (159-61).

As daylight runs out, she obediently accepts her abandonment, and deeply alone, permits herself "forbidden" and "morbid thoughts:"

> ...perhaps it is just their cruel thoughtlessness. I'm only the governess. I don't matter. It will be quite a good joke when it occurs to them that they've forgotten me. The true sadness of being herself had never struck Miss Parker till now (163).

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Miss Parker is a patsy governess, a workhorse. She is wary now of who she is or is not. She can only shiver and squat "on a rock with the seabirds flying about her," a "poor little" marooned governess.

Nick, her Markie's "low-class friend" with the "distressing accent" comes, in the mystery of the night, to rescue her. And he is surprisingly unthreatening. In fact, she is a "dazedly grateful" "little heap of misery." "Nick was the sort of man who really does not bear [her] any ill feeling for all the trouble she was causing him" (164). That his attention "bore a significance which was as true to her as it mattered little to him," is a plus here. She drops her guard a little. She feels resuscitated, not as "seal come to life" but as an imprisoned woman set free. She feels no longer "bound and tied in her own sense of superiority or inferiority" (167). What a "complete pleasure" it is for her to talk with ease, to utter her thoughts to another human being.

Back at Silverue, she begins to take charge of herself. Experiencing at times a "sensation of independence," she is close to adopting a new pattern for herself:

> Miss Parker stuck Lady Bird's list back in the mirror's edge. She accepted it and all that it meant, but in her conscious acceptance there was a cold and bitter discouragement of spirit. She felt impelled to show herself some mark of assertion. She even thought that she might even like to show some kindness to herself for whom nobody cared (271).

Ordering Dora to light the schoolroom fire and smoking, yes smoking, "in the middle of her supper," are great uplifts to

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her: "Matters became possible to her which before had filled her only with a shadowy sense of defeat. She was alive now. A true person" (273). For the moment at least she is gratified to contact the real.

But her "supreme gesture of revolt," against her old self, of going to see Nick, is too perilous for this new hour to stand. Nodding "impudently at the Bird ancestors" however, she does set out, only to be humbled and halted, ironically, by the "sense of ownership" and "civilization" she senses from outside Nick's cabin. Perhaps it is Nick's male mastery or the mistrust of her own courage under the felt "certainty of defeat" that stops her. Whatever, her wishes are no match for social facts. She is not "that separate creature" of a moment ago, and "soon she will forget how one night she had defied all custom and gone seeking Love."

Yet her small achievement in the way of identity has earned her a threat of dismissal. It's doesn't happen, but perhaps her life of minor tortures will turn, perhaps not. In the end, she can't let go her naturalness, nor can she relapse into mere survival. She seems to be an insecure employee forlornly contracted to Big House Silverue's old order.

"Self-Contempt"

Viola Brown of **Devoted Ladies** is so utterly dependent on her Anglo-Irish keepers, so utterly at odds with them, that she might as well be Irish. "My real name is Viola but

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everybody calls me Piggy." "I used to call myself Piggy when I was a little girl" (181). The name stuck like a brand, and Piggy at thirty is fat, bored, and shallow. To her cousin Sylvester, the successful London novelist and playwright, who owes his income to stock female characters and audiences, and through whose stingy eyes her story is mostly told (he is the owner of the house in which she and her maiden sister are paying guests), she is "impenetrable dreariness and affectation." She is an "an ugly figure," "a fright," whom "he [cannot] bear to look at," inspiring "him with a definite hostility both mental and physical" (101). He pins her to Tig, her "disgusting" dog, to her abhorrent garden with its phallic tree, and to her library "a cold row of seven and-sixpenny...monuments to Piggy's idle-minded stupidity" (94). Then again her plumpness, her toad-like worship of her star friend Joan, and her Irish hospitality and jollity "afforded him some amusement." The ghoulish deligh this Anglo-Irishmen obtains in this isn't prying, however, because Piggy has no private emotions or life. To him, this single woman is past consideration, beyond "helping, altering, or enduring:" "Piggy hasn't any self anyhow." So why should one

> ...deny oneself the enjoyable infliction of a little careful cruelty? One's pleasure in it far exceeds her pain, for she is much too stupid to realize how unkind one is being (223).

Piggy gets tossed and tumbled too by her "best friend," Joan Nuthatch, who also happens to be Anglo-

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Ireland's "Girl Eternal." She is utterly captivated by this brilliant princess of Castlequarter, swearing her "eternal Love and Loyalty." And Joan is keen on her friend's homage and generosity. Piggy, she knows, is useful enough for the maintenance price of concealing her from Anglo society. For, she believes Piggy to be "a prize boar." She has the knack of making fun of her; of allowing her twin boys to rag her; and practically institutes pig-baiting as a "stock Sunday afternoon amusement at Castlequarter."

Viola, in contrast, fixed in her "Piggy" mind, is infatuated with her friend and absorbed in the radiance of the vision:

> Gazing thus upon Joan, a blessed sense of being possessed, bullied and fulfilled flowed happily through Piggy's being. She was whole and at one with herself. She was found again. She knew she would now be able to talk with Joan (157).

Joan is her "one true excitement in life", someone who, despite the hurt, she can love with "a flaming devotion." Only glamour, uncatchable though it be, can bring her lolling, yearning existence into focus. "She had never known a single-minded effort or experienced a sincere desire..." (147)

This relationship, always on the threshold of pain, is answerable. For as Piggy says "a Pig can suffer". She can feel "the Unkindness," the burning rejection:

> And Piggy stood beside them. Alone, burningly alone, terribly apart and unwanted. Fat, stupid Piggy, almost in tears... She was the unpopular child, the child who cannot belong. She was poor Piggy who had no success at parties. This was typical of so many moments in

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> Piggy's life, sickening, frightening moments in which she was impotent and alone and a terror of life and of her own stupidity was as a web spun about her, stifling her mouth and blinding her eyes. She would crash out through this web with loud and hopeless words... (193)

It is not pity she wants but only "to be set up in her own esteem."

The opportunity "to love and serve" is her whole disposition, because she understands that "she matters little" in the Big House. In earlier years, "le bon Dieu and La Sainte Vierge had figured often and familiarly in her conversation." Now, Viola Brown is a reservoir of unmet needs for intimacies and acceptance. Her serving self is the genuine self who suffers:

> Piggy had spent her whole life like this, without actually **living** for one moment of her thirty-two years. What she would look like, what she had looked like, what she would tell, how much success her story had met with--always the future or the past tense of living.... In all Piggy's self there was no lonely place--not one thing that belonged to Piggy... (146-7)

News of the loss of Joan's friendship is demeaning and grave: "Calamity was on her. Vanity fell headlong. Love and Constancy were wounded and Piggy hurt beyond bearing was left wordless and alone in her pain" (261). To Jessica, the messenger, "Piggy's obvious anguish amused her very much," as it would have Sylvester. But to Piggy it was a final eye opener, a drummed revelation. Her "hope and trust in Life died" (283).

> For once she saw her life as her life was--a rotten wooden whistle into which she might puff wind endlessly till she died. There was no note of music in it for her blowing. She felt as wicked as a dog and as weak as a bruised snake; weak and poisonous. But her fangs

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> were choked in dust. The wheels of all happiness passed endlessly by her. Again she was as a house that had no light and no fire (284).

The moment is humbling and castigating, but Piggy can retreat no deeper. She must assert herself against a chronicallly unbearable life and, standing with her pain, she refuses to allow the evil-intentioned Jessica to destroy the love between George Playfair--he alone showed some kindness to her--and Jane:

> Beyond all thought of herself, Piggy's gift of service was in her stronger than she knew... To Piggy, George's need of Jane was as real a thing as her present sure knowledge that it lay in Jessica to destroy him... Stupid unreasoning Piggie held the truth in her hand and did not question it.... She put her foot down on the accelerator and the leapt forward and dropped (302-3).

Olivia Brown's murder/suicide is a scherzo rising out of the bitterness, and pride of a castout.

"'The Forgotten Woman'"

The lock-up of Aunt Pidgie in **Two Days in Aragon** needs no metaphor. Solitarily confined to an old nursery room which has "about it the sad unnecessary air of a deserted beehive," she occasionally wraps her old bones over the rocking-horse in the window which "ramps eternally idle." From it, she gazes down at the river water "sliding past her and beyond her... people and happenings all unrelated to her life, all but Nan."(69) For Nan, Aragon's instrument, is her jailer. Offering her cribbed subject that "cold shaft of loneliness where her life was lived," Nan isolates her from the family, from visitors as low-down Irish as Aunt

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Gipsy, and even from her own harmless diblins. She tortures her with nailed boots, ("the sharp lump... that ran into her foot like a dagggar") and icy water, starves her on crusts, dresses her in stitches, accentuates her bird-ness ([Pidgie] longed to be a sitting hen that no one could disturb for twenty-one days), and serves her up with frightening object lessons and stories:

> It was a terrifying little speech delivered with girlish becks and nods and veiled understanding of possible horrors not to be explained. It was by such innuendos that Nan kept Miss Pigeon in order... Miss Pidgie knew there were things Nan could tell that would get her locked away for ever in the asylum, that terrible prison on the hill...where terrible people called Brutal Warders knocked you about..." (66)

She puts Aunt Pidgie's slippers on "her feet as if they were irons. Clapped in irons," is Aunt Pidgie. And "Who did they put in irons?" (65-6) she wants to know. Nan scolds Aunt Pidgie too for sneaking hot water behind her back-- "You might be boiled to death"--and protects her from herself: "Who's responsible for your health? Who has the job of nursing you when you're sick ? Who? Tell me that now, who?" "You, Nan," (73) says Pidgie longing for a piece of bread. In fact, "Miss Pigeon's subjection" has been, along with an "exquisite store of linen, and children's stright backs,"(106) one of Nan's chief accompishments at Aragon.

When Frazer, the butler, raises a rare, if self-serving, challenge on Pidgie's behalf,

> "Poor Miss Pigeon indeed. A chair is about all she does get for a meal...a chair and little more than a crust, don't I know it? Don't I know where my good grouse goes, or my nice ham, or my bit of sole... I

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> send up on the hot plate so tasty from the diningroom? Dont I know who starves and bullies..." (126)

Nan's livid defense only betrays her controlling hand. She can admit of no cruelty and sees herself as having been

> ...a tower of patience toward Miss Pigeon's cracked childish ways, and as healthy deterrent and guide against many nasty and dirty ways. She kept her clean. She fed her. She kept her away from visitors. She frightened her into good behavior.... She had done her duty by Miss Pigeon...(130)

"Yet a dark wind of fear [is] blowing through Nan." (130) Frazier's diaries of her inequities, dangerous enough to her, also suggest a crack in her psyche. There are all the Pigeon-like women along the passage of Aragon, Irish servants, Fox mistresses, and Lady Fox herself, who seem to be in tune with things "that nobody knows about," and whose private tears telling of life and the death of life Nan understands.

In any case, Aunt Pigeon is more than Nan's "flat beetle." She has a language of her own, lively to some, piquing to others, and an affinity with Grania Fox, which is outright subversion. Nan tries, with some success, to discredit this imp's "Heathen Gods," her fairies and supernaturals, her holy places, and all her Gaelic superstitions, but this accord with her niece strikes at her heart. Grania's nerve in taking an Irish lover gives her entry to Aragon's netherworld, where she discovers Pigeon and makes a bedeviling pact. Pigeon and Grania, bird-boned and full-bodied, inmate and rogue, energize each other. Grania has a "moment of vision" when she sees her heretofore

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invisible aunt "in the darkness of the towering rhododendron" as a "different creature; alive, rather wild, strong in its desires" (10). And Aunt Pigeon, in simply embracing Grania's doggy Soo "the passionate little gypsy"... who would "beg-up , jump- up, and die for Ireland," aligns herself with the more torn and terrific, and the far more Irish, of her contrasting nieces.

But the conspiratorial bond between the two occurs when Grania finds herself sharing her aunt's cell:

> "Well, Grania," Aunt Pidgie said, "you've been crying, you shouldn't cry you know, its no use. I found that out a long time ago. Nobody knows and nobody minds, not a bit." (160)

These are not words of solace to Grania, but they're a start:

> Grania suddenly felt herself to be in a very strange and awful little world, a complete and finished world of small fears and great loneliness, Aunt Pigeon's world.... Suddenly, through all her own storm of trouble, it came to her that the fears might not be so very small, that the terror was perhaps as great as the loneliness (160-1).

Grania's empathy is now as certain as her young confidence: "Is there a nail in your boot?" "There's always been a nail in my boot. There's been a nail in my boot for as long as I can remember"(161). Examining the nail, Grania compares it to a dagger, "We'll burn these boots." "And while you're at it," Pigeon chimes in, "you may as well pop my last winter's combinations on the fire, too, dear. They're like sitting in a gorse bush. Really they are"(163). Grania has seen enough to "open up a perfectly horrid little vista of

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neglects and tortures." Aunt Pigeon, all cramped feet and joints, stretches out to her neiece. She explains apologetically that all her prowlings after bird's eggs were solely on behalf of her own hunger. Then, their bonfire begins, they toast each other as "mates," and the "cagey bird" can dream again:

> Aunt Pigeon saw herself hard at work or hard at play, eating a lot and sleeping deeply. In her dream she was strong enough to undertake anything. Her dream had no relation to an old lady, but to a strong-bodied, strong-minded individual (225).

As Nan and Grania pursue their own mounting crises in matters of rule and love, Pidgie, however, remains locked in the nursery. Nan, marched by the IRA back to Aragon to witness its demise, has nary a thought, despite the fact that "a piece of heather as sharp as a thorn gets into [her] shoe and tortures each step she makes,"(219) for her endangered prisoner. But lameness, or not, "Not so strange in reality perhaps because if Nan's imagination had ever touched Miss Pigeon she could never have used her so unkindly for so many years" (219). Meanwhile Pigeon awakes behind bars sensing "some new kind of punishment." Looking out, she is "depressed and agitated," hating again "the beauty and isolation of the prospect wtih all her heart." She envisons escape, even freedom, but is as keenly aware as ever of her caged status:

> Locked still! She was locked up--locked up and forgotten. It had happened before and would befall her again, but always a terrifying sense of being a prisoner, and a hungry prisoner too, assailed her with this punishment.... Hop, hop, from place to place,

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> like a newly caged bird. Tap on the window in case it might arrest some person's attention below. Not that she would have dreamed of asking anybody to come up and let her out. She only wanted the feeling that someone knew where she was, it was a link with the outer things, this waving and pretending... (226).

She conjurs up one of her stifled screams: "a rasping sigh, and batlike squeak, her face covered with her hands to shut out the all-aloneness, and a voice as papery and thin as the old moon that might be white as bone in the sky" (226). As the flames rise up, she hears the desparate cries and sees the horrible deaths of Aragon's past victims. "She sprang about and rushed to the door, shaking its handle and piping in that lone mosquito voice: "Fire! Fire! Fire!... But only silence poured back to her..." (232)

"I'm a Birdie, I'm a Birdie," she cries over and over again. She manages to drop Grania's puppy to safety in a harness of stockings. And not unfittingly, Captain Denny, the IRA unit chief, rescues her. She is borne off, her feet trailing "behind like dead ducks," and is installed momentarily in a loose box, the delicate bones and fragile wings of her puzzled body curled up as if for eternity. Accepting the roost, she murmurs pleasurably, drowsily, "Chook, chook,... chook, chook, chook."

"No Field of Vision"

Diana in **The Rising Tide**, much practiced at the art of accommodation, quietly endures her lifetime sentence. We can draw on playwright Sylvester Browne for a miniature portrait:

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> There was an unspent sweetness, an ungiven power of loving in Diana that was not sad and ingrown... She had none of that sourness so often evident in those who lead unselfish lives. She had dignity and balance and no affectation (255).

Diana French-McGrath of Garonlea carves an identity through a responsible arrangement with her fate. Gardening, for instance, is a mainstay in her life:

> The toil and peace of having your hands in earth you loved in the place where you lived came back to her, fortifying in her a curious strength for age.... Each present day and hour complete in its own strength (319).

And her attachment to the escape-hatch, Rathglass, is something her would-be chaperon finds simply wonderful:

> [Syvester] understood it and envied her. It was strangely moving to find a person capable of almost hysterical love for a place. Blessed in its air and earth. At peace in its service (271).

It's not that Diana doesn't rebel, but that the external form that binds her is too apparent and real, and too deep in her to deny.

Diana's imprisonment begins with her family's huge ancestral home, a place which obstinately bears the curse of history. It is so palpably gloomy to Diana that she can blurt out upon meeting her brother's fiance:

> "I loathe and loathe this place. I never feel well for a moment and there's that awful depression pulling one down all the time like lead" (33).
>
> "The oppression--it belongs to the house. It's a thing we aren't allowed to admit..." (34)

No place can be more oppressive, and Cynthia must agree that the effect of the "melancholy" is "overpowering." The

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monotonous pressure seems to lie, beyond the powers of an exorcist or an architect, with the French-McGrath line itself:

> "But Cynthia, if you only knew what it's like, always being watched and ordered about. Everything known about one. Even if one writes a letter to another girl--one has nothing of one's own at all. Not even a dog. Father won't let me have my own dog" (34).

It is these family chains that kill the spirit of Garonlea and absorb Diana's life: "You knew it all too well. Nothing lovely, nothing exciting, would ever happen here. The level of sadness and propriety was so secure" (66).

A French-McGrath daughter, for instance, was on lease either to Garonlea or to the home of "Mr. Right." Enid's forced marriage is an object lesson to Diana:

> Garonlea was the house and the reason for this dreadful thing that was being done to Enid... No ugly scandal must touch a Miss French-McGrath of Garonlea. No vaguest clouding of the rich Protestant Chastity of that valley. The Family, the Place, the Other Girls, Enid's Good Name, everything but Enid's happiness and Enid's freedom to live (64).

As outraged as Diana is on her sister's behalf, her puritanical upbringing, which never allows "sex to show its hideous head," dampens her support for Enid: "Secretly she was disgusted by the real cause of this trouble. It was a sort of fulfillment of her dislike of Enid's lack of control. It was a slap at her own extreme repression too" (65). But the whole affair puts Diana at the mercy of a Garonlea which

> ...terrified and overcame her with its inviolability. It was more than usually the placid, ordered house she has always known... It all overcame her. All of it!

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> The slopes and rotundity of the valley; the kitchens and many fat clean servants...the wet, well-kept gardens and dank lawns...the hot greenhouses...the fat voluptuous stable cats;,in all these places was the inexact familiar sadness.... The crisis in Enid's life was hushed and blotted out and drained of its power in the ruthless benignancy of Garonlea and all that Garonlea stood for (65-6).

Diana can and must detach herself from her body (Garonlea requires Chastity) but not from this place. It is past escape. Although she is twenty-eight and her sister Muriel thirty-six, "they [are] still treated much as they had been at eighteen and twenty-six. They [are] the daughters at home. They [have] no fixed allowance..." (77) Because neither "of them was married or ever likely to achieve that state of bliss and dignity," they were given "no caste. They were the girls at home" (98). They might stray from Garonlea, but only by the length of a single woman's leash. There is to be no divorce from the Family line. Diana's spending days at neighboring Rathglass with Cynthia does little to bolster her nerve,

> This was her own life from which she could not escape, and the warmth and beauty at Rathglass the fantasy. This was the real she, this rather soured and flattened creature wheeling her bicycle into its shed, taking off her gloves among the stubby little suits of armour in the hall... (93)

She understands that "no one in this house ever got into a shadow of reality." Anglo-Irish Garonlea has its own origins and she's stuck in them. Even her move to Rathglass, offers little expectancy:

> [Diana's] mind still registered in the same protests, except towards Cynthia she had not expanded in any way.

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> Garonlea still held her a prisoner, depressing her health and her spirits unnaturally (83).

And her inevitable return visits home bear the same patterns of regression:

> Again there swept through her that feeling of helplessness and depression that she would never escape at Garonlea. Standing there in the library she felt as if her life had already begun to drain and trickle away from her. She was changing already, slipping back into the real she, that sad creature of vague despairs and rebellions (149-50).

As promising and full as her relationship with Cynthia ("her dashing ister-in-law") is, "all her happiness is in being Cynthia's slave and shadow," and the rising trajectory of life at Rathglass is rarely useful to her. The self she wants still exists in others' eyes:

> Diana was thrilled by Cynthia's life in the way she had first been thrilled when she first read Mr. Kipling.... she had to go from the lives of others to reading of the lives of others. She had no criterion of happiness in herself (91).

She can never become rich in her own eyes. And Cynthia can never be left adrift. Even after a dusk to dawn party, her delicacy of concern must be right there for Cynthia. She is the steady center, the dull conscience of Rathglass. Diana slips back because she can't go forward. Having internalized Garonlea's maze, her life at Rathglass is almost surreptitious.

She has her own virtues though. At the Dublin Horse Show, Diana's values clash with those of Cynthia:

> Diana felt absolutely exhausted and sickened by the show, by the sight and sound and smell of horses and the people who got their living or their pleasure by them. She felt if another man with trim legs and tired

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> eyes and a bowler hat tilted over one of them stopped Cynthia and asked her to come and have a drink with him, she would like to scream...(201-02)

The "broken currents of horse-talk" nauseated her sensibility. Diana is as good at morality, the one outcome permitted her, as she is at good behavior. Unlike Cynthia, she is no wife, no mother, no dashing horse-woman, no woman of the world. Yet she is so "curiously detached from the comforts of the flesh" that Cynthia,in her final crisis of love, can't turn to "someone who has lived so vestal a life." Diana is just too set in her impressions to take in a Cynthia:

> To-night Cynthia's cowardly refusal to give back those too rich presents of Gerald's had filled Diana with real dismay. Static little codes like that, of which she had read in books, were very true to Diana. She detached it from all she had known of Cynthia's tremendous power of taking. It seemed to her a real loss of integrity (239).

Even at Simon's restoration party, where she comes rather daringly as "Herself by night," she is a "perfectly-dressed doll," "clamoured round," and harmless. She is still "cross, dark, uncommunicative" Diana.

That Diana might be a prisoner, however, is lost, even with clues in hand, on that effective evaluator of old maids, Sylvester Browne.

> An unbelievably elaborate and ornate bird-cage hung rusting on a wall, with all that it meant of prisoner and dead prisoner too. And at last--it was Diana who found him--still with horror and inspiration, standing spellbound before two life-size black boys in Saxon porcelain. They wore curious, bustling sort of pale-blue kilts and white boots with tassels.... They stood on tiptoe on heavy, elaborate pedestals (277).

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To Sylvester these telling objects are but "marvels of Rococo," perfect for "play acting" and "play producing" and therefore for Simon's restoration party. If "they were the first things that Cynthia whirled out of the library,"277) in her renovation of Garonlea, their prop value is inestimable to him. But to Diana these heavy German artifacts are "hideous" in themselves and strong "old currents" riding Garonlea's leaden air which she can't fight off. That she has to participate in Sylvester's dirty attack on Cynthia's work

> Informed by the perfect memory of Diana's perfect hatred, not an ornament, not a sprig of asparagus fern, not a photograph was out of its place.... Even the Saxon black boys seemed less exuberant in its breath, more of the page and meek slave about them, less of the curiously pampered favorite (297).

only assures that Garonlea will again exert its will at her expense. But if the party rubs Garonlea and its authoritarian structures in, Cynthia's strong renovation attempt of Garonlea, which has kept at bay its haunting force, also does little for Diana:

> It was a pity that all these changes at Garonlea altered it so little for Diana. To her Garonlea was more itself than it had been before Cynthia had torn down its red wall papers and hurled the unwanted ancestors into attics with their faces to the wall... and other objects upon which she looked with contempt and nausea. In all these locked, out-of-the-way places...the spirit and power of Garonlea still lived with a tenfold strength (178).

The life sentence administered to Diana by the male world of Garonlea holds, here, as well as in the female world of Rathglass.

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"Wedlock"

Maeve Sorrier of **Taking Chances** ostensibly joins the lifers when her short shrift marriage to Rowley ends. Having staked her life to marriage, Maeve must accept diminishment. But the burden of her lost foresight must lie with Sorristown itself. It is her all, and the all it offers her is the hope of love. The ramparts which now hem her in have always encircled her. As Jer remarks, "Maeve loves [Rowley] too much to see straight, but she wont k-keep him" (33). Mary adds: "Marriage is a bit of a toss-up for virgins who have the importance of being virgins on the brain" (34). The loneness she experiences with the loss of Rowley is the loneness she experienced in her love for Rowley:

> Maeve, sitting beside Rowley all the familiar miles home, was afraid--deeply and miserably afraid. Slowly, fighting for its birth in her, was the knowledge of how little she knew Rowley, how deep was their constraint together. However well he loved her, he was as inaccessible to her as any stranger, the more so for their intimacy (234).

Maeve is imprisoned by her unconscious loyalties (formed by family injunctions) to men who value her solely for her beauty and ignorance.

What semblance of freedom she might obtain before her breakup rests on her captivating appearance. She is as real to her captives as an illusion can be:

> He thought of Maeve--Maeve white and lovely, the gold of her smooth hair and the gracious curling lines of her body. It was her beauty that cried to Rowley, held him... Rowley was certainly going to marry Maeve for love (15-16).

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> Maeve came into the room. Her prim, warm dressing-gown could not quite soil the lovely strong lines of her body. Her eyes and cheeks were bright, her yellow hair a glory in the lamplight. Jer, watching her comb it out with a green comb, fell into a restful stupor of pleasure. (19)

Maeve's appearance is no less compelling for fitting others' fantasies, but reality serves no one, when the power of illusion undermines it. Living in a fictive space, what can her bodily self or her beauty mean to her? Can the qualities she possesses escape from Sorristown's idolized view of her?

> Her loveliness had the same chastely, folded, devout serenity, the same sharply devised, unreachable purpose--beauty in all good innocence.
> If Maeve had no more purpose than a lily, who has not known that cold thrill of entirely unsordid rapture that a bright lily growing gives one? Is not that purpose enough (74).

What can she know about herself or the world when men know so much about her?

Even to her Aunt Edythe her singular goodness and sweetness looms as "a lovely inseparable barrier between their further knowing each other" (41). And she can write to a friend and speak of this girl she brought up in these words:

> ...at Sorristown for the wedding of poor Ralph's only daughter--a delightful girl...but **dull** , my dear. Her mind--as is only to be expected in conjunction with so much bodily beauty--is a garden, and a garden planted entirely with Madonna lilies and potatoes (62-3).

Her Aunt Evie follows suit, standing in awe of her niece's "unfathomable," if "entirely comprehensible," "singleness of spirit"(39). To her sensitive brother Jer, she is a woman

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of "staid principles and sure affection, searching her own heart for the cause of unhappiness"(185). She is perceived as so passive that her own fiance can lead this mocking examination of her wedding proofs:

> "These are terrible! Simply shocking! In your photographs, Maeve, you never look as if you had enough sense to come in out of the rain." Rowley placed the proofs in Mary's greedy, outstretched hand.
> "Oh, what agony! Mary lays them down one by one.
> "This is a the gem, though you look as if you were giving birth to a coil of barbed wire!"
> "Yes I'll give that first prize." Roguey had them now, but he didn't keep them long. Mary was much more interesting to look at (55).

Maeve is simply image vulnerable before the least scrutiny. And mockery shatters her here when Mary voices her conviction that Rowley is "much too human for Maeve." Rowley himself, of course, finds Maeve to be too mechanical, more like a doll than a woman: "Why was Maeve so perseveringly, unbearably sweet and kind--even letting him off the dances he was dreading with her" (123). Jer can reminisce about an earlier Maeve, so attractive before being kicked with the complexities of marriage, yet so inwardly conventional:

> No gold hair was ever half so crisp and smooth as Maeve's, no hand ever so dexterous with a chestnut, no mind ever so ready to embark on the great problems of life--such as the selection of one , out of the many possibles, as husband for Binty, his retriever bitch,the infertility of ferrets, , or the application of sulphur of ammonia to the tennis courts (172).

Sorristown is as convinced of her one-dimensionality, as it is of her physical charm. As Mary perceives Maeve is "an

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excellently turned out young man," a cutout from Anglo-Irish material.

Maeve is thus in no position to determine the only important outcome in her life. She has no clarity, no present self. Mary, her rival for Rowley suspects this:

> "Lucky, Rowley was!.... [Maeve] looked so young and trusting, so mildly confident in her right to the biggest happiness in the world. For her Mary felt a sudden wild misgiving. Misgivings for Maeve, whose lot was fixed and sure--the thing was absurd." (100)

It is interesting how one fascinating woman's self-concealment re-enforces another's. It's as if their spellbinding qualities are turned against them. Ambiguity must mark all of Mary's takes on Maeve, even on the day of her wedding:

> Maeve, regally, triumphantly, bridal, almost unbearably happy... Everything she did and wore, every single word she spoke, was woven through with the bright, intense glamour that endures only the actions of those single-hearted and respectable virgins who have journeyed circumspectly down the happy canal of uneventful maidenhood to the lock whose first name is wed (128).

Maeve is perhaps better dead than unwed.

What does await Maeve in marriage? Is she headed for a beautiful lock, or to a grim lock-out?

> Maeve was at Castle Fountain.. She was mistress of Rowley's house. All her plans and dreams were coming true. Her new clothes hung in ordered precision in the great cupboards of the bridal chamber, where countless Mrs. Fountains had loved and slept (164).

For all is just too pat. Maeve is a non-resisting form within marriage's grasp, as loyal to Rowley's arrogant

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perceptions as to Roguey's. Her first return to Sorristown offers her self-recognition, but to what end?

> ...this sudden sight of her own wedding seemed to sever her from the intimate life of Sorristown, putting her firmly and quietly down in her own new life, where she was still so lost and buffeted about that she could see no way clear before her." (171)

Everything Sorristown imagined for her is now unimaginable. Jer understands well that the fun-filled Maeve who

> ...played with him patiently all her life, before this tide of marriage had washed her to a far, indefinite sea where perils, hidden from her eyes by swathing mists of glamour, hemmed her narrowly round, threatening her daily on every side,(171-2)

is now a "sad princess."

And Maeve's isolation only intensifies with her suspicion for the one person who, if only as an outsider, might provide some clue to her unanswerable world.

> What, she wondered, was there for her to do or think?... A little sense, Maeve thought, a little patience, and oh, please God! a little less of this dreadful choking jealousy that caught you and held you, forcing the grotesque into your every thought and action (235).

In the only language Maeve knows, Mary Fuller, like the Irish Conroys, is the enemy. "And Maeve, painfully jealous, as all unimaginative women are, and proud as only the pure of heart are proud..."(234-5) explodes in a fit of self-righteousness, against her spirited "challenger." She spurns marriage manuals and books as useless in dealing with such wildly dangerous women as Mary:

> "Nor could they guess... that there are girls like Mary in the world. Girls--Maeve's hands clung together in her lap, her nails biting into her palms--girls who

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> have no respect for their own slack , lustful bodies..." (235)

She calls up some venal painting to morally prod her fellow indentured romantic with.

> "Maeve had seen the picture once--what was it called: The Adulterer? A girl and a man tied side by side, lashed to two posts... Those were the days when these sinners were punished.... Fiercely Maeve knew that those days were right, that such thieving women as Mary deserved just such a fate" (235-6).

Rowley, the dimly known but sublime master of each woman, slips out of the picture unnoticed. There is no "class consciousness" for the imprisoned. And Maeve, her mind split by a bad marraige, her body by Jer's incestuous leanings,

> "He thought with a guilty, deligthful excitement of Maeve--Maeve with none but himself to care for her, Maeve with none but him to care for and think of" (268).

must retreat on herself twice over. Maeve reappears in **Conversation Piece** as if to confirm her sentence:

> "That's Maeve Fountain"--the loveliest girl with a sad mouth... she rode with a long rein and a long stirrup, and her back was as straight as a die-- "Rowley -- Maeve's husband--ran away with another," Willow continued, "and she's not the better of it yet" (88).

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Chapter Three: "Mother Knows Best"

> Pain they endured and accepted.
> Endless Chaperonage.
> Supervision of their correspondence.
> The fact that Mother Knew Best.
> That Fathers Says So.
> That there is no more to be said on the subject, they accepted. (5, **The Rising Tide**)

> Lady Charlotte French-McGrath mounting the stairs in her daughters' wake was a shocking despotism, really swollen with family conceit and a terrifying pride of race. (7, **The Rising Tide**)

> "Angel, you're at the red lights and you'd better know it. You're a robot mother with distorition--an ultra-modern with every Victorian vice separately embedded in concrete--reinforced concrete." (142, **Loving Without Tears**)

Molly Keane confers great significance on her mothers who, in her Big House scheme, represent "Authority". Whether as family heads, bulwark Queens, lusting managers, or archetypical overseers, they make good prison guards. They are the preservers of house and home, the family exemplars, holding up its traditions, norms, and rules. Bound to conservatism, they think English, speak Queenlish, act Toryish. The family portraits are their sworn duty, the House their chief obligation. In the absence of the patriarchs, it is they who wear the tiara and rule "by main force," with "unquestioned power," and "absolute power." But they are a graft for the Anglo-Irish system. Cooped up in the Pale, they are titular heads, aggressively or indulgently serving its declining status quo. Motherhood,

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in short, whether good or bad, is an ordinance for Molly Keane's mothers.

Mothers rule: they play guardians and domesticators. Assuming patriarchy's dictates, their boys are to become men, their daughters, more pointedly, to become acceptable girls. Theirs is a children's world, accountable but unintelligible, thriving on the imposition of obligations and prevailing norms (namely those for females), and singularly without freedom. Some of Keane's mums can be funny and expansive, but never do they seem so in regards to their daughters, for whom they are withholding, verbally aggressive, and often selfish. Her mothers barely notice their daughters' tears, nor are they ever caught offering support or trust. Lady Charlotte, in **The Rising Tide**, cruelly forces her daughter into a hateful marriage to save the family name. Mrs. St. Charles in **Good Behavior**, as we've seen, unyieldingly mocks her daughter's weight, height, and appetite. And Olivia Bird of **Full House** while harping on her daughter's disloyalty, is hardly cognizant of her existence.

In charge of their daughters' minds, feelings, and general behavior, Keane's mothers sow enmity and incur isolation. (Their daughters' rebellion is the subject of Chapter Four). They must instruct their daughters in self-defeating standards, breed in them a sensitivity to Authority, and encourage dependency and self-absorption. Her daughters are left to fend for themselves.

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As wives and ladies of the patriarchal Big House they are both bound to (male-defined motherhood), and rewarded for (hierarchical positioning), their not-mothering. They are substitute males recruited to uphold the values and lies which oppress them. Keane's daughters sense their own fated future in this collusion, and fear it. Thus matraphobia is to the daughters what the sentence of separateness is to their mothers. Their estrangement from one another, and the squeeze of their joint imprisonment, instigate the noisy skirmishes which serve to create and hide patriarchal structures. And hierarchy here can be a lock without keys, eliminating real women, and setting up despair and unfreedom for its wary subjects.

"Tidal Queens"

Lady Charlotte French-McGrath in **The Rising Tide** is the monumental Queen of Garonlea. In lieu of a King, she rules there: "Here she had lived and suffered and here she was supreme"(7). "Swollen with family conceit and a terrifying pride of race," she, like a chieftain, meets the Big House seal of approval. But how and over whom she rules is another matter. Desmond, the only son amongst her five children, "a charming creature," "at the top of her estimation," is "entirely free from his mother's influence." Ambrose, her husband, a quail to Garonlea, does rule himself quite well, approving his wife's "moderate good sense' and overlooking her "complete tyranny" into the bargain.

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What it boils down to is this: Lady Charlotte is in charge of her daughters, and of the upkeep of Garonlea. Ruling from behind the high walls of Big House domesticity, she manages property, running the things which fall within her turf. Chief among these are her female offspring, whose every business, from her aloof position, is her business. Their best interest and future matches her own. It is thus incumbent on her to both find them and deprive them of husbands. "Determined as she was that the girls should marry men of Property and Title, Lady Charlotte did nothing at all about collecting these mythical and appropriate husbands" (8). Lady Charlotte exists through motherhood, and rules through obedient daughters, one or two of which she must bind to her orbit. For her daughters magnify the power she's achieved for playing the mother role.

> Meantime it would be unfair to her not to allow that Lady Charlotte loved her daughters with a passion none the less genuine if it demanded first their unquestioning obedience, and fed itself on a profound jealousy of any interest in their lives other than those she might herself prompt or provide. She felt that her children owed to her as a mother, not as a person, love, confidence and obedience. She felt this tremendously. It was a true thing with her.... She absolutely required that her children should prove a justification, as she should see it, of herself (9).

They must acknowledge her sovereignty because she consolidates her position through them, and the glove she wears to cover the hand which achieves it is not always velvet.

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Her daughter Enid absorbs the compact blow of her mother's contravening authority the moment her unapproved love affair is uncovered. She drags her off to her kitchen garden to address this breach of her rules:

> Within the high brick walls all was hot and still and orderly. It was as orderly as a prison yard and Lady Charlotte had as much authority over her children as any prison Governor. She was a dispenser and an arbitrator and behind her was unquestioned power. A habit of obedience overlaid the tumultuous desires and suppressions of her young daughters. "Is it quite wise or quite kind to encourage a young man who neither Mother or Father could ever consider seriously possible? Just write him a perfectly kind, straightforward letter..." (42)

Enid's "stained, small voice" of protest is disdained.

> Lady Charlotte's interruptions came bright and remorselessly. "Mother understands a great deal, you know, about what her little girl is feeling, but she is old enough and wise enough to know what is best" (42-3).

If mom stands and judges, daughter crouches and defends. Lady Charlotte sets up a court in the library to determine the identity of Enid's corresponsdent. But the disobedience of a daughter is her worse fear:

> These two peculiar letters arriving together even lowered some of the surprising conceit which forbade her mind to accept suspicion of disobedience in one of her children.... Lies and deceit besides being wicked were sad, but especially sad and wicked--useless as well--when employed by a more than foolish child against Mother or God (45).

An infantilizing appeal to dependency, and to morality, are the proper holds. They offer their own justification:

> The due reward of maternal tact, diplomacy and firmness awaited Lady Charlotte... The reward was almost too wonderfully apt to be true, and through it Lady Charlotte experienced a sensation of placidity and

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> pride at this fresh proof of eternal rightness of her judgment.
> The reward was Enid, showing extravagant signs of repentant hysteria (47).

Lady Charlotte is Queen and Enid in her "mental agony" must buckle under "words like Seduced, Betrayed, Giving All, and Wicked Woman," which "hold up her mind in a grip that allows no other thought"(49). She alone, not "faint-hearted Arthur had been the one most grossly responsible for their wicked act. While I was Pure I was happy, Enid thought miserably..." (50) So pressed against and so racked by Righteousness, her Sin is unspeakable to her:

> Sadly confused, unable to think or know anything at all clearly, she lay in her horrid disillusion, overcome by a shattering remorse such as one might feel today, should one follow the impulse of beating a maddening child till it died. Quite as terrible a remorse, for to her mind her sin and shame were beyond measure, condemned by other words such as Adultery and Fornication... Thou shalt not... (50).

Lady Charlotte's cruelty is an initiation rite, a form of dispossession.

> Romance was dead and she had sinned and left herself nothing, none of that vanity called self-respect. Not even her own love for another was left. All was impossibly lessened and cheapened according to every one of her standards(50).

> It was terrible really, this frightful feeling of shame and self-hatred which quite demoralized her as a rational being (51).

Enid is reborn into her mom's religion of daughters. She becomes the daughter that befits Family Pride.

> Enid's whole life was taken out of Enid's keeping... She had ended her present life as surely as if she had died and now Lady Charlotte like god must give her a new one. Really, there was nothing else to be done except the things that Lady Charlotte did and she did

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> them with wrath and speed and efficiency and throughout showed an unflinching social front (61).

Enid marries and the "hurried" wedding has the appearance of a desired and successful event. "Lady Charlotte could hardly have turned a braver face towards her world"(63). Enid's last ditch plea to forestall the forced marriage only permits Lady Charlotte to have the last word:

> "My dear Enid, you have very little choice in the matter either to me or yourself." And so the subject was closed. That faint shaft of sarcasm left Enid silent and powerless" (63).

Mother is always right--at least at home.

Diana alone rebels. For her, Garonlea is a tomb which her mother eerily patrols. She disobeys training's orders and bullyings more than other daughters and is Lady Charlotte's least favorite. In fact, her mother stiffens at the very thought of her. In the matter of Enid's wedding preparation, she schemes to take Diana off her high-horse:

> Lady Charlotte gave the dresses a businesslike attention which excluded any possible hint of admiration for the daughters inside them. Towards Diana... [she] gratified her resentment of Diana's dark independence by making Spiller practically refit her dress, altering the position of each pin not once but twenty times (67).

Diana's "disgust and rebellion" here over a dress achieves little for herself and less on behalf of Enid. For Diana, despite her protesting moods, is as much a replica of Garonlea as her sisters. Like Violet, "that satisfactory product of Lady Charlotte's upbringing," and "that exact material that such an upbringing demanded," she too is well schooled in Big House Morality. And Enid's "sexuality," is

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more cause of mortification in her than in any Queen mother. The daughters, in fact, are linked to each other like children. The rightness of their guardian and their own inferred servility seems divinely ordained:

> All her own life she had been Queen and had ruled her children sometimes by main force, sometimes by emotional appeal, but always behind these things had been, for her at least, a right and a reason why she should demand obedience. There had been no absence of principle, however tortured the principle. She herself was self-sufficient, she was beyond those whose lives she ordered and commanded (75).

Lady Charlotte's mother's autonomy, as substantial and lifelong as Anglo-Irish society itself, can even harden itself against modern day queens.

Cynthia, having come to Garonlea as Desmond's spirited wife, is fascinated from the outset with the possibility of reversing her mother-in-law's rigid order. Motherless herself, she has no intention of fitting the Lady Charlotte mold. She is of the world, not merely of Garonlea. Beautiful and modern, she can attract the best people. "She was perfect with everyone." She transforms Rathglasss, her husband's home, from senescence to swing. She becomes a queen in her own right;

> Sympathy was the chief thing Cynthia gave to her train. She gave them sympathy for the hardships of home, the tyranny of parents, the shortness of money, the waywardness and backwardness of lovers--sympathy and a tremendously personal interest (78).

going to war with Garonlea before she inherits it. And Desmond's death only further anticipates her rule at Garonlea and her resolve to sweep out every last vestige of

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her predecessor's oppressive rule. But do Big Houses await "new angry Queens?" Cynthia has the will and the courage to transform Garonlea but does she have the moral or civil authority to contest the mocking bows of a tyrant's head? She may make Charlotte's glossy bloom wither but can she answer her reign?

For Cynthia is a mother. From this role, she exerts the same kind of wrongful power as her namesake. She is also far more enamored to her highball crowd than to her own children. Motherhood for her too is a veneer for force. "I hope that child's not going to turn out clever," she says of Simon, upon catching him reading a hunting book. Diana is "frightened" by

> ...the vein of cruelty in Cynthia's relationship with Simon and Susan. She called it by other names. She called it "Cynthia making Simon hardy." She said Cynthia was so wonderful in not spoiling Susan..... but secretly she could not help a creeping feeling of dismay and fear at the hardness of Cynthia's way with them (125).

Cynthia's children, "pale, uncourageous," and altogether too uninterested, are a great disappointment to their mother. Why couldn't they love hunting and dogs...and their ponies, as all right-minded children should" (135)? She forces them into long hunts to build them up: "Susan and Simon were often borne along for miles with tears pouring down their faces, and everyone said how much they were enjoying themselves"... (132).

Cynthia's modernity might as well be Charlotte's old-fashioned hand when it comes to bringing up children. They

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are all that she despises, all that the power inside her disallows. She abhors their feminine natures. "You had to feel ashamed and embarrassed if your children did not take keenly to blood-sports, so they must be forced into them. It was right" (135)! She is ashamed of Simon's "playing the piano...or drawing one of those hideous left-handed pictures,, so unspeakably like Susan or Diana or the sewing maid" (135)... Whose children are these? Desmond's? She may, in part, violate her children because she can't loosen herself from her husband's power.

> She did not know that she gave herself a masochistic pleasure in her treatment of his children. She denied this satisfaction to herself and had a thousand reasons which entirely justified her in her own mind. It never occurred to her that she bullied them and drilled and ordered and tortured the miserable little lives out of them because she wanted to, because she did not love them, and needed to hurt them" (136).

She may be as beholden to Desmond's power as Lady Charlotte is to Garonlea's power.

Is Cynthia truly a "Rebel Queen?" Upon first meeting her future rival, she sided with her treatment of Enid. "...Her sympathies were directly with Lady Charlotte and her condemnation for Enid." She feared a passion which was not within a "noble marriage." Even at her prime at Rathglass, she was too detached to be truly known or loved:

> Another thing was that no one ever criticized Cynthia. This left her more alone. She could not even tell when she was being absurd.... she was one of those popular Queens who don't meet the people who think them either comic or boring or vulgar or selfish, or any of the things they so often are (137).

And at Garonlea, it is too late to change this

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> It was tragic if perhaps natural that Cynthia should come off her spiritual pedestal, cease being an unattainable ideal and become a vulnerable creature almost at the last possible moment of her life....But she was too set. She had been a queen too long, and the tide of her beauty was too surely on the turn. All the power over men and women was a very temporal kind, lying in her looks and her bravery... Not in any nearness of spirit or sympathy she might have with them (206).

Despite her distance from Charlotte, she is another lone mother, as forlorn as a lost child.

> She was alone. She had been too long alone--too long peerless, unquestioned and lonely.... But she did not cry. It was too foreign to her (173).

Can "the Life and Soul... the Wonderful Hostess. The Successful Mother. The adored Chatelaine of Garonlea," who gets by on pose and posture turn this monster House on its head and shake it free of its oppressive rule?

The impossibility of Cynthia's rising is, to Diana (her closest thing a friend), as sure as the distressing and enervating lives of her children:

> All this Diana knew. She knew the tenuous strength of the discord that existed between Cynthia and her children. Nothing could bridge it--nothing could bridge--nothing solid and actual that Cynthia did for them...could overcome that familiar loathing for the poses they knew in her so long.... They could never forget, and they were too young to understand, her cruelty to them as children (242).

> [Diana] only saw the danger of [the children's] bitterness towards Cynthia. She felt as though some wheel in life was coming slowly round. As in a dream she could not see the wheel or the circle it made, but she knew. She had been told before. She had the dream fever of panic and impotence in all her thoughts of Cynthia and the children (243).

To her cynical "lover," David Colbrook, she is "one of those super-conventional women" who bears the "attributes of

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failure." But great irony resides in the case that Cynthia is not man enough to transform Garonlea but her unsteady, effeminate son is man enough to inherit it. Garonlea, in short, is where Cynthia and Charlotte find themselves and not much can be added to that, except perhaps to ask: How can Cynthia even dream of transforming a place which strips her of status?

On balance, the cost of Lady Charlotte's galvanizing rule and Cynthia's vital reign, to them and their daughters, is out of whack. Simon will take over Garonlea and lick his wounds, but Diana and Susan are no better off than their Irish maids. For the queens can see effect but they can't see cause: If Lady Charlotte defends the status quo, Cynthia can't resist it. They are children playing mothers. They are childless queens in separate boxes, called kingdoms--

> Lady Charlotte grew always more bitterly jealous and resentful of her, dreading the time when Cynthia would take her place at Garonlea... None of her friends really knew of the distrust and jealousy of Cynthia which were like aching and hidden corns in Lady Charlotte's soul (76).

> Life for [Cynthia] never ceased to be a competition in which you won and won. You never lose, never entirely let go your hold even for a moment. That was the way of desolation(290).

--given big roles to play, but at the expense of their humanity.

"Bleakly Buried"

This is not the case with Mrs. St.Charles, the mother of the narrator in **Good Behavior**. Mummie's role is so small that she hardly bothers to play it, opting for a secretive

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life and cloistered exertions. Only in the eyes of her daughter, Aroon, does she loom large in the way a "small dog can sometimes convey a false impression of size." To her she is too spitefully close and too stubbornly remote. Her solitude, to both of her children, is simply a sea. There seems no way for them to please her. "No step we took left a print in the sands"(45). To her, Aroon's wild flowers were "poor little things" for having been picked. Little does Aroon know that her Mummie lives by a code of behavior more stringent than the one she administers to her, and that her painting, her gardening, and her furniture re-furbishing are inflections of survival.

Aroon, however, can report on her mother's hard life:

> Once she had a show in a London gallery. During a whole, year she painted for it. No art critic noticed it. Hardly anybody came in to look... Even that disastrous experience did not stop her painting. She went on with it, making almost anything she painted look preposterous and curiously hideous too. Give her a bunch of roses...she reproduced them as angular, airified shapes in a graveyard atmosphere, unimaginably ugly... (11)

Mrs. St. Charles vanishes into her padded cell, a "stone-flagged storeroom" shut off in Temple Alice's cold depths, to accomplish this output. But unfortunately the secret logic behind the hours spent wrestling with her devils in her dismal "studio" and collecting herself in her private garden cannot include Aroon:

> I don't blame Mummmie for all this. She simply did not want to know what was going on in the nursery. She had us and she longed to forget the horror of it once and for all.... She didn't really like children; she

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> didn't like dogs either, and she had no enjoyment of food, for she ate almost nothing (13).

Mum is most coldly unsociable in her authority. Holding the mother's position, she must raise her daughter by withdrawing or applying attention. Sentenced to propriety, she must pass it and its origin onto her daughter, her son (of his father's preserve), escaping the brunt of her scrutiny. Blame, disinterest, reproach, and quiet derision are the weapons at the disposal of a woman who, well-trained in dependency, is quick to launch her shafts whenever independence rears up in her daughter. Her icy company moves Aroon back, while her concern is so faulting.

Scrapping Aroon must restrain her emotional and bodily self to fit the standards a mother must uphold. She is too irksomely big, for instance, for her shrinking Mum's taste, an anomaly in the narrow confines of Anglo-Irish daughterhood. Thus, her eating becomes an occasion for "satisfied derision." "Perhaps if you were willing to eat just a little less, we wouldn't have this appalling bill; of course you happen to be a big girl" (178). Aroon is too big and voracious to be allowed to shift for herself. Mum's "campaign for economy," on behalf of Temple Alice, is an opportunity for digs at Aroon's disorderly and expansive self: "One cant help noticing how very determined you are on your little comforts." Aroon consumes too much food and fuel, spends too much on clothes, and is stubbornly extravagant over her doggy's portions. Unrewarded good

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behavior is about as close as Aroon gets to a mother, who is so determinedly cool and proper and beautiful, and who seems to fast and freeze only to accentuate Aroon's otherness. This is especially galling because Papa supports his daughter's excesses. "Mummie watched with cold disgust and Papa with pleasure as I cleaned up the plates" (190). But under hard times it is Mum who captains the ship. "We kept our heads above the morass, stifled screaming despairs only by the exercise of Good Behavior" (191).

But, Mummie's behind a dark barrier too, if no more now than when Papa was alive. Papa, so attractive to Aroon for his "freedom and "energy," and brawny dash is different to Mummie. His liberalism and pleasure are paid for by his wife's conservatism and abnegation. News from the front of his getting wounded, brings this detached response from Mummie:

> She did not think of leaving Temple Alice to go to him. "There are so many loving friends in London," she said, "They'll do far more for him without his wife fussing round. All those women, cherishing and longing. Besides, they're so rich." 67

He expands, she contracts. He flaunts his body, she battles hers. He's loud and unanswerable, she's cryptic. His foolery and fancies go unimpeded at Temple Alice, while her indulgence for his invented stories go further than the ordinary suspension of disbelief.

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It is only much later that Aroon gets to view Papa as the dead fish he is, but it's not enough of a lesson to benefit Mum.

> Years afterward I read his letters, straightforward boring accounts of daily happenings: charmless, passionless, with no relation to the magic quality he possessed. He didn't keep any of her letters... I don't suppose they would tell me anything I don't know. She was so cold (65).

Even remembrance of her mother's flashes of anger--at life if not at her husband, does not lift Aroon above her Mum's intrinsic tyranny. Her mother's lack of means have become her own., and she is unpitying. Mum's "immense reserve of power," "a power which she might reserve through any self-crucifixion," (129) remains her cardinal feature, and scar of her lost human-ness.

Can Aroon understand that Mummie's indifference begins and ends with Papa; that she had been silenced by his inherent power; or that she is as lost on him as she is on her children? Can she grasp the implications of here mother's having signed over Temple Alice to Papa? Or deduce whose needs were met by this? (Papa eats and drinks like a king while Mum and Aroon starve themselves). Can she ever come to know her Mum's melancholy and bitterness, the brilliance of her impassioned paintings; or be able to recognize their own common desolation? No wonder her pals-ing around with Richard and her brother is heaven-sent:

> I felt in my new distance of happiness that Mummie had grown smaller, meaner, of no account. When we heard the men leaving the diningroom I rose to my feet--light as a bird, I felt young as the morning (105).

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Or that hers and her Mum's nightly to-bed ritual was almost welcomed.

> I took the left stair upwards, and Mummie took the right, so when we got to the bedroom corridor there would be no need to speak or kiss. She wafted up her side, and I trudged up mine (130).

The whole situation is missed on Aroon.

The desperation underlying this mother-daughter relationship becomes apparent as events unfold. Mrs. St. Charles literally blames Aroon for Papa's death:

> "If only the car had been here last night." Mummie spoke as though each word were drawn out of her by pincers. "However," she added, "we mustn't think about that."
> I was stunned by the assumption that Papa might have lived but for my idiot incompetence or neglect over the car (218).

Alone with her Mum and her Mum's lousy calling Aroon feels all the more deprived. She feels as separate and "dispirited" as the dogs of Temple Alice, which

> ...[convey] to me a clear picture of myself: the unmarried daughter who doesn't play bridge, letting out the dogs for evermore. Mummie and Rose would be in power over me, over Temple Alice until I was... beyond even the remembrance of time past (219).

With Mummie now set on "rigorously... perfect behavior"--"her mourning was economically perfect"--and on "businesslike" managing, Aroon can only project her probable future with Mummie:

> Whether she was painting or gardening or stitching, her disgust with me would enlarge as I grew older....
> And as time passed there would be new devices invented and contrived for my restriction and humiliation.... I could imagine no escape from them or from myself in the interval... (237)

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Now Aroon eats openly out of hostility to her mother's Authority, and furtively out of her need for her. She has absorbed her mother's self-defeating standards.
she bears that suppressed, private, family self within her even now. Like her Mum she has no personal identity. And as with her mom, her rebellion is far too limited in scope to be transmittable. Aroon still can't know her mother, this funny woman whom no one finds funny, this mysterious woman whom no one can fathom, this "recluse" painter whose scathing work is as unspoken as her life, and this crabby Mum who is hardly deserving of her daughter's murderous heart.

"Flattened Under"

Another scorned mother is Olivia Bird in **Full House.** Olivia is in charge of Silverue by virtue of her husband Julian's disinterest in house matters, but the shape of her reign owes more to her unruly past. For a time in her development Olivia felt compelled to satisfy men's sexual experimentation: "Apparently she took nothing but just gave and gave in that public-spirited way that women had in the Great War" (13). Her wayward habits, pursuing her into marriage, produced a child, and in consequence, the clutch of domesticity. She must now guiltily bear the family secret. An object of mistrust, she must keep perfect reign over her image (even at 48 her well-disciplined beauty is "set down in many books for all to see") and, more importantly, fill the gap of family "leadership" left vacant

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by her husband's strategic retreat. Running Silverue from behind the approved masks of beauty and busyness, motherhood becomes axiomatic. If she is to preserve her husband's name and estate, her submission to his perfunctory and unstated needs is in order. She explains to Eliza that "in spite of not loving him," "I must be loyal now" about his secret.

Shameless posing and posturing, and maternal effusions must, for his sake, displace her shameful, lax selfishness. Her life is now full of her children, and they are full of her:

> Sheena disliked Olivia very much. Here her tenderness fell short and stopped. she was not even tolerant of her. It was not a case of not caring. She took her dislike of Olivia quite seriously... She loathed Olivia's affectations and posing and lyings and misrepresentations of anything that mattered.... She had no integrity whatever. This was what Sheena realized most keenly, although she knew nothing at all of her mother's life (61).

She is as much an object of suspicion to her children as one of misogyny to her husband. But Sheena is her only daughter, and there is pain for her in this assessment for Olivia, pain in her role, pain in her identity:

> And the sad thing was that Olivia really and truly was fond of Sheena and proud of her, and took a keen delight in buying her lovely clothes and seeing her virginal triumphs. In thinking to herself: So was I once. So I loved and schemed (61).

But regulation--she must be faithful to her routine--not freedom is foremost for Olivia as mother, and Sheena's resentment for her can only grow.

Her relationship with her mentally disturbed son John is no better: she is a child-mom bringing up child-adults.

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"I've always had the most extraordinary influence over him, why I can't think" (15). For him, as for his sister, she exists at the other end of the world, her asphyxiating concern for him only accentuating this. Her simple faith in, and obstructive zeal for, her weak son so aggravate him as to fuel and propel his rise to power. Her unbearable courtier's homage, for instance, upon his return home to Silverue, must invite him to fill the void of power in his own home:

> Eliza wondered just how unkind John was going to be to [his mother] and how inconceivably stupid she was going to be about John.
> Olivia turned to Eliza. Her eyes were alight. With enjoyment? With excitement? No; with consciousness of herself, seeing herself in this situation.... Now he was coming back to her... To think that dressing a part could make a thing like this more actual to Olivia was pathetic. The inconsequence and the obviousness of all her posturing and nonsense.... They did not even see the shadows of her pretended self, only her pretenses. And in her affectations she was most sincere. She had nothing else except her beauty, and that could not affect them at all (29-30).

But to Olivia Bird desirability is survival in marriage. Beauty is her husband's entitlement. And she sees to its accomplishment with a maniacal discipline:

> She could as have easily have cut off one of her hand as abandoned one of the thousand and one rules of health which underpinned her shockingly youthful appearance (71).

Eliza, whose view of Olivia is more lucid than her view of Julian, and for whom Olivia parades her "oppressively and astonishingly young looks," wonders why this "continual struggle?"

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> She has no lovers now... The countryside adores her for her placidity and kindness; and even beyond her stupidity and selfishness.... None of this vital part of her life depends on her looks. Nothing depends now on this terrific sustaining effort. One of these days she'll crack up under the storm. The exercises, the baths, the tonics and the cruel, cruel dieting (71).

Yet Eliza knows that Olivia's beauty is "the most important factor in her relationships with everybody," including, to her surprise when Olivia herself points it out, Julian:

> "It's so lovely that some one minds about my still being beautiful. I mean somebody beside myself. I will keep it for him," she said, "because he does value it so..... Julian is the only person who doesn't mind my being so stupid.... And he's forgiven me all the things I've done wrong ever since I married him. Hasn't he?" (260)

Beauty is Olivia's one viable asset in an inviable world. It doesn't matter to Julian Bird that his wife is an "eternally girlish" "Big Sister to her children," as long as she is performing the services of an agent. But, if Olivia's beauty is essential to Julian, and can be more than artifice to Eliza, it is irreclaimable for the children:

> Her face, newly painted, was as fresh and taut as a new house, and her dark Spanish chestnut hair...so dexterously arranged... Age could not take that, it was a bird's line--a flight--as beauty is. And could her children not be tender with her? Eliza feared not (30).

Olivia's concealment of her true self is really the issue for her children. Riding the waves of weakness at Silverue, she is an adolescent bringing up child adults. She has "that awful habit of calling [John] 'boy' and patronizing him with a close, suspicious eye and a unrelenting love." While Sheena feels her life is a

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triviality when lived in her mother's orbit. Sheena and John use but do not accept her brand of mothering. It's too false and superficial to reach the "depths" of their suffering. It's too vane for sympathy, they think. And it's too husband-directed, finally depriving them of both parents' attention:

> And neither child nor friend counted with Julian beside Olivia.... Through all things Olivia was first. In lesser matters he might help and protect their children from the dreadful antics of her posturing, but beyond that, in any real issue, they were set aside and Olivia only counted with him. They were shadows and she the very substance of life (294).

Sheena meanwhile is too stupefied from all the dos and don'ts of being a daughter. She is supposed to be bodily on the one hand, and virginal on the other; smart but unread; independent but vulnerable. She receives mixed signals as to how she is to look and behave, and is too often a disgrace to her overly protective mother:

> It was at a terrible luncheon party which Olivia had forced her daughter to attend... Olivia was sitting opposite to her young daughter and observed her eating with enormous rather slothful greed and paying so little attention to the remarks of her neighbor that Olivia longed to kick her into good manners. This was no way for a young girl to go on . No way at all. And Raymond... would soon weary of his efforts and in no time at all would put it about that Olivia's unfortunately debutante daughter was as stupid as her mother (87).

Full of the internal anger of the post-pubescent woman, Sheena sees Olivia as a hypocrite. In trouble and shaken, she cannot turn to mother and her happy little world of achieving. But mom can track her in her shrinking space. Sexual injunctions, arbitrary suspicions, undaunted

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snooping, step out of her fantasies of control just when Sheena is observed to be "beyond belief... a creature disimproved by unhappiness" (285). "Sick for Love," schizophrenic, she flounders, in need of mothering, and despising it. Eliza may be doing the footwork which will save her, but even she cannot supply the missing emotional support.

Olivia cannot lift herself above her children's clamor and chaos: "...if the tragedy of John could not quiet her, nothing but the grave ever would" (22). But with her "genius for rooms and houses," for decoration and "Decorum, Decorum," and for "lovesome gardens" and civic doings, she manages to carry on:

> This was Olivia's Thursday. The day of the garden fete. To-day should prove Olivia a more popular, resourceful, original woman, and a better gardener than that ambitious neighbor. (172)

A "Big Day" means a lot of busy involvement, "the monstrous correspondence," the intense supervision of servants, the systematic assignment of duties:

> Olivia kept on finding jobs for everybody, and when they had done them to the best of their ability she came and undid them and then gave them to somebody else to do again.... Olivia's hurrying from nowhere to back again and saw her suspicious eye upon them. If they were not very careful another little job would be found for them...(173, 175)

It is the joy of belonging to the charmed circle of Anglo society that inspires her. She is after all Lady Bird, "the exotic woodcock" with "pullet-like curves ... deceivingly flattened by the most expensive and subtle mind's devisings"

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(66). If Eliza's sunny Jubilee day is marked by "awful busy gloom," by vulgarity and affectation, by the disgusting posing of Olivia, and topped off by Julian's "dismaying and disillusioning" support for the whole mess, from Olivia's point of view it is grandeur and victory. The event raises money beyond its goal for a good cause, and Olivia will be all the rage. Eliza's final re-assessment of Olivia must await the traumatic revelation of Sheena' parentage, one which Olivia can accept and Julian must go on denying, before she acknowledges that Olivia, the woman who is still anxious to can the ugly misfit Miss Parker for the Swiss girl of her dreams, "can still astonish her."

"Preempted Callings"

Angel, in **Loving Without tears**, is, like Lady Charlotte, a Big House matron who seems to wave the wand of tyranny over her household. Alone, she fulfills her widowhood with two major life activities: mothering her children, and managing Owlbeg. Owlbeg, the "tiny castle" on four hundred acres of the south Irish coast, is the first object in her hands. Angel really is Owlbeg. She restores it (removing everything deaf and dumb about it, like its black boy statuary), designs it, manages it, hovers over its new life. Making masterful use of Oliver "her friend, her creature," as a kind of "working steward," and of handpicked domestics like Birdie who is "neither servant nor yet quite of the sad order of governess," "she rules Owlbeg" like a pettish Queen. Everyone's in her favor, and everyone

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"works obediently for her." Her "vanity and power," her "greedy life," and her dreaded language-- "She was keyed to a pitch beyond her own controlling and her brain and tongue combined with dreadful ease to destroy" (106)-- far from being a drawback, only facilitate her smooth rule.

Owlbeg Estate is in effect all hers, laboriously hers. Its reclamation and upkeep is what she has to do. And she endlessly does it, forgetting herself in persistent activity and close supervision: "When alone, Angel usually thought of her daily life. Her neat mind was like a little scissors clipping and trimming at untidiness, cutting a neat way through difficulties" (82). She devotes herself to Owlbeg with a touch of grace, mothering it as she does her children:

> Oliver adored Angels unaffected pleasure in Buhl cabinets, in richly-carved marbles, in pseudo-Italian painted furniture, in gilt sconces from Austrian churches...in photographs of her children by Marcus Adams, of herself by Lenare... These things were hers and part of her, and so, of course, were the children (7).

She accomplishes her administrative work with more will and fanfare than she does her mothering, but beneath both lies little authority. She has no contractual control of Owlbeg, and she's bound to the controlling authority of the Big House matriarch. Her tasks are to mother and administer rules and prescriptions not her own, in a house, not her own. And this she does with an automaton's vengeance, rousing such extreme retorts as this from Oliver:

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> "I'll speak how I damn well like. Angel, you're at the red lights and you'd better know it. You're a robot mother with distortion--an ultra-modern with every Victorian vice separately embedded in concrete--reinforced concrete"(142).

Angel looks straight at him: "My children adore me. Ever noticed that? They must like concrete." And he looks straight at her:

> "Does that make concrete wholesome? Does it make poison wholesome? Honey and vitriol, my sweet, that's you. Oh, you're just a big lovely ice cream full of steel shavings" (142).

Angel's mother role involves a heavy allotment of objective concern, interference, and manipulation. She is competitive and divisive. She is everything from touching to tough, everything but affectionate, and nurturing. Angel does not participate in the development of her children, because she herself finds no place in her mother's role for growth. Her "arrested development" as a mother must be theirs as children. Slaney, her flighty daughter feels borne along on her mother's broad wings, "she' always right." She turns as her mom turns: "I'm frantic, I must ask her what to do next" (62). "Just my happy baby still." she says approvingly of Slaney's ongoing commitment to her. She still chooses Slaney's dresses and runs the current of her social activities.

> Her food was a mother's occupation too. As a gardener tends nectarines, so did Angel minister anxiously to skin and hair and health of body.... Angel led her daughter by a ribbon towards the supreme sacrifice and glory of the right marriage (15).

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She anticipates the needs and supplies the answers to "her beautiful, guarded , wholesome child, so happily too young still for this world..." Birdie, Owlbeg's Irish cook, says to Slaney, in an effort to stem Angel's tide: "Those who love us best muddle us worst." But Slaney's fragile response shows more heart than will: "But as children cling unashamed, Slaney clung. She needed and towards Birdie [herself] she was almost in the pre-natal position..."(64) Slaney is so dependent that even when Angel wrecks her romance, she can throw herself at her feet in abandoned relief.

Meanwhile, Angel can make pulp of her son, Julian, who even after a stint in the Royal Air Force, hasn't grown up, either. He is as much "boy" to her after this interval as before. And his memory of Owlbeg, infancy and adolescence, is both short and fixed. Mother is a touchstone, attuned to his distress and frustration, her scrutiny necessarily protracted. "I'm a big boy now," he says to her but with more trepidation than befits an aviator. Sally, his lover and handler, finds something seriously amiss: "I'm not giving that young kid up till mother takes the Indian sign off him forever."

Yet, Julian, as the heir of Owlbeg, can strike fear in Angel. The downward pull his return evokes in her materializes first in the person of his lover: "Sally seemed prominent in all this change. She typified the unknown hours." Julian plans to make Owlbeg pay through a

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commercial scheme, but more to the point is the taking over of Owlbeg which this applies.

> The unanswerable arrogance of his youth shook her confidence. the years of her own and Oliver's happy effort shrank and dried into a drear unimportance (157).

All her babying fuss over him, might be worthless, all her work for Owlbeg, a Sisyphean labor. She is deflated by his alien presence at Owlbeg.

> Quite suddenly she feared for all her triumphs and successes. dear and absurd, the years flew past her mind as she leaned beside that bright and strong son, whose danger had been...her reason for endurance, for the maintenance of that brilliant struggle at Owlbeg" (157).

What could he know of all her persistence on behalf of Owlbeg, work that most around her shunned, but which made the place live again. Julien simply owns Owlbeg's blueprint and as such is an enemy to her as mother and Queen.

But she's more a "silly old cow" to herself than to her son. As a victim of a role, Angel needs her kids to be nondiscriminitive, and as dependent on her as she on them. Sally, from her Odyssean perspective, perceives Angel's plight:

> [Sally] saw Angel's power to defeat all that she had done for Julian and eat him and drink him and take from him everything but her own love. She could see that Angel was as helpless in her own loving as any woman, as powerless not to kill what she adored (109).

She molds her children from using "slavish Tiddley," her "perfect orphan niece," as her model. And Julian, true camp-follower as he is, is convinced of his mother's superiority: "I don't know how she had such ordinary types

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as us for children" (83). And by her own code of domestic custom, she is a successful mother. "You know very little about me if you think I'll give up my children just when they need me most" (142-3), she says, alerting the rising domiciles.

Angel's domination is no more effective than the submission she requires. Oliver's little tune, "Home to life, and life starts when mother stops," underscores the nature of her maternal role. He warns her: "You're so full of tact and the wonder of mother love, that one filthy day you're going to pop" (20). Slaney, sure enough, refuses to be a "cellophane parcel" for a husband designate, proclaiming, "I shall marry to please myself, not to amuse my Mom" (246). Oliver calls her "the danger", making nimble reference to her stereotypical center. Sally seconds him, "I've saved that kid from hell and from Angel too. She's a destroyer" (247). When Sally tells Angel "You're a classical let down to motherhood. You're a predatory, conceited, vain old doll, and a most inexpert liar" (211), she speaks with maddening assurance.

Angel's role precludes love:

> They were gone. Angel was alone in the warm vindictive room. She was without a clue back or forwards to any happiness. She was with her poor wicked self alone (213).

> Angel, who mercifully required no real loving ... Now, with actual loving in her house, sh was in a torment of mistrustful jealousy, despairing at their escape from her... (214)

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She, the object of her children's frustration--"you've picked us up--you've let us down--you've loved us and played hell with us"--is isolated in the institution of motherhood.

> She was once more in that ice-bound, limitless place which she had known when she was first a widow, the terrible country where she had bravely refused to dwell of have her being (214).

In the end, having spoiled their mother's preconceptions of how their lives are to go, they leave the hold of her ship. Angel, has hope, though; the dark run ushered in by this abandonment of motherhood will, after a couple-odd years, end with grandchildren back at Owlbeg. Then, restored to mothering, she will "build her whole life again on their lives."

"Press Photo"

Joan, wife of Robin Nuthatch in **Devoted Ladies**, is one more dummy queen. More truly a Princess, she manages Castlequarter at the behest of her indifferent husband. "He was brave and stupid...and adorably kind....He loved his children and his hounds. He loved fox-hunting and good horses..." (163) Her workload, however, is minimal. Her twins, being sons, are more like "Heirs" than children, and much of the administering of Castlequarter is carried on by her male entourage. Her reign then is no more than the world shine of the fantasy kingdom she's married to. She is its class, its optimism, its indefinable air of success. As the personification of the perfect Anglo-Irish woman, she is Castlequarter's beautiful surface.

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> She was young and pretty, incredibly girlish and incredibly well-dressed. She rode bravely and charmingly. She was mad with enthusiasm for all outdoor sport... Happy to dance, happy to tear lovely dresses in rough and noisy play. Happy to kiss the older men... Happy indeed to be young, lovely, successful... adored by her friends, photographed madly by every press camera at every race-meeting in Ireland... A lovely stranger who was yet of the county...it was right and fitting that she should become Mrs. Robin Nuthatch, wife of an M.F. H. and very efficient mistress of his country (149).

Married to the "most proper, rich, charming and eligible young man in the country," places her as if in magic enchantment:

> ... several good horses, a garden in which everything that was planted grew fast and well, many willing and obedient servants, good health, a good figure, a good eye for a horse, a good seat on a horse and an inexhaustible fund of conversation about horses. She had and was in short everything that a country and county lady need aspire to have or to be (89-90).

Even in marriage she continues to be the golden-haired wonder and the "representation of the Girl Eternal in Irish life. Indeed the birth of her twin sons [does] more than anything to confirm her in hr pose of the complete wonder-child" (150). Pictures of her appearing weekly in the **Tatler** "continue to confirm her youth and beauty and her 'being Joan.'" To Piggy she is "at heart **just a lovely child**. Just the youngest, most unspoiled **child**, that's what Joan is" (180). "Her babyism," whether with her kids or doggies is just utterly charming, as is her good fun: "the Nuthatch family had a really passionate interest and enjoyment in the Nuthatch family and the Nuthatch jokes." (163)

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Her mothering is, of course, inconsequential, because her sons are separate beings with their own separate destinies, who display no more self than she does. As patents of their pop, they appear to start with the inverse side of that role. Cruelty, whether to animals (wild and domestic) or to persons like Piggy, seems to consume their vital force. Their mother is pragmatic as regards this: "Joan had very sensible theories on the subject of children being able to be the bullies of their ponies" (157). Just as she can get "absorbed in" their toys and games, so can she be amused by their jokes on Piggy:

> Edward encouraged Piggy to thrust her head into the earth and when she was obediently groveling blind upon her stomach he and John pinched her behind simultaneously The colossal success of this joke reduced them to a state bordering on hysteria. They rolled upon the ground together screaming with laughter. Joan too thought the joke pretty good..." (161-2)

And her dopey twins can gleefully join in their mother's "pig-baiting." Joan might as well love her spoilt little masters, because she can't subject them.

Motherhood, however, is an essential part of Joan's reign. She is an upright mother as she is an upright wife. Her all-embracing identification with the men of Castlequarter assure this outcome. Patterning herself on her husband's needs, she is his kind of wife and mother, genuine and dependable. She is as much mother in name as spouse in name. And as such is an integral and

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indispensable part of the great task of the Big House in Ireland, "ruling" over one of its exclusive nests.

Perhaps she does get to "mother" her girl friend, Piggy, but between her unrelenting superiority and Piggy's idolatry, the daughter analogy falters. Joan directs Piggy's life, which is unattached to men and vulnerable, toward her own selfish, small-minded, and, calculating ends. She, like other Big House mothers in **Devoted Ladies**, is too often on Piggy's case. And Piggy, being "possessed, bullied, and fulfilled" by this rhinestone heroine of the Sunday Supplements is only too accommodating for a Piggy's own good:

> How To Look One's Best In Old Clothes was a question that fevered Piggy to her very soul. The passion that was on her to look her very best... was set about miserably by the knowledge that her appearance at Castlequarter in any clothes not in rags would be met by cold scrutiny, and Joan's faint ridiculing voice would examine the matter... And nothing would be left for Piggy but an embarrassed wriggle and an incoherent explanation... (142-3)

Joan is a thoroughly digestible queen. Presiding on the crutch of ceremony, she is little more than the proponent of the winning, rich life of the Anglo family in Ireland. The lifestyle she evokes is the life she lives. Her brother, George Playfair, a man who can speak of jazz musicians as "niggers," and her complacent husband, enjoin her "to do the right thing," and to spare herself judgement, she never does miss their beat. "A practiced interpreter of George's silences," as well as her husbands drift, rebellion is as far from her as unhappiness. She wears the

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tiara because she adopts male ways. "[Bridge-playing] was one of the few things she respected in another woman, for she played bridge with a pious endeavor and retributive vengeance but with little skill. She gave her whole mind to it" (266). Joan's behavior is venal to no one in her world, let alone herself. Her boundaried life, tight and guidelined, hypnotically narcissistic, is that of an image pressed into service to sell an imperial powerhouse.

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Chapter Four: "Elbows and Knees"

> For a fox, a daughter of Aragon, to carry on an affair with an O'Neill from the Mountain was wrong, Grania knew...as the love of black and white people.... Her foot was set now in a strange country... (15, **Two Days in Aragon**)

> Sheena ...was as blonde as a eucalyptus with elegant smoothed limbs such as they have and eyes the colour of those leaves and gentle and Christ-like.... She painted her face absurdly, and chiefly for her own entertainment... and she wore quite literally ragged clothes, but took great trouble over her hair.... [She]...was a creature exiled within herself. Bold and much afraid and most touchingly beautiful. (20,22 **Full House**)

Most of Keane's young women characters are restless and rebellious within the confines of the Big House. Roguish, lilting, Irish in their affinities, they explore the boundaries of, create little ruptures in, and blunder about in, their Fatherland Family. Keane comments on "rogue" categories in her novels, but her daughters personify roguery. Rogues wander wherever they can, without destination, on their own, in need of elbow room. Servants' quarters and workplaces, bogs and mountain fastness, have a natural appeal to Keane's rogues. They are prone to dreams and bones, to encounters with ghosts, to nightmares and fevers, to fireside story-telling. They are selfish and selfless, dependent and independent, self-conscious and unselfconscious, obedient and disobedient. Kicked, they kick; kissed, they spit; cornered, they smoke. Her rogues,

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orphanish and, regardless of their age, adolescent-like, have names like Easter, Grania, Sheena, Slaney, Willow, and yes Prudence and Peter. Created by the very community from which they are excluded and by the Mum they love to hate, they are rather schizophrenic, shadowy figures, dumbstruck and stammering, trying hard to be themselves, and (with the luck of the Irish) rarely succeeding.

Keane's daughters have frank, effortless, almost songlike bodies. They tend to youthful flexibility and slim length. As at ease with their bodies and in their bones as they are with the surrounding natural world, they may connect the two, and find it freeing. Inside their craniums, however, lies the insecurity of adopted selves created by concealed emotions, truths, and counterviews. Circumscribed by camouflage and wordlessness, and alone in lonely Big Houses, they, like the Irish, don't reveal their inmost selves. Defeated in verbal contests, they accept all opportunities for physical release from riding and dancing to gardening and lounging about. They speak and they can't speak back from their bodies. Easter is "wildly speechless when all she [can] not say burn[s] and deafen[s] her whole being; and again times when all secrets of her days [are] poured out in easy luxuriant words" (83-4 **Mad Puppetstown**). This is their self-acceptance. This is their rogue's song.

Lilters and rogues, orphans to tradition, get a better hearing from Irish domestics who share with them traits, attitudes, values, and a world apart. Their rebellion from

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down under, which entails everything from a refusal to rat to a refusal to obey orders, is always egalitarian in spirit. Their affinity can become, as in **Mad Puppetstown** (1931), where Easter Chevington, Patsy Roche, and Paddy Fortune, steal the show, not just an alliance which facilitates a breakout, but outright affection. Rogues and servants share music, outdoor fun and games, chats, skills, news, and wisdom, and sometimes their own language. In **Two Days in Aragon**, Grania Fox risks everything for the love of her housekeeper's son, an IRA operative. It's true that there is the occasional lilter's lapse in these relationships, but the servants, more alert to such mistakes, are, for their part, unfailing. (Critics will certainly question these romantic cross-class alliances, but that is not my intent here). More will be said about this natural affinity in "Speaking Gaelic", Chapter Eight.

"A Rogue's Rising"

Easter Chevington of **Mad Puppetstown** brings to mind, in her modest way, an Irish rising. Her life and house seem to follow the course of the Rising and the Troubles in Ireland. Born in "those full blooded days" of the new century, Easter, "an unattractive and intelligent child," is mostly to herself, but sharply alive. She is the only child of Major Chevington who will die in the Great War. She is the heiress of Puppetstown, her family's grand estate, which like all Big Houses in Ireland at this time, is subject to

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the inner and outer dangers of disintegration and Republicanism. Growing up alone with her twin cousins, Basil and Evelyn, her Aunt Brenda and her Great-aunt Dicksie, Easter is hardly aware of this history and yet attuned to it. Her pattern of independent behavior attests to this: Like the Irish within and without Puppetstown, she instinctually dodges and refuses every plan laid out for her by the Big House scheme. She's too much in motion, and has too much going on inside her brain to be captive to any daughter, lover, or English Lady role. And whatever her failures and successes as a rebel, she is none the worse for wear for her Irish-generated efforts.

Perhaps her Irish- or other-identified self starts from the moment she senses her difference: "Easter was a small, mousy-looking child." "Her eyes were grey and very shortsighted..." She is "a plain little shrimp in her plain flannel nightdress"(6-8). Her gender is a problem to her too, the wearing of anything but sailor suits causing "her agonies of embarrassment." And Evelyn, her cousin, is her envy "because he as a boy [can] presume with so much grace and success over matters like chocolates" (53). Easter is a troublesome girl, perhaps appealing in her boyish physicality ("she looked indescribably of no sex or age"), but dark and different, unable to know her place and with no wish to know it.

She feels enmeshed in her Aunt's and Nanny's obligatory realm, her striving and emotions hemmed in. She

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and her cousins have to turn "their minds and their steps from the freedom and the wild to the immediate prospect of probable censure and certainly the abhorred rites of unnecessary cleanliness"(59).

> "Drink your milk and take off your sandals (and look what you stepped in, Miss Easter. Can you not behave like a lady should?). And lie down beneath your top blanket..." (53)

Her unhappiness is clearly linked to Big House regulations:

> Easter sat upon the edge of her bed swinging her bare shanks. Why at this hour was everything forbidden? Books, pictures, toys, walks abroad, everything that failed to distract or amuse in its proper hour would entrance at this live forbidden moment (11).

She associates Puppetstown with constraint and wishes she could be elsewhere. Books for her are one such magic carpet: "Rigid now with cold, Easter turned page after page, lost, indeed, to all sense of time and place" (15). They are so pleasurable: "Easter lusting unbearably after its enclosed delights; after the fruit that she could touch..."(13) Outdoor life is another exit. It offers a missing social matrix, and most importantly to Easter, her body's freedom:

> Easter's legs quickened, keeping pace with her heart....
> "Who kissed the calves? who kissed the calves?" Easter chanted and ran, setting the time for the first act of the day's play. She fled down a long garden path. Between flights of columbines and spires of larkspur, her brown legs streaked..." (18).

"Pax" on Evelyn, she says, darting about with the boys, beating them at their own game, and making them take notice:

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"after all she was only a girl and could be forgiven when she did these blatantly mean things" (18).

Motion of all sorts keeps Easter free of the ways and means of the proper life at Puppetstown, but perhaps her most effective alternative to the Big House ball and chain is her relationship with the Irish servants. They are like each other, and like the darkside of the Puppetstown they share. Paddy Fortune, an ex-steeplechase jockey, is now "groom at Puppetstown and intimate friend and ally of the children." Patsy Roche, hailing from a line of poachers, is "employed at Puppetstown to clean boots and knives, chop firewood, and carry coals" but is hardly "at hand." To the children, he is a dear and true Irishman.

> The children loved him. That they were entirely forbidden to play with Patsy Roche lent a charming excitement to hours spent in his society. Whatever he did had about it the authentic stamp of artistry.... The children, perceiving here a singleness of spirit that matched well with their own, gave him the strong friendly liking of the young... (31).

The servants are loyal to the youngsters, and in their devilish and enchanting ways hold a special appeal to Easter's secret heart. She can hang out with Patsy in an everyday way, without censure or notice. The servants are like comrades. "She [can] perfectly understand Patsy's attitude towards Mrs Kelly. It [is] so entirely on a level with her own sense of subservient animosity towards authority"(43). She gravitates toward their pub-like work spots. The "divine talks she has with Patsy and Fortune," their intimacy and unthrifty pleasures, free her from

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entrenched thoughts. Their lives are entwined with her coming of age, with the Ming Horse on her mantel which gives her a "curious shiver of delight," with the day to day beauty of Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair mountains, and with that favorite "picture [on her wall] of a lady jumping a post" (85). Gathering strength from their uncanny, questioning ways, and range from their dancing, laughter, and ferret-loving, she grows in awareness. She sees the servants as free from the lectures, duties, and protection of that upper world that she herself eschews. And her Irish streak begins to show, as she shrinks from the unreality of her own place. Before the picture of Queen Victoria, gracing Puppetstown's silvery walls, "a large plain photograph of a small plain lady," her attention drifts "to the more interesting antics of the flies on the ceiling..."(53)

One way she escapes that world of high class breeding, with its teas and boating, its bridge and tennis, and its unabashed courting of British officers, is to hunt with that unrepentant, unnameable Irishman, Jer Donahughe. Jer is the kind of man "who need[s] no whippers in the field, whose hounds...instantly fly to him when he want[s] them." With the hunt in his rugged frame, and the outdoors in his veins, he can make a day of it for any lively youth:

> And Easter's laugh shrilled out on the frosty air. Jer Donohughe's coat was the color of blackberries, his hounds were slim ghosts and his horse a fanciful white moth: Life was a delight, and the stars rang faintly in the skies (96).

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The hunt for Easter is the wings of inspiration; it is the breath of Irish air and contact with all the life around her (see chapter six). And for the Irish lads at Puppetstown who are lucky enough to work this sweet outing it is just as singable. All together are part of the medium of hunting, in that keen sense that she and Jer mean it. Present in small ways, through the long day's myriad events, they belong to Easter's poetic musing at its end.

> A fire blazed up the chimney in Easter's room...a faint curtain of its scent hung ravished about the Ming Horse. A horse was Easter's to-night. She swept the lesser gods away from this ancient idol, and a worship for the delight and frenzy of the chase seized her mind... 'I love,'her heart cried, I love hunting and Fortune and Patsy and Basil--' delight seized here so that she wept (99).

From behind house curtains, however, lurks Aunt Brenda, who to begin with, estimates Easter to be too sharp, rebellious, and brainy for a girl, and whose moralizing strain is well known to her niece. She marks Easter's improper passion, deeming her choice of friends as unfortunate and her hunts as overly intense and dangerous:

> "You know Aunt Dicksie, we must send her abroad or something soon. She's becoming nearly impossible. The only people she wants to talk to are Fortune and Patsy. And she'd rather go out hunting with Jer Donahue and his harriers any day than come out with the fox-hounds. I don't think its any good for her being the queen of the harriers with 10 awful buckeens cheering her over every fence she jumps and giving her quite a wrong idea of her own importance, do you?" (131)

She would send her defective niece to England without regard for her given situation, for her Ireland, and least of all, for her Irishness.

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Easter will have to go to England, but at the IRA's, not her governors' behest. Before this separation occurs, however, her peer environment, in Ireland, offers one more binding experience. A daring day-trip to Man (a mountain retreat) at a time of heightened IRA movement offers Easter opportunities for risks and balances. First, Patsy's dire warnings against the trek only fire Easter's resolve, for she not only knows that he is a "covert" IRA runner, truly sympathetic to his people's cause, but that Puppetstown's continued wining and dining of British officers must target her home for destruction.

Troubles for her party arise first at the mountain village of Clohamon, where Easter, in the face of her cousins' baiting, stands up for the begging tinkers: "They were friends of Easter's, it seemed, so the boys said no more against them, poachers and idlers they might be" (138). Then Easter is especially taken by the weathered and wrinkled man-- "he too was a retreat and a harbor for the fugitives" -- whose son is one of the lads on the run. At serene Man, the lake and mountains provide her with this insight:

> "I will never be a lovely or womanly woman." Easter was lying on her back eating a hard-boiled egg towards the sky, "I will always be shy and rather dirty and I will always have hot hands."(144)

And while Easter is calibrating her unpretty identity at Man, a British officer has been calibrated at Puppetstown; and Patsy's offering of safe passage home

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notwithstanding, the jig is up for the Chevingtons in Ireland. Old Aunt Dicksie who would "rather be shot" in Ireland than live in England "on purpose," and her able "Prime Minister," Patsy Roche, hold on at Puppetstown, but Easter is diverted off to the stolid upper class world of her relatives in England. She is then sent off to Paris (her cousins being steered to Eton and Oxford), where she is "taught how to use her eyes and a lipstick" which she has "not yet learned to put to any really devastating effect" (182). Back at Luddington Court, construct of the Crown, she is no less a bust, bowing there to her cousin's fiance Sarah, whose body is "disciplined to beauty," ("her mind as subdued") and carved out of "scent for an autumn personality," ("essence of vixen, I presume," says Easter) (209-10). The whole place is a net to ensnare her.

But at Evelyn's Oxford party, drawing on what he calls her "cheap wit," Easter can take revenge on the "marvelously fresh girls," "with whom she could never compete," and be enough of a woman to be out of control as a woman.

> Through the rest of the night Easter danced and laughed. Everywhere Basil saw that pink dress and those burning, wide eyes in her small brown face. Her success verged on the vulgar. She cut dances with him and dances with Evelyn with shameless regularity. Going into some one else' rooms... there was Easter, every nerve excited, the center of some splendid and indecorous joke (223-24).

Following this surge of unabashed accusation and courage, her stubborn, sulking center collapses:

> It hurt her to cry, it bruised and wounded and tore her to a reality of suffering.... She could not abide this

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> need and this emptiness... she hid her unwanted body away from this unkind tomorrow and slept (225).

She is too sullied, dark, and thin, too commonplace and misplaced for this white, form-laden world, its noble pillars staring down at her.

The music room ghosts of Luddington suggest her way out. Obtruding on their sanctum, Easter is suddenly aware of "lonely voiceless voices and hands unseen." She flees the stinging telepathy, the sadness and terror of these English ghosts, but having "mocked the ghosts of England" by her one false step into their dark, closeted world, Easter bridges a gap. A psychological mechanism now connects her with a different world:

> Her mind was full of idle, indulgent hands, that built for her a bridge between hope and remembrance, that crossed safely over the black and bitter water where she had seen a dream drowning.... And there was a way now bridged and opened to forgetfulness, Easter set her feet gallantly on the bridge.... there came to her a thought of mountains--mountains of a clearest violet and a cold, thin wind blowing... What were the names of these mountains? Their names? If she had their names she was charmed for ever. Why should she think of a horse now? ...the ancient strange horse... (239)

The "settled stable blood" of England is ice-cold and Ireland is heartwarming. Easter flunks the former's diploma of virtuous Ladyhood and is offended by its downheartening suggestion of a love affair with her own cousin, Evelyn. She has her own standard and Ireland is its place. Like a tree in the wind, she leans back toward Ireland, toward its people, its ancient mountains, its wildness. Puppetstown is saved and it's hers now that she's of age. In Picadilly, on

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the way home, Basil sees her as "very slight and green" and "as pleasing to the eye as a little wood," and compared to her English school friend, Flower, whom they meet there, "a thin green wood-cut," "brown," and with "nervous hands and unvarnished nails." But Easter, spotted and slight, may not wish for or get, the camouflage of escape.

For if England runs out for Easter, Ireland scarcely begins. Aunt Dicksie, the seasoned possessor of Easter's own Puppetstown, is now as ready to endure her niece as she was the Shinners. Her chilling presence disturbs Easter's whole self-sense:

> Easter was staring into the mirror... Conceited too, Aunt Dicksie thought, conceited and self-possessed. But it was her own trim, unwanted little face that Easter saw, not her own self so alone as she was, but red carnations blotted in the glass against the deep reflection of the night sky.... Romantic, passionate, Spanish, was the sight, and it flew to Easter's heart, flooding her with a terrible wine of self-pity (259).

This island of her nanny's is too impoverished in spirit, too lacking in heart, too unlike Ireland. She is supposed to be as egoless and uncomprehending as Patsy who, alone with the "fanatical," "absolute mistress," Aunt Dicksie, lives in a different register now. Easter has left one ghost-house for another and is convinced that "Puppetstown has always been like this--stale and still." Her world is indeed "spinning on an axis of crowded, trivial miseries...all abominable," a world of "broken china" and "broken hearts."

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Basil is one of the fragments of her life she is trying hard to gather. Their relationship is too self-conscious and flat. Why (at Picadilly) did he have to say: "We aren't in love, we haven't the blind minds of lovers. So places and things matter awfully to us," (232)? Yet it is Basil who, at this moment of Easter's despairing of Puppetstown, blows the right music. Easter needs a break, he says, and a ride to Bunclody, a crossroads town, containing the "smallest house in Ireland," might answer. She takes him up, observes the life and music (see chapter seven) of this poor Irish shelter and finds "the end of charm again.... Easter's heart [is] ringed with a hoop of flame" (286). The mountains and Ming Horse return to her again: "The charming spell was laid on her again. She was entranced and delight and excitement sang in her..." (287). The sudden swing toward her own and Puppetstown's self-making is as Irish as Patsy and the "small house" he himself had first mentioned. The wind has gotten through to her, but can it, in the end, carry her old rogue's spirit? What about that greatest thing, love? "Herself and Basil in love with only Puppetstown, both of them." Is Puppetstown itself enough for an Easter rising?

"Black Rogue"

Grania Fox, the unaccountable, slumbering giant of **Two Days in Aragon**, is a darker, more truly **other** rogue. Grania, after her namesake, Grania Uaille, an Irish woman

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rebel and chieftain, is in contrast to Easter, earthy, sensual, and compulsive:

> Grania was a fat little blond with pretty bones under her flesh; rather a slut, and inclined to wear party shoes with old tweeds. She would be in her bath and would forget to wash very much, but she had a great hand in curling up her blond hair, of which she was very vain. Three of the most marriageable young men in the County Westcommon had asked her to marry them; but they had no skill for love-making so she refused them all and returned to Foley O'Neill, who embraced her in woods and other out-of-the- way places... (6).

It is this stray-cat passion for Foley O'Neill that propels her rebellion at Aragon, as it does her identification with Irishness. To Nan O'Neill Fox, Aragon's administering housekeeper, and to the Big House tradition she upholds for the Foxes, this affair with her son is far beyond the Pale:

> For a Fox, a daughter of Aragon, to carry on an affair with an O'Neill from the Mountain was as wrong, Grania knew to Nan as the love of black and white people... (15)

That Foley is a black Irishman, "ferret-like" and decriable to his own mother and that Grania is faulted for even knowing him--

> "It must be a terrible strain getting in by eight o'clock with such a fascinator. What do you talk about when horses are finished? The Irish Republic, I suppose, and whose going to get shot from behind a ditch next. And which of the brave boys will do the job" (147).

--is motive enough for Grania's resolve. And she, in the magnitude of her love, the more generously wishes him for herself, her whole person changing around him. "Her foot was set now in a strange country and its ways were before her" (15). Foley is everything she can love:

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> Grania was far too young and inexperienced to take love at all lightly. The idea of passing love was not born in her.... She thought everything in him and of him was for her, as he was the breath of life and the only meaning of love to her, so she must be to him. She had no doubts of him whatever. She was only unquestioningly wildly glad that by a miracle he had found her to love. She pinched her fat arms now, hurting herself into the knowledge of reality (59-60).

Her hugs tightening, she "[is] absolutely confident in Foley's love for her" (26).

But Grania's transforming love is not reciprocal. Foley can roll with her in the wet grass, and feel the thrill of her runaway loving, the warmth of her illicit embrace, and yet turn his eyes from her truth. There is no romance in this Irishman, not for the likes of Grania. Is it his Irishman's "social inferiority?" Why can't a bold, beautiful man, an outsider like herself, match her wild conviction? The answer may lie in a power-for-love trade of his making, one, ironically, not unfamiliar to Aragon, a place off limits to the likes of him. The notorious master-servant sexuality of the Foxes over the years may be more than a blood legacy. (One notes his sexual "kinks"). Perhaps the crux of his rejection of Grania is his conformity to the very ruling power that Grania rejects in loving him. Isn't Grania too damn demanding, too sure of her sexuality, too grand in her loving? Doesn't she lower herself, in a common, Irish way? (Sex was "vile to [Nan's] mind" too once she took control of Aragon).

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He shocks, almost breaks Grania with his anemic and then hostile response to her suggestion that she might have a baby:

> His voice disturbed Grania. There was nothing in it of what she had supposed would be there for her if she told him this. There was no tenderness, only rough alarm (80).

When she realizes this is no aberration, she can only recoil "in a dizzy little panic" from the abyss he presents her with, warning herself away from "this stranger."

> Always she had followed his mind in doglike devotion, in apt anticipation. It was not such a business really. His mind was not so complicated. But that hers should go with it was one of the miracles of this loving. Now how short a way his love and mind might go with hers (81).

Foley can go as far with Grania as the amplitude of her body can take him, beyond which lies the unknown territory of his mistrust in which passivity and hate rule.

> Foley wanted nothing of her beyond this. She was no real mate for him. He did not understand her... He did not once in his mind cross her mind. Her very freedom in love seemed shameless to the peasant in him... It was against all his beliefs and all his conscience. Nothing was engaged in it but his body... Between their secret meetings he was full of fear and disgust at himself, and a kind of coarse pity for Grania. For she was doing everything he most despised in woman, there was nothing he could at all respect about her (82-3).

It is his ponderable stunted psyche which fails to recognize Grania as a human being. And Grania, despite her naked shame, is no home girl, not his.

Nor, of course, is she a home girl at Aragon. If she is a scandal to an Irishman, she is even a greater one too her own Big House. This is her double-bind. Long before Aragon

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learns of her damning secret liaison with Foley, she is viewed as far too overriding in her ways, too impetuous, too black. In fact, to Aragon, she is as Irish, at least by implication, as its loyal daughter, Sylvia, is English.

> Of course Sylvia had her admirers among the young soldiers who were quartered in the garrison town. Why not. She rode well, played tennis well, and though had not Grania's blonde, untidy beauty, she had a birdlike tidy prettiness which was very attractive. Also, with a competent restraint she seldom made an intelligent remark except now and then on the subject of horses (23).

> Sylvia was happily of her age, competent, not wild. Pretty in the right unaccepted way. Nothing embarrassingly clever about her. Everything she had was buttoned up and put away in little boxes (96).

Sylvia is propriety itself, fastidious, frugal, charming, always cool and under control, precise in her movements and dress. She is "as sharp as a lemon," "calculating," and snobbish. She is as white as her tennis game, which she and her symmetrical friends perform with "capable serenity" for the benefit of British officers, and to the detriment of Grania who, as a "bundle of nervous stupidity" (97) is exposed.

> [Sylvia's] fair hair was neatly waved...not one hair ever got out of place in the most strenuous games, unlike Grania's yellow feathers that flew more wildly at every ball she missed. She wore white stockings and white buckskin shoes, white and softer and sounder looking than new tennis balls even (94).

Sylvia is what Grania is not. Grania alone dares to gauge her virginal sister:

> For what was Sylvia saving up? That was the question. Towards what end was that store of secret energy directed. When would the expense of spirit begin? And

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> if she found no object, either man or thing, on which to expend herself, what then? (23)

Her sister has no mystery to her, not in life, nor in love.

> Oh, they're so cool. Love is like a frost with them. She keeps away. He keeps away (82).

> She looked truly set and exactly meant for marriage with the most eligible young soldier possible (94).

Sylvia's demeanor under pressure draws this blunt observation from Grania: "She sat neatly and prettily because that was the way she would have sat even if she was being electrocuted.."

Upon news of Foley's apparent betrayal of Aragon (as an IRA informer), these differences inside Aragon become politicized and sharply intensified. Grania is overwhelmed and feels more alone than ever:

> Poor Grania, poor little lump of passion and grief, tears and despair and exhaustion. What to do? How to save? Who to tell? She was so far removed from Sylvia's dignified frozen acceptance of sorrow. There was no affinity between Grania and these plastic girls (142).

When Aragon's outrage speaks, Grania's understands the true black and whiteness of the situation. Nobody at Aragon can mediate her response--"they were cold creatures outside the ring of her thoughts"--she must take literal stock of her own image.

> She was not missish and well-groomed in the fine joys of girlishness. She was dirty and passionate and generous. She was greedy and had only begun to live. She had not grown steady...settled into any soberness of life. She wanted dangers from horses, and hardship any way she could get it... She knew she could never have enough of the salty earth.... She had gathered her strength in these ways, and Sylvia's decorous probing

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> and gibing did no more than pick the surface of her determination (147).

Grania, so hard, so soft, is about as determinedly Irish as Sylvia is English and as Foley is neutral. "[Grania] had all the unashamed and natural beauty of wild blood." Nature is her chord, and her physical courage. It is also implicit in her outwardness:

> There was something between her and the river water and the blood of the rabbits she shot, and the feel of wind in her bleached untidy hair, and the feel of running, and the new-found delight of something wild...there was something between her and these things that made her strong (147).

Grania creates herself outdoors. If she has no ability to live at Aragon, the landscape in and around it answers its stagnation and her own self-contempt. She has as an authentic sense of the Irish terrain as her green-as- Gaelic aunt Pidgie. And it is through her complicit bond with this outcast aunt, that Grania stockpiles strength.

In Aunt Pidgie's prison room, the shimmering shadows of she and Grania play upon the four walls. Stealthily echoing the same notes, the same sentiments, so far from themselves yet becoming themselves to each other, they understand their long ignorance which comes from Aragon's past. These two yellow-haired women know all, but are unable to tell, except now, tacitly, in the Pidgie's lockup. What they learn, in body and bone, is that their hollow prison is escapable, and that they are "true mates."

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But, revelations at Aragon of Foley's arrest, Grania's affair with him, and the possible pregnancy bring heavy accusations;

> "Think what you're doing--a Fox siding with a rebel! You've got to say something. It looks better" (150).

> "But it's a deeply terrible shocking thing, my child, to let a man like that touch you, and of course if anybody gets to know you have let him then it's too dreadful, it's too dreadful then"(152)

which for Grania are "little wooden words, tapping like weak hammers against a wall of impenetrable passion" (152). They are the insane words of a solitary mother, expressing a domination which compels action.

> Oh, the dry, cold retirement in the voice of an embarrassed elder. The power to harm, the dangerous power to estrange for the rest of human time together, and done so entirely for the best of motives.... Power used without brain blindly, clumsily, from motives of terrible excellence. There is no pity in heaven and none in earth for the tragic holders of such power (151).

> They are dreadful little words taken in the slightest context, but here with life and death to weigh against them they were fatal--they put something like a flaming sword into Grania's hand... (151).

Nan's recriminations against this defective Fox girl only deepen this challenge. "No one must know about this. No one at all. My God to disgrace the house and the family" (155).

> A Fox daughter in vulgar trouble with a servant's child. In just such trouble as the poor country girls who worked in the house had been in with the bad Fox's of all times... (156)

Grania rejects Nan's abortion medicine, her offers of servitude, and pushes past Aragon's dreaded patterns:

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> Ah, what a world to give to the intense and moving passion of so young and unknowing a creature. Every thought Grania had was real and genuine, real down to her silly young bones, untainted by the cynical mistrust with which age and experience and a better...have tortured itself (158).

Drowning but not drowned, she moves to save Foley from British vengeance. But once again, her exertion on his behalf, her reaching towards him with something new of herself, in his moment of need, is met with rejection:

> Something in the way he avoided looking at Grania made her even more the situation than the murdered and their murderers (200).
>
> The Fox man in him found in Grania what Fox's approved only in their mistresses and detested in their wives. "Shut up", Foley said to Grania. "Shut your mouth, will you, will you, you dirty little tart" (200).

She's as dumb to this shadow of a man as to Aragon, because when it comes to her, Foley is Aragon. And her only avenue is attempted defiance: "Blind with tears, Grania stood up. By so much as she had given, by just so much was she apart from Foley now" (202). Her "faith broken," there is little more for her to grasp but this loss, over and over, pitilessly:

> "Oh, don't start that stuff," he spoke with that savage sourness through which men seek to avoid a scene, and through which they precipitate the disaster of untold grievance upon themselves for ever.
>
> Nothing could have been more light and cruel than this careless, vulgar reassurance. His assumption that the affair between them had been as slight to her as to him. It was as if her heart was a little old basket he held in his hands and squeezed its dry frail sides together and threw away the carefully made thing to the dusty winds to play with and rattle through its ribs (209).

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Despite this unyielding nightmare, Grania does witness, at a distance, Foley's escape from Irish shores. At Bungaron, she sees him striding along like his snobbish mom, whose self-betrayal is imminent, "carrying his strong beautiful figure along with unaffected swagger and endless challenge" (211). He is no more than a "sailor in a foreign seaport" to her now, a half-hearted political exile and a betraying lover. And Grania Fox, for all her rebellion, has no thoughts for herself, but suicide:

> But at that time nothing except a strong and natural fear of death kept Grania from wading through the surging weeds into the tide of the sea and the river currents, and swimming with them after Foley's ship until she should have drowned (212).

She proudly returns now driving back into the gentry's valley, where homes are too high to cast their lights onto the river:

> Grania drove past these houses that she knew, feeling as if each held her enemies... Even to-night, in all the great despair of her loss she could imagine the little slights and little politenesses by which these faint houses would put and keep her in her outcast place (213).

Without love, Grania must accept "their long goose faces" and forego defiance. But then she sees Aragon ablaze, recalls Aunt Pigeon locked up, and steps on the gas. Skidding to avoid a greyhound, she crashes, runs the rest of the way, and realizes with "exquisite relief" in front of a burning Aragon, that "she was not going to have any baby... never been going to have any baby at all" (218). Illusions dropped, folly and oppression stopped, Grania's new

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unmelodramatic life may parallel and inhabit a rebuilt Aragon.

"Day-Glo Rogue"

Sheena Bird of **Full House** is a rogue of a white or parti-colored hue. Of motley texture, she is an unacceptable acceptable young woman, of and apart from Silverue. She is a composite of independence and dependence, boldness and self-doubt, reality and dream. Eliza, Silverue's guest, views her, by sealight, as

> ...a creature exiled within herself. Bold and unafraid and most touchingly beautiful. Her defiantly disreputable clothes were such a lovely pose, those hard bare legs, that absurd red skirt with its affected patches, the dark fisherman's jersey...all these were pathetic evidence of a great uncertainty (22).

While John, her unstable brother, moved by "the reality in Sheena," gives us a less conflicted view of his roguish, self-reliant sister:

> Sheena who shut her eyes and her teeth and jumped off the tops of garden walls when she was a child. Sheena who would lie for hours in an agony of stillness watching bird or little foxes playing, impervious to cold or any discomfort, untouched in her faithfulness to the present. And she was so brave and persistent. If she did a thing badly she did not seem to identify herself with it present ill-doing, but with the vision of the thing done well. She was full of brave endeavoring. For the protection of this state she affected moods of aimlessness in which too, she was happy. And never brisk. Dear creature. Dear Sheena (95).

Sheena is more than Silverue's waif. Despite her reluctant spirit, her habitual self-forgetfulness, her naughty "choir boy" looks, she is a rebel of no small means.

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She is unsparingly direct, for instance, in boycotting her queen mother's existence:

> Sheena disliked Olivia very much. Here her tenderness fell short and stopped. She was not even tolerant of her. It was not a case of not caring. She took her dislike of Olivia quite seriously... She loathed Olivia's affectations and posings and lyings... (61)

"Endeavor" and spontaneity are what Sheena embraces. Her wicked and bright reaction to the "terrible luncheon party" she is forced by her mother to attend, is illustrative. Sheena, comfortable herself in her torn stockings and "droppy hat," provokes social discomfort in Olivia's sample boy. More intent on her appetite than on amenities, she rebuffs the best effort at conversation by the "smooth young man" she's supposed to impress, with the bluff indifference of the flapper.

> Olivia...observed her eating with enormous rather slothful greed and paying so little attention to the remark of her neighbor that Olivia longed to kick her into good manners (87).

Sheena, in fact, carries her gumption to a great number of situations. As her mother's peer, she resents her insufferable "airs." She faces down her commands and daringly, as occasions arise, flouts most proprieties. She can also be "industrious" and

> ...embark unhesitatingly on the most appalling projects such as: the running of gymkhanas; theatricals for just causes; the making of gardens...(as unlike Olivia's as possible); the breeding of ferrets... (60).

Silverue, is a squeeze for Sheena's activism, however. And unable to bear things, she opts for Storybook passion. But the dramatic inward self hardly answers the anti-poser

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in her. In escaping her conventional daughter's role, Sheena too effortlessly slips into a lover's role.

> Sheena was awake, lying in a divine romantic lull, her loving thoughts more with herself than with Rupert, but her thoughts of him through all thought.... Sheena was young enough and without experience, she could reach a stage in love like this and rest there like a travelling salmon in a pool.... No one could live in the present moment like Sheena could. Nobody could be so realistic, for she was alive to the moment with an unconscious integrity. She possessed much spiritual industry. Her mind was not lying in a dead water of past hours or future hours, what she had done or would do. It was there with all the time...(86-7).

Sheena's loving seems to serve disguise. It dovetails with the romance movies that she runs off to see with Miss Parker. And it makes up for the losses rebellion entails, but it is a contradictory fit. For Rupert, her lover and "Clean Young British Soldier" for whom "she would never be sufficient mistress of herself to keep waiting," may convey his own superiority, but he unwittingly raises Sheena's Irish too:

> Sheena knew things Rupert did not know. She knew what it had been like with John. She had a true feeling of what John was suffering now. She had achieved in a way the hardness that comes of knowing, a decisiveness in accepting sorrow... (188)

For sheena, like Easter and Grania, refuses to disown her own will, and Rupert in turn offers plenty of startling opportunities for her independence and outrage.

When he breaks off their engagement because of her knotty family history (madness), she counters with: "I'd sleep with you... But I wont marry you" (192). Rupert quavers before Sheena's show of spine, and alienates her by

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his insane jealousy. Later, at a dance party, in a "savage refusal to accept so much pain," Sheena makes another embodied effort to reach him. But Rupert, characterizing her as "behaving with preposterous foolishness, lack of reserve and absurdity," is "furiously and confusedly insulted by her behavior" (231). He next finds her in the bar, self-weary and unwilling to stop drinking:

> She looked dreadful in the wicked unshaded light of the bar, a storm-driven eucalyptus tree, exhausted in resistance. But that was not what she suggested to Rupert. He had harsher names to call her by. For she was his own and she had offended most grossly. She must hear presently what he thought of her. And he thought her pretty cheap. And in all the world most dearly (234).

Dragging her off into a damp schoolroom, where a "huge mushroom grows up through the boards," and where a stifled Sheena must open the window to a rain which is "like branches of cold throngs on her bare arms," he tells her that he hates to see her "making a little ass" of herself," and that the people she's been "playing up to" really think her "cheap" (237). Sheena is speechless and reckless with anger before this toad.

> Sheena would scarcely speak with rage and grief. How could he pretend to need her and then speak of her in this pompous awful way. Nobody had ever spoken to her like this before.... Finding words were such a trouble, although everything she wanted to say was most distinct in her mind (237).

Sheena is "a wilder, truer creature than he [can] ever know." And he finds her slangy reiteration of his willingness to sleep with him simply enraging:

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> I'm angry because its awful for me. Its awful to hear you talking like a tart. Like Silene. Like that bitch, Kirsty. I want you for my wife . I don't want you like that. Tarts. Bitches. You were different. You were mine.... You've failed me (240-41).

Splintered, Sheena takes refuge in a forgotten, hard-tiled bathroom: "She [feels] frozen up. No more tears. Only this unendurable sickness and this loss of love which she cannot face" (241). Eliza finds her looking "like a corpse which she has dragged out of a pond. Nothing could be more unlike Sheena than this sad bedraggled creature" (244).

Her negation, like sin, has stolen the ground from under her. Shadowy fears are accompanied by gin and drugs, and a childlike marriage high gets her through his rejection. Eliza pinpointed this outcome in her first appraisal of Sheena:

> [Eliza] sat there... considering Sheena and thinking how boring it is for the young never to be able to say what they mean, or if they do to hate themselves for saying it. To be young is to care too much. To mind with an agony of spirit. (22).

Now, with her loss of constitution, even Sheena's brand new camaraderie with Eliza is of little avail, and will not survive this single-minded love she bears;

> There was something gone in Sheena. Something sound and distant and remotely holy that had been in her. Something unbetrayed. Her trust and her bravery about life seemed vanquished, and this shaken creature all that was left. This sordid flattened creature who had once been so mild and gentle.... No doubt she would in a measure recover but never entirely.... Eliza, drinking gin out of a tooth-glass considered her with a desperate kind of pity. She must catch hold of herself in a minute and tell Sheena the truth (303).

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which is once again allowed to flower, ironically through Eliza's strong efforts to set the record straight about her parental origin:

> Sheena lay as quiet as a mouse while Eliza told her that she was not Julian's daughter... Life quickened in a creature that perished.... She opened her window and leaned out into the evening. It was as though no house could contain this wild joy. Round her the air seemed charged. She was translated. She was once more the tender enraptured creature who dashed paint upon her face and flung herself immoderately ahead of time towards all assignments. Having no fear or vanity to delay her. Trusting because she knew herself loved and charmed from sorrow (304).

Sheena survives derailment but her new track is grooved to the security of shadowed precincts, to the governance of a fiance. Eliza has rescued her, but under Rupert's purview. Who is Rupert? but a wolf for himself and a sheep for Sheena. And what has happened to Sheena's rebellion against Big House values? The world at large and her negative parts now seem missing. She seems to have lost the whole motive of shaping herself. She has become a simple role, the flakey wife of a British soldier.

> She was as much withdrawn in body from them as in spirit, a creature seen in water and at a distance. A creature unencumbered by gratitude or any sad retrospect.... completed and set apart. To Eliza, now an object out of reach, like some piece of work she had herself created, finding in its completion all power and passion towards it spent, all connection forever lost (309).

Like her brother John, she has gained a certain wholeness, but at the expense of a more engaging and challenging self.

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"Young Rogue"

Prudence Lingfield-Turret of **Young Entry**, the heiress of Lingarry Estate, is a more potent and attractive rebel. She flaunts strictures, assails one juggernaut aunt, shocks the other, and has heart deep relationships with both sexes. She is bright, beautiful; she is a splash in Dublin:

> There was a quality in her that rose, not so much above, as beyond smartness, and that made every **outre** thing she did, or wore, become the only correct procedure, or apparel (125).

She does "things to distraction always," in an "indiscreet," almost "too eventful" life, filled with illicit incidents in illicit places. A tomboy and an ingenue, "her very presence was exasperating, uplifting, and adorable all at the same moment" (174).

Yet Prudence, like Easter, another heiress, feels "ruled absolutely" by her Lingarry guardians. Meant to be "young" forever by these statuesque installations, who wish to remain undeposed when their charge comes of age, Prudence is closed off to openings to adulthood. Life for the joy of it, however, and the experience of being young are, of course, not intended for her either. For Prudence is destined for Big House rule and marriage, and must learn to live within the framework of Anglo propriety. No matter how many sins "she heaps at the doors of Heredity," or no matter that she is "the despair of her guardians, and the joy of all fellow irresponsible," inside herself she feels the strain of Lingarry's present triumvirate. Her desire to

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know and be more of who she is, is always tempered. She can be ecstatic with dancing and Dublin and yet be nearly paralysed by a bitter old aunt? Fear can be stronger than need, and her wait for freedom be too long. Yet Prudence doesn't seem cut to dependency; she has her very own self, her girlfriend Peter, and her Irish servant allies to carry her through.

Her body is her great means of being herself. It seems to speak for her, for all she's for and all she's against. Her boney frame, her low-down clothes, her wily height are the making of a girl who's on her feet. Prudence never, for instance, misses a chance to show her legs, in and out of pants, skirts and jumpers, in men's breeches, on horseback, in muddy rescues, in Vauxhalls and Dodges (she is a "life-size radiator nymph"), or on bikeback:

> She leaped into the saddle like a boy... her knees were up in her ears-- the bicycle being a size too small for her--and her short skirt was anyhow (31).

> Stretching forth a sinuous length of leg--the shapeliness of which even a checked stocking for futuristic design could not quite disguise... (32).

Even "beneathe a loose coat the lines of her were sure and sweet." "Forever pulling down her eternally rising skirt," she even ruffles Toby, her jaunty boyfriend, who wonders whether her clothes ever stay on. For the race-meeting with him, forbidden by her aunt, she gathers up her confidence by dressing in "flame-coloured knickers," a small red hat "to match" and pale, fine-smoke colored silk stockings. Sassy? To herself, yes, but to Toby, and here we sense the shadow

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of marriage as a continuum of the bind of family, she appears, with her "heart-shaped face" and "innocence" to be a Pre-Raphaelite doll:

> There was something nearly saint-like about her.... She looked...rather as if she had stepped down from a stain-glass window, strangely well-appointed for a race-meeting....; the gold of her hair, an irrepressible aureole... (84)

Her moment to breakout is his moment to contain. Nevertheless, her body continues to assert itself. Later, when her fainting requires Toby's close attention, her suspenders kick out: How was he to know, "dammit...where the brutes began or ended."(130) Yet, her gal, Peter, sitting atop a pig-sty and watching her buddy rag and wrestle with Toby below, doubts her sexual appeal:

> She's so madly chaste, she never realizes how absurdly beautiful she is. Mostly bone, of course. But it's such superb bone.... Is she attractive to men, I wonder? (77)

And it's true that Prudence's tumbling, like her dance floor athleticism, and her horsemanship, does prove a leg that's more than show:

> Prudence had a beautifully looking seat on a horse. Her flat shoulders moved and set so easily; unlike most girls, she used her thighs, instead of riding in that hideous, balanced fashion... (103)

In any case, it is to Prudence's ends to be both physical and sexy. If she lifts herself up like a dancer, and seems to get her own way more often than not, her survival as a human being, under the imposed burdens of Lingarry, depends on it. She must be irreverent to meet the insinuations of her spiteful and discriminating guardians,

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Gus and Kat, whose starched authority, she alone (as heiress), is expected to uphold. Besides, they find it paramount to lord it over her in all matters of personal choice, which begin and end with her body. They find her dress, for instance, "sickening" and disgustingly "exhibitionist," and invest a cargo of attention in her bad girl's body, perceiving it as flushed with suggestiveness and sinister motives. It is Gus who tries to teach her "The Facts of Life:"

> In her wisdom, Gus had indeed succeeded in awakening a measure of sex-consciousness which, like a barbed entanglement of mushroom growth, for the moment effectually separated Prudence and Toby (166).

Prudence is pretty poison to Gus, and chastity is invariably implied and promoted in her abiding opposition to Prudence:

> It was really too absurd that this old aristocrat should make her feel as though there was something morally wrong, low and dirty, in the sight of that clean-limbed girl, as she streaked across the court, with a controlled swiftness which was grace itself (17).

> It spoiled things so--all this endless and exasperating stress which they laid so painstakingly on virginity. For, really it amounted to that and nothing else (165).

Gus's words can blazon "searingly upon [Prudence's] brain," making a home in her very being:

> ...some rather brutal remarks made the previous evening, the memory of which still scaled in hot, pricking waves over Prudence's body, while their half-truth forced itself sickeningly and unrelentingly upon her consciousness (95).

Her unselfconscious virginity and her bodily composure are jeopardized by their sickening concerns on behalf the god of

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Decency. "'Damn it'". Prudence longed to say, 'I've got **some** clothes on...but ancient custom prevailed" (18). Lingarry, in all its "ugly stateliness," a "foul place," with "two ugly beasts inside," makes of Prudence a "mere cipher. Gus's "Authority" sits on Prudence, denying the possibility of change:

> The old inhibition of her fear of Gus, like a fast-rooted fungus, spread its clammy hands through her brain, to paralyse her will and fill her with a sickening anticipation of the evil yet to befall (89).

Prudence's compelling, square-up relationship with her girlfriend, Peter Trudgeon, offers no such restraint. The great affinity of these two rogues is strong enough to withstand any old pressure, inside or out. Theirs is "no warm, unstable, flapper friendship, but a deep interest," their "very differences form[ing] ties between them." They are "truly intimate," body-to-body, clothes-to-clothes, mind-to-mind friends of the same sex, hanging out, pranking, hunting, and speaking the same slang. Only Peter's opinion counted for Prudence: "Prudence's eyes shone at this depiction of her own entrancing personality." And Prudence's worldly charm and influence was a draw to Peter: "You're the world's most kissable person, and you see red when you're kissed." "You've got an extravagant **mind.**" Their life together is a happy medium through which they see a great many things. "It [is] everything for each of them."

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But the co-optive structure in which they live is another matter. At the very possibility of Peter marrying,

> Prudence felt a nasty jag of misery, thinking that she herself would be, perhaps, the first one proscribed. All her love for Peter rushed over her. She longed to cry out: "Don't... Don't **do** it, Puppy. "

That Prudence truly loathes Peter for this, and that she feels the possibility of abandonment is real enough. For Peter "knows with utter certainty that she is ready unhesitatingly to sacrifice her friendship to her love." And Prudence "realizes that the sacrifice has begun..." (246) The fact that the man in question is a "dam Saxon," an ex-colonial officer, too English, too old, too obsessed with his foxes, and too indifferent to herself, only leaves Prudence more alone. She can just picture Peter's life with him:

> She would hunt all the season, in a manner bordering on the religious; take a fishing in Norway in the summer; return for Peterborough hound-show, Clonmel, and the Dublin Horse-show; and after that, cubbing to do all over again. Lost to Prudence--lost for ever (166).

What is Prudence suppose to do now? "Marry Toby?" The downward drift toward **Young Entry's** rosy ending begins here. Both young women seem about to be neatly integrated in an Anglo-Irish frame which assures their ultimate dependency. The harsh language of Peter's "reconciliatory" letter and Prudence's response to it takes for granted the throttling world surrounding them.

> "You won't approve of my engagement...but I want you to know that it is such a big thing to me, that I almost don't care what you think about it, one way or another.

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> I expect you'll feel the same whenever your own comes off..." (271)
>
> "Tony and I, Tony and I"; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.... Prudence's thoughts were wandering off on cold, shuddering little expeditions (272).

Something gives way in Prudence. She's "alone in this cold house," unarmed and spurned in this single Big House.

A quieter, more lasting affinity exists between Prudence and Lingarry's servants. Simple contact with the Irish-- Peter calls them "the people"-- in a severely restricted Anglo society, is an opportunity Prudence cannot ignore. Treated alike by the Punishers as "scapegoats" and "slaves" and "assumed [by them] to be liars and shirkers," Prudence and her pals are nonetheless free agents in each others' company; their very humanity, and equality being a protest of the standing order.

> "Thank you, my dear. Since when, may I ask, have I been in the habit of **abusing** my servants? I should also be interested to learn how it is that you are so familiar with the disgusting details of their--their private lives? Yes, tell me that, Miss! 'Highly-strung,' Faugh! disgusting...! the impertinence--I never !" Miss Augusta fumed her way out of the room.
>
> Prudence, slightly shrugged her thin shoulders...and made her way out by a circuitous route towards the stable yard (47-8).

Prudence, for her "Irish" affinities, is seen as part of the "red aura." She is close to "her great crony" and "poacher and poet," Mickey Grogan; to Lingarry's chef, Mary Kierney; to John Strap, groom; but most specially, to James, the butler, "the poor old lad," who is even closer to her than Patsy is to Easter: "Prudence, who had loved with passion

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in her childhood, still discussed all her affairs with [James]." (40) He is everywhere in her life, absorbing the widest range of her emotions, offering affection, timely care and comfort, casual companionship, and even enjoying a familiarity with her similar to Peter's. He spies, "borrows," and conceals on her behalf. He calls Aunt Gus "the devil's own dart" for making a bonfire of her shameless "red bonkers and darling hat," warning Prudence, from a "plantation man's" vantage, "now always beneathe her sway ye'll be." Prudence, on her side, is castigated for hanging out in James' pantry, is called a "low woman of the streets" for wearing his waders fishing, and is generally abused for enjoining his part. The very idea of his dismissal is a "calamity" to her. "Well, if James goes, I'll go too," she announces with finality.

Prudence's relationship with Mary Kierny whose "strong, unstable forces of emotion" has found an answering emotion with herself, also draws ire from above. When she hears of Mary's haunting suicide--against her Aunt's command she tried to prevent the first attempt which led directly to Mary's firing--she blames Gus:

> "Mary--poor Mary! Mary, who was always so nice about the dogs' food... And to have such a slow cruel death:" Prudence visualizing it horribly, was shaken by an agony of anger against Gus (100).

It is James' ghost stories in the wake of Mary's death which kicks off the county-wide rumor that a servants rising is imminent. A mere specter, of course, but to Prudence, in her

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chance meeting with Mary's poverty-stricken Irish mother, it is more. She learns that the weight this distressed woman bears over a daughter's suicide is a mere wave in a tide of troubles which, like poverty itself, is not likely to turn. A shadow cast on the wall of the cabin by the old woman in the form of a "giant ferret," almost spins Prudence in the direction of Ireland. Only more pressing problems about her own uneasy future seems to prevent this outward move.

To marry or not to marry? This is the question lying beyond the impress of this Irish rat. This is the grey shape that even James cannot chase from his defenseless pal:

> The blue shadows, which lay like still water, beneath haunting eyes; the droop of her neck on the smooth shoulders; the shaded lights weaving colour in the ashes of her hair; these things made {Toby] helplessly aware of her. Yet Prudence, the essential, the unexpected, the distracting Prudence, seemed to have quit her lovely, gaunt body to-night, leaving an automaton self behind (284-85).

No longer the "demon," no longer unafraid, Prudence, body and soul, has nowhere to go. How can she be gone on Toby, whose life is now daily bound by the same gentlemen's club code adopted by Peter's own Major Countess?

> To ride a hunt, or a race, as it should be ridden; to tie a very taking fly; fish seriously; shoot straight; and some day hunt a pack of hounds (248).

But it is Toby who knows only too well that there are two parts to his Prudence, one of "endurance and quite incredible muscularity," and one of quick submission to another's will. It is he who "used to submission" from

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young women, confidently pins his hopes for marriage on his own status (imagined here by Prudence:)

> Hunting, dancing, racing, meant for her Toby, and Toby's car; gave her the pleasing consciousness that less lucky girls were saying: "That? That's Prudence. Prudence Lingfield-Turrett, Toby's last. He doesn't do badly for himself , does he? She's... desperately attractive, don't you think? Wild as a hawk." (253).

and on Prudence's frayed helplessness. And Prudence, worn out by Lingarry, is ready to oblige him. Any accident will do, and to a horse-thrown woman in distress, Toby is a sane and strong presence:

> For one dreadful minute Prudence felt as though all her lifetime had been a gigantic struggle; a struggle to escape from something which pinned, and held, and crushed her to the ground; something ungovernable and violently strong. Then she was caught beneath the arms and swung up and away.... It was Toby... (104).

And Prudence, her unchallenged impulses now subject to guidance, is beyond roguery. Destined to marriage, and domiciled , her breakaway efforts are, in the end, the answer to Aunt Gus's prayer to the Deity that her charge be "a blessing and not a curse."

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Chapter Five: "If Dogs Run Free"

> She was exciting. Things, one felt, would happen around her. Like the woman who rode to Banbury Cross, 'rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,' Mary was a factor for disturbance. (30, **Taking Chances**)

> Here was no soft girl for her to mould, or silly to expose, but a subtler, hardier type, someone whose beauty and power of living, giving and taking would be within her own knowing discretion to expend or reserve. "Experienced type, not nice," was the phrase which best described Sally... (92, **Loving Without Tears**)

> Jane was mad with excitement. She had fallen off Miss Smith twice and had not hurt herself. She was filled with an enormous sense of achievement..."I was sitting on air and holding on by Miss Smith's head; it was ages before I hit the ground..." It had been enthralling morning...a more definite excitement than she had ever known before. (277, **Devoted Ladies**)

Outsiders, generally in the guise of guests, lovers, or visitors, constitute another grouping of protesting women in Keane's novels. These stubbornly real women serve as Keane's conduits of meaning. They are prouder, maturer, more outspoken, less inhibited, and more self-assured than their younger counterparts. When rogues themselves, they are a brand darker, tougher, and sexually bolder. But for one dubious exception, they are never mothers, and they are never girls. Whereas the lilters of chapter four are markers of rebellion, these are marked women, their revolt, as with the Irish with whom they identify, lying in the very nature of the outsider. No matter what they're like, and

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they vary immensely, they are perceived as public selves in a private world and, as such, potentially disruptive. What they commonly achieve, and how they're commonly perceived, as creators, catalysts, and foreigners, represent their common, Irish-related, threat to Anglo-Ireland.

All of these formidable women are in endless discord with the naturalized hierarchy of the Big Houses they inhabit. For one, they acknowledge and/or experience desire that comes from non-rational places. Being out of control means to them either the closing in on or the crossing of boundaries, whether physical or emotional. Riding, experiencing horse, terrain, and self as one; surrendering to what the body suggests; experiencing desire, daring, gallantry, and grace; is one important means of holding this power. Love itself, confident, insistent, and pagan, tries to match this spontaneous emancipation, but personal and societal walls are fundamentally prohibitive. The language of love "that's not been told or given," enough to grasp in itself, is especially hard for Keane's outsiders, who are prisoners of the Big House in which they are guests, and of the Bigger House in which they, as women, reside. Nevertheless, their belief in Self, always in-the-making, is the eye of the hurricane to a structured world.

In actuality these women are more invasive than destructive; more uncompromising than frightening, bringing creative disorder to the halls of Authority and Isolation. They discern the carefully cultivated fictions, the

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hypocrisy, and the conventionality of Anglo-Ireland, and insist on their own ways, their own society, and their own unconventionality. Their imagination (some are artists or writers) questions a monolithic, closed-off, and lonely environment, and offers the wings of desire to those within it. Undifferentiated as French, Spanish, American, or Londoners, they are viewed like Irish inmates, bearing the mark of "the other." Cynthia, "that rebel Queen," of **The Rising Tide**, has no fear for herself, her family, or for Rathglass when the Republican forces, whom she knows close hand, sweep through her county undeterred. But all alike, outsiders and Irish servants, although just there be-ing in a Big House brings within a sharper, clearer air, if not an expose of muddled ruling modes, are unwanted freaks of nature to their hosts who would prefer to bid them 'good riddance.'

"Sensuous and Searing"

Mary Fuller in **Taking Chances**, Keane's quintessential outsider, is white heat to Sorristown's unrelenting status quo. Exploring what is to her the dark country, this uninhibited free spirit scorches its alien souls. While Prudence of **Young Entry** is an Irish lass, Mary is an Irish goddess. She is the "divine essence," the "vision," and to Jer, at least, "a radiant treasure," an "unleashed tiger," Venus and amazon in one. Her defiance of containment begins with her "Egyptian cigarettes" and "snake-skin handbag" and

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moves to her "lawless heart." She's vivid, and spell-binding, and cleanly pagan:

> ...she was wild and sweet and witty, and, to look at, the direct subtraction of all morality (107).
>
> She was exciting. Things, one felt, would happen around her. Like the woman who rode to Banbury Cross, 'rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,' Mary was a factor for disturbance.... No trick of colouring enhanced her rather pale fairness, but there seemed to burn within her a secret flame of never-ceasing possibility (30-1).

Jer, her most sympathetic companion at Sorristown, notes her brilliant freedom.

> He saw her...run down the steep flights of steps and across the lawn, exquisitely accompanied by a red setter whose movements and beautiful shape typified exactly the same measures of undirected carelessness that was Mary's attitude towards the things life does to you....
> Jer, who was always seeing fresh angels in Mary's beauty, was suddenly filled almost with awe by the swift enchantment of her (210-11).

As an unstoppable romantic, Mary can be more destructive of Anglo-Irish entrenchment than the hell-bent Irish Conroy's. Her size, given Sorristown's scale, is indeed immodest.

> A sudden sensation of delight in her own self overcame her; yielding to it vehemently, she stripped her body bare, and standing on the wreckage of torn shoulder-straps and poor split cobwebs of madly discarded underwear, she gazed with nearly humble interest at her own beauty. The mysterious thick pallor of her skin had the elfish loveliness of a straight peeled rush... Stepping up to the mirror, Mary kissed herself on the mouth....
> Then she laughed aloud and looked about her new strange room, seeking reality again (115).

Clothes and body are as much Mary as are the her movements and thoughts. And she is no more indifferent to them

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either: "She took up, wrestling her so nearly naked body into a garment, which was not so much a dress as an inspired indiscretion..."(37) But for her even clinging clothes can be counterfeit, as unnatural to her as to a dog, especially when Rowley, her prince, is to be her witness;

> "Oh well, let's dress. What shall I look? Pure and holy, or bold and bad? Pure and holy. No, he might be filled with compassion for my youth and innocence then. All right, I'll be bad. No, Ill be demure or mysterious....Squiff,if only he could see me in my just--nothing-at-alls. Squiff, you immoral dog, you can always be seen in your just-- nothing-at-alls, that's why you get off so strong."
> In the end Mary looked much like herself, her elf-like self, clothed in a dress inspired to express the elusive, vagrant quality of her beauty... (116).

Mary's rabid physicality is lost on no one at Sorristown. She sends quivers of delight through her outlived Aunt Edythe: "Her legs, her eyes...her mouth, her lovely clothes--the creature quite goes to my head" (63). For Jer, with whom she is remarkably at ease, her bodily person expresses all of reality, hers and his. A drawer of hers "full of quite the most immoral lot of nighties" he's ever seen, gives him quite the "cheap thrill," and elicits this response: "Jer, they're **not** immoral. Why, they're all nicely monogrammed--every one." (112) With Jer she is plainly herself, open and entertaining. "I suppose Jer that it never makes you feel perfectly drunk to look at yourself?" she says, flirting with self-idolatry. When Jer fumblingly refers back to her "t-topping" dress," she doesn't miss a beat: "It's...not a **dress**; only really nice girls wear dresses--clever ones undress either by design or

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by accident" (117). It is Jer who she hurriedly calls on to pack her elopement things:

> His eyes went hopelessly from one slip of vivid colour to another, where her dresses hung in close-packed line, their edges neatly showing.... Stockings were easy--he had known they would be. But when it came to underclothes he shut his eyes and grabbed a few layers off every pile of intoxicating rainbow colour that he could see (259-60).

He can only stand back and admire the trembling presence of such a wily woman: "he cared for Mary's hopeless self so much that he would never trouble her with the love that was in him for her enthralling body" (214-15).

But in Sorristown, Mary's open being is idolatry. And punishment must come in the form of Roguey, whose life seems unattached to any other aim. Mary has to fight off his approaches, tolerate his obtuseness and dull coercion, serve as his object for worship and sex, and bear the unreality of being his wife. Around him she feels physically depressed, "hopeless and sullen towards herself" in a way which is "not shame, but curiously allied to shame." She "stiffens helplessly in his arms," feeling the choice between scorn and admiration:

> Mary's whole mind was a stiff blank, as cold as her body; her throat hurt her in a queer, terrible way, as though she was going to cry.... Everything was so hopeless, because everything shrieked and hurt.... Because things could never be any better (191).

The dual monologues he sets up only accentuate her alienation and solitude. Sorristown's profanity to her seems at one with his inescapable presence, with his using up the air and space she needs to speak and act.

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The sorrow she feels around Rowley, by comparison, is one of subtle abandonment. He experiences her as a trace of "pagan air: elusive, exiting, almost not there; a snare and a delusion to befool the memory" (45). She is an "enraptured Presence," at once a strange goddess and a fashion plate, too impenetrable and too radiant for simple loving, yet certain to be his possession:

> Rowley, following her into that blue room of hers, watching her thin, unreal-looking legs...her narrow hips and shoulders set, it seemed, almost to music; that small and passionate face, ancient as frailty, with its hot mouth and cool, estranging eyes, knew that she was his--that was all. (224)

And she has no answer at all for his "damned devils" which she must continually protect herself from. Maeve, meanwhile, with all her claptrap about "morality," endlessly chafes her for being a "loose creature:"

> Maeve, watching Mary's slender, strong body, knew that had she herself been expecting a child she would not have rushed about to dances, or bought new intoxicating dresses..." (186)

And the penetrating look from her quavering, triumphant arch Aunt Edythe sickens Mary: "Her chuckling, unspoken insinuation of lewd comradeship penetrated Mary's armour of aloofness, making her feel...a grimy little slut" (137). Under the "disdain from the prying eyes" of her aunt, she feels depreciated:

> She who had loved her body, had never cared who took pleasure in the sight of it, being not so much immodest as unselfish on the subject, hated it now. It had let her down and tricked her and made a brute of her again (127).

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She is no Mary Magdalene to herself and her sexuality verges on swagger.

But Mary can take this infliction. She is very much her own, body and mind. She can ride the current of passion alone. Moth, an old mare, "wise," "rare," "fast,"and "undefeatable," introduces her to Ireland proper, all "in the right way."

> ...the joy of riding a thing that was such a lovely mover as the Moth bit into Mary's whole being with gladness....
> ....
> Lovely, lovely, lovely! Up on the hillside Mary watched and listened, thrilled to her heart's core. there, with a wild country round her, a good horse under her on which to get over it... (81-2).

Riding, she surrenders to the movement of her whole body.

> Herself, her horse... flowed and overflowed and re-charged with a fresh delirium of excitement Mary's whole being. Again she knew that this, this glorious triumph of the body, is the end to which all who love sport bravely are bred. It is the one, the only thing. Rowley was to her now not even a memory; Roguey was just the world's best pilot; her horse and herself alone mattered, alone were one (144).

In her surge of energy, she reaches that secret pride of the horse, that ancient symbol of Ireland. She rides the wild power of her 'Moth.' She courses the hare with a willful, even joyful lack of control. "Her blood sang through her veins--not blood any longer, but wine and life. To the hunt belong the hottest, most glorious moments Life can give... There was no equal for the sensation that was with Mary now (87). Incautious of "the spice of danger," she experiences it to everyone's dismay but her own. But risk puts her

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outside the Big House dog and pony show. Prior to one of her chancy outings, Jer notes her

> ...exquisitely accompanied by a red setter whose movements and beautiful shape typified exactly the same measure of undirected carelessness that was Mary's attitude towards the things life does to you (210).

And Mary does ride Conroy's "forbidden" horse, the one that will kill her husband

Because Mary wants something, or some self, in her to break, she must throw herself wholly into an action. And the Irish hunt too, is an earthshaking experience. It is a form, an adventure that penetrates to the heart of life:

> Fox-hunting with its difficult science, ritual, its hardness, is the one thing that stands alone in life for those who love it--the one thing that cannot be shared or halved; and if the spice of life live in you, never can you lack forgetfulness of all else in life beside it (134).

It is a new condition, a full note, a choreographed motion from inward to outward. The hunt, converging with romance, places one outside the Pale, and outside its own brand of romance:

> Again she knew that this, this glorious triumph of the body, is the end to which all who love sport bravely are bred. It is the one, the only thing. Rowley was to her now not even a memory; Roguey was just the world's best pilot, herself and her horse alone mattered, alone were one (144).

despite "the gentle but rakish loveliness" that a Rowley might get out of her way on horses:

> He couldn't help it. He was smitten with the remembrance of a wise little horse, and a foolish girl whipping and spurring her into the traitorous green enamel of a really soft bog (95).

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Loving itself, of course, is a less material and magical option for Mary. Personal truth rarely gets expressed from a monumental foundation and patriarchy exceeds Sorristown itself in its archaic, hierarchical restraints. But Mary tries to connect her hunt's unaccommodating spirit with love's:

> "I think hunting is like love--the same sort of excitement. You're uncomfortable and cowardly waiting at some covert, and then suddenly you're swept into madness; you can't help yourself, you **must** get on--" (34).

And love for Mary is also taking chances. Rowley does have his moments for her:

> When he spoke--which he did with pleasant assurance--everything about her seemed for a fraction of time arrested, spinning of a second wildly in unknown space, before dropping back into a normal plane (28).

But love is more often something apart, "beyond consummation," distinct from that of her lover. Mutuality is love's demand but its absence cannot defeat love. Mary Fuller in this matter is independent and self-determining. Rowley is kind of Holy Grail, someone she can and does stand beyond. Love, for her can be remarkably of the moment, and a source of power.

> And as Mary laughed and made up her mouth, her heart was rocked and swayed every way, crying for comfort, knowing that love is pagan and knows no compassion. She knew...that there is an utter moment,a brief, lovely interval, which time past, love, no matter how pitifully we bolster up its semblance, trembles and dies. But this utter moment had not come yet. Not just yet, Mary thought, reaching toward it blindly, with her lovely head thrown back bravely; a hell of a rake she was, and chanced things gallantly (121).

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Rowley, may be no more to her than "one crying in the wilderness;" "everything of matter in his life [having] gone by the boards," before her "terrible sweet" and "brave" love. But Mary wants love to be an all-out belief, as sensory as it is conceptual. Why need it be outside her control?

> If only it would stop being live and hurting! Why wasn't love a thing like hunting? Something to tear you up at the moment with a live, wonderful lust... (136).

To Jer, who can't grasp how she can be Rowley's sex object, she responds: "You **can't** understand If he was the most utter bounder I'd love him. Other people don't exist for me" (215). Mary's love then, strange and unknown, changes its form many times.

But what does Mary actually get by virtue of her shimmering emancipation? What does she achieve in the world, in Sorristown? We know that her prismatic spirit benefits Rowley:

> A leaf in a high wind was Mary, dancing--bent before it, helplessly entrapped in movement. Rowley, a good if not inspired performer, knew that never again would he be master of so much magic. He was swept on a tide, as fierce under-current wreathing lines about him. With her near to him he was helpless to think. He no longer hated himself--not while she was there, so near, so gravely, marvelously giving (119).

But so much seems lost to her:

> If beauty could help it was hers; all around her, outside her house and inside, and herself the keystone of it all. If bravery could help, and the strong, honest excitement to do with horses and hunting could help. If the keenness and the darling ways of little dogs could help, she had all these things. If love could help her at all to forget love... (217)

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Jer, the realist, understands the futile aspect of her passionate loving:

> Mary, so brilliant and so successful, so rich with love and so incomplete (197).
>
> She seemed such a dim, caught creature, that Jer, though he knew better than anyone all her sad sinfulness, was filled with a wild championship for her unhappiness (159).

Mary's world is too mirrored: she finds it "impossible to define just whether Sorristown fail[s] her or she fail[s] Sorristown" (170). "She felt endangered--there was no safety for her in the hold of beautiful stable things.... Nothing had any hold. Everything broke away" (180).

Yet Mary's presence at Sorristown is revisionary. It is not a dream--it creates, it changes. If she, as someone living outside the frame of these socially reigning families in Ireland, cannot assert her own meaning, she can, "with the pluck of the devil" shake theirs. For Mary Fuller is not only outside the Victorian drawingroom, but also outside the Pale. Mary is as much a part of Roguey's death as the Irish Conroy's, with whom, in any case, she identifies as she does with the Irish staff (Paddy Byrne, Doyle, James Cavanaugh) at Sorristown. Like the Irish in and around Sorristown, she is a flesh and blood ghost, who touches every one of its corners, and brings forth every one of its skeletons. But she, like they, is no avenue of hope, for Sorrristown holds the power of betrayal:

> Never had Jer imagined that Mary's nerve, that unsmashable nerve of Mary's, could go so completely and suddenly.... she had turned her small, hopeless face to

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> him and said: "I will never be happy again any more, you know," but Jer had laughed, his own heart very sad and doubting and full of dim oppression, and said... "Have a drink with me before you go. Yes. D-do you good," and they stood together in the dining-room, with all the unfriendly Sorrier eyers looking blackly down upon them, and drank to each other (262).

It's as if any dream hatched at Sorristown is bound to expire in its fulfillment; and that an Irish goddess can find no home in an Ireland dispossessed.

"Coy and Capable"

Cynthia French Mcgrath, the imposing mother of **Rising Tide** is, as Cynthia Holland-Mull, an anarchic outsider, confronting from below the power of Lady Charlotte, of her own lovers, and her own son, Simon. Garonlea to this newcomer is an obsolete prison, the unreality and challenge of which is within her grasp.

> She looked forward to this as another battle and occupation and excitement for her life. She had ...such tremendous self-confidence ...she felt the oldest, most inward character of a place must yield to her if she should determine to change it. And she was defiant about changing Garonlea (144).

She feels empowered enough to "take on a whole world of tradition," if not "the blood and bones of the McGraths themselves:"

> Cynthia was outside its power still. She had no hag-ridden memories, and the rebellion she brought was fresh and strong within her. Her mouth was taut and her eyes half-closed now as she took in the room, concentrating on its possibilities. ...every moment fully conscious of her power... (150)

She goes after the impossible, the deeply rooted power, a power which has made a nation for itself where a country was.

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In rivalling Lady Charlotte, she outmaneuvers her at every turn, and defies her domination from every vantage, including horseback: "Cynthia looked down as if she would like to spit on Lady Charlotte from all that height above her" (106) She wins the release of the Queen's daughters, and son, and later, in her attempt to renovate Garonlea, goes after every last vestige of its entrenched mandates. But like Mary Fuller, Cynthia is less a rebel than a dramatic heroine. Outrageously more in touch with the spirit of her times for her encircling world, she holds the mystique of the star. At Rathglass her smart, rhapsodic parties are invariably crowded with fans from the whole county impressed by her whirl of high spirits, her native, racy wit, her fluent charm, and her chilly sarcasm. As an emancipated woman, Cynthia gears her life to her public. Less the mother than the Patron, less the lover than the "Wonderful Hostess," she is the life and soul of Rathglass and Garonlea. Rathglass is "her Court" where she holds forth with a great deal of bravura:

> There were...soldiers who hurried willingly to such houses as Rathglass to shoot and hunt and do reverence to Cynthia, while they flirted with and sometimes married into her Court. It was really rather an exciting and powerful position for Cynthia... (79)

Her parties offered the "more" that people wanted:

> There was not one corner of Garonlea where you could escape from the excessive success of this party. It swept and surged through the house and through all the people who took part in it. There wa s a gorgeous untrammelled atmosphere about it... The heartiest people blew hunting horns...and slid down the banisters and her meringues... (167)

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The air around her is as active as her dancing and as electrical as her modernity:

> Nothing is so revealing about people than the aura of influence they put forth round themselves. They cannot be strong enough to maintain it if it is unreal. It is not, unless it breathes of the very life of the person it surrounds. And this romantic excitement which was the very air round Cynthia was a true reflection of her life at this time (80).

"Cynthia worship" becomes all the rage as everyone thrills to her persona and to the "romantic illusions" which surround it:

> ...even the moderately independent girls tried to dress like Cynthia, use the same soap and face cream, ride like her, and do their hair for hunting like her. Beyond this, they even tried to talk like her... (79)

Her unique talent for match-making has the mothers of the county seeking "her patronage for their daughters." She is a "passionate creature," spontaneous and clear on behalf of styled souls who flame in her presence. She is grand and funny, gentle and carefree, vain and self-assured. She seems to preempt every situation and to encompass every outcome. And she has the knack of integrating so many of the fast things happening around her: "She was always hard at work or play, and her court had to work and play (but especially work) with her" (79). She single-handedly transforms Rathglass, and more impressively, nearly twists Garonlea from its roots. Her "tremendous business over Garonlea, her terrific occupation with every sort of affair" becomes the talk of Ireland.

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As a lover too, she is direct and firmly organized: "She had loved Desmond really and tremendously. It was the only way she knew how to love." And now with a resurgence of love in her life, "she demanded exactly the same return for her love as she had known before.... She looked for the same thing." (186) Love for her husband is forever like life, "not a thing settled, [and] vividly of the moment." It is something to be won again and again and always on new ground:

> She had Desmond, yet because she loved him so she had him not. This put the keenest edge on her vitality in living. It lent a glow to all effort. It was for her a matchless thing to have in life (80).

Cynthia's realness is attributable to her "painstaking" commitment to happiness. If putting "Love first," gives true zest to her life, so too does releasing the boundaries surrounding clothes, entertainment, and such sensual pleasure as fine dining and warm baths. "She manages to invest [her] drinking with a sort of sacramental quality" (91). Her dress is the "fashionable, sleek" decoration she cherishes: "All the dresses were hers. Her very life" (89). Her gold hair with its "softness of willow flowers," and her easy physical rhythm seem part of this arrangement. As does her love of beautiful design which carries over into the well-appointed rooms of her "lovely" and "luxurious" house.

But while Cynthia's buoyancy over life and society can lift her heart, in another of her aspects she is hard and

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stunningly alone. It is as if she's too conscious of herself along a field of action as actor, limited participant, and Other. For example, she seems to derive no real personal pleasure from men, even though her loving them is the "core of her romantic appeal." Her husband's death in war is undoubtedly a deeply felt experience for her, but her long faithfulness to his memory is "abracadabra," which once beyond, she is able to loosen her "hold on content, to grasp at stars again." There are layers of feminine craft under her celebrated ways, which leave her too apart. She also seems to be untouched by many of the events and life circumstances that she herself drums up. And she can be too worn down by life's processes, lover's poses, and wanton moods, which leave her vulnerable to the backlash she will later have to undergo from the men in her life. This said, however the "spark of reality, that undeniable fire of life" seems forever kindled in Cynthia:

> Cynthia's laughed her rich, sweet laugh at the absurdity of it all. She was blind to the possibility of failure or age or sickness, except in the most practical ways (145).

Riding is a major part of Cynthia's capacity for effective and joyful involvement. A gallop, a horse's neck, the freeing Irish terrain can exalt her. A gallant horsewoman, "superbly confident," "easy and magnificent," and a captor of blue ribbons, riding is her soulful pursuit and her business. It is also her outsider's way to scan acceptance (the Dublin Horse Show is her turf), or

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conversely, to adopt singleness of purpose and realness. To Cynthia, riding is both an adherence to and an aversion of royalty. On a horse she is an English patroness, her form inscribed in the public eye, and an Irish lass, content with the resounding balance discovered in material solitude. When Lady Charlotte stops her at the Cross-roads and tramps her for dishonoring her deceased son (Cynthia's husband) by riding out alone, Cynthia refuses to dismount: "The whole group, Cynthia, Richit, (the Irish trainer) the bright horses and hounds, was outside Lady Charlotte's power or keeping" (105). Cynthia, "a strong dangerous creature" in this Irish pact, thanks her uncivilized impulses, and rides away.

In probing times, the hunt for Cynthia is a sensual and emotional release. Serving her as a clarion call to body and mind alike, it is a definite form of self-renewal:

> There are people, and Cynthia was one of them, to whom the mental and physical excitement of hunting are both a religion and a drug. At the moment of happening, at the moment of danger, at the moment of decision or fear, and in waiting for these moments there is not time to suffer or know about one's other life. The brain is tremendously independent of the body in the excitement of hunting, and that excitement fulfilled, the body is curiously independent of the brain. One is filled with either excitement, fear, or content; never, as it were,in slack water.
> Then there was the semi-fanatic "must hunt" attitude which is often stronger in women... Cynthia had it very strongly developed... it was a flame that was part of herself (107).

In hunting, Cynthia breaks some of the crystallized images that gather over her. In the hardiness of outdoors, she aggresses beyond others and her own boundaries.

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> To-day and during the months that followed she hunted because she loved it as well as for the sake of oblivion. For hours she found this, though not always exhaustion enough to compel sleep because her body was particularly strong (108).

Her Irish sympathies, as natural and necessary to her as her riding, also remove her from House and head, and bind her heart. She is consistently on the side of the Irish. Richit, her husband's servant, is "dearer and of more importance to her than any person" in her long mourning. And "she never change[s] her cook, who [is] an artist with an imagination of divine versatility" (81). Most importantly, it is her inseparable relationship with all the Irish neighbors and tenants around Rathglass and Garonlea that saves both Houses from the IRA's burn campaigns during the Troubles and the Civil War.

> A civil war was going on in Ireland... Cynthia and her hounds were so popular that there was never any difficulty over her hunting... She went her way with all classes. There was a meal and a drink for any man on the run at Garonlea. Or a bed and no questions asked. Yet miraculously the house escaped burning by either party. Cynthia was really loved by the Irish people who knew her. She would have done anything for any of them or they for her. She was closer to them than to her own kind and class (208-09).

Her intimate relationship with Diana, who in turn is always sympathetic and friendly with the Irish staffs, also proves Cynthia's native strength. The attention Cynthia gives her and others like her "for the hardships of home, the tyranny of parents..." and a "tremendously personal interest," is, in its own way, extended to the Irish. The way Cynthia is herself with Diana is how she comes through

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for all under the sway of Authority, including the troubled young women around her:

> She looked only like herself. Where she was, there was the place to be. There only was strength and laughter and warmth and the reality of present time... All these girls who had been cold, stiff and blasted in the hell of Simon's party, were better now--Cynthia with her extraordinary, almost male power of flattering women, had restored in them a sense of their own interest and glamour. It was strange and beautiful, this radiance flowing form Cynthia to the girls and outward in lessening circles through the terrible room. And it was incomparably stronger than all the chill ghostly currents of the night. (316)

If she can do wrong enough by Diana, if she can slight the Irish under her in selfish moments, she more often commiserates with their plights, dealing with them straightly, offering them safety, and recognizing their work. And their spark:

> ...Diana entirely rebellious, souring and closing her spirit in all directions except towards Cynthia, the one towards whom it flamed unquenchable... (77)

which is that part of her own self, reliable and strong, that she brings to bear against Big House superiority.

And Garonlea, with its old oppressive and masculinely conservative air, now embodied in Simon, its heir, not in Lady Charlotte whom she has handily outlasted and defeated, is the corrosive prison she must defeat. Her own psychical terrain, and tendency toward self-destruction is at stake in this battle. Simon, her own London-born son, and to a lesser extent, her male lovers, Gerald and David, are the most naked representation of this old Anglo regime. If she can stave off their ugly assumptions and conventions she can

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wrest victory from the jaws of defeat. But Simon, truly sticks in the craw of her efforts. It is his murderous heart that beats in time with a reactionary Garonlea. With "a disgusting amount of confidence," he sets out to explode Cynthia and her re-creation of Garonlea into a pile of parts. To his mother, he is a dangerous child before whom she must stand strong or fall.

But prior to her brutal showdown with Simon, she has to harden herself, perhaps at the expense of her own human spirit, in ongoing skirmishes with his male peers. "Lovers" they're called, but their jostling complacency and outright aggression drive Cynthia to heavy drink. When Gerald, the generous but lifeless American hulk in love with British lineage and the power behind it, gathers nerve to suggest her submission, she is horrified. He becomes "insultingly possessive," an alien presence in her home, and is unceremoniously dropped from her life. As for David Colbrook, that "extraordinary good judge of pace in both love and racing," who insists, in the face of Cynthia's pride, on her "vulnerable uncertainty," and "oldness" and who is as hungry for her demise as is Simon, he too must slip unwhimperingly back to his married state in England. But Cynthia is not perhaps gallant enough to have survived their prolonged turbulence without some loss of self.

For there is a hung-up quality in Cynthia which is apparent in her as her stardom recedes. David and Simon, the two men most hungry for her breakdown, also observe it:

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> But was that haunted, hungry face the real Cynthia, or the smooth bare back and strong pretty neck and quick able hands more like her? After all the figure was real, the face was only seen in a glass. Still in the looking-glass they saw her...sticking her fingers in her ears venomously, as though all the tumult and music and hunting cries and lovers' whisperings of this party were hateful and terrible to her. Then she opened her eyes again frightened. And with a sort of wrench, a tremendous effort and change, her face in the glass became smooth... (169)

Transfixed by her own success, underneath she is an outsider up against powers much greater than herself. Garonlea keeps telling her: Time will steal you too and I am time. The mask of youth, her ticket to influence in a man's world, is slipping off. "But she was too set.... All her power over men and women was of a very temporal kind, lying in her looks and her bravery..." (206). "Deified beyond reality" she is so enamored of youth as to be shocked by its defeat... The portrait of Laetitia, the wife of old Desmond McGrath of Garonlea makes her "aware of a chill breath between that piece of lovely decoration and herself" (235).

> [Cynthia] was too long peerless, unquestioned and lonely.... But she did not cry. It was foreign to her (173).

> Life for her never ceased to be a competition in which you won and won (290).

Cynthia can allow for being English, and perch on her vanity or on her ultra cool persona but, in the end, she is not English enough to be Queen.

This is her strength, her true scale. It is what permits her to wave the red flag of revolt in her battle for

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Garonlea. For despite her crazed alienation, she is ready to set forth into the public eye of Simon's restoration party. It is in his confounding arena that she will stand visible, and reactivate herself, and the whole dead scene around her:

> A bar--who ever heard of a bar at such a party? Cynthia was quite right. It was the break up of Simon's party and the starting point of hers. Her schoolroom... Soon it was stuffed and crowded with people having a drink, people feeling better already. Girls, finding each other gay, amusing. Not spies and observers of unsuccess. Cynthia everywhere, with this one, with that one, giving all that was herself (313).

She wins--at least for the present--by being all Cynthia, the outsider and traitor to Anglo-Ireland. This is the identity she longs to embrace full force.

> To-night her determination to defeat Garonlea again was the only thing. She gave herself to it. For to-night, only for to-night. Never had there been such a spectacular moment as this with the house restored and marshalled against her. Never while she lived had Lady Charlotte's power meant what it did to Cynthia, seeing it in Simon's eyes to-night. She saw defeat. She fought for a fitting exit. A death in music. It would never be Cynthia to creep away from Garonlea in weak surrender. She would go out at her own will and time. Not at her child's wish. Not at the insolent insistence of the house and its ghosts (315-16).

Cynthia's "loss" here is partial at best: Garonlea may have its Black boy statues restored to prominence, and Simon may embark on its rule, but Cynthia now spared of her urbanity and her depression, seems returned to the real world, and to a truer realization of herself, and the power she's up against.

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"Daring and Demonic"

Sally Wood of **Loving without Tears** enters Owlbeg like a thief. She's American, she's blonde, she smokes, she's older than her fiance, and she sasses his mother before she lays down her bags: "I wish she'd come back home, the dirty old stay-away. I'd like to get the meeting over." (68) "I found this in the American Red Cross," says Julian, by way of introducing her to his sister.

> "Oh!" --Slaney was shocked and a little thrilled at the daring... "You're not to call our wonderful Mummy a dirty old stay-away..."
> "Oh, I'll clean up the conversation, Toots... but there's a lot of me left after that."
> Slaney gazed at her strange painted picture and all the implications of the unfamiliar, the indifference, the absolutely allergic to the known code, seized on her violently... (68)

And such is Sally: She's a tall, glamorous, neurotic, Pre-Raphaelite, with "bird-boned legs. Her voice is a "husky drawl" "as deep as well water twenty feet deep." "Her tilted painted face is set like flint" (76). She was on Broadway at 18, and has played and danced in the European capitals. She is also bright, witty, sensual, highly individualized, and everything certain to raise a raucous in a Big House like Owlbeg.

Under Angel, Owlbeg is life ensconced in the defensive structure she's made; comfy, ingrown, rhythmically monolithic. It is a life made up of predictable outcomes to which her household must conform. To Angel's Owlbeg, Sally is disorder. She is a an amoral swinger, a monstrosity. "Now look Oliver--how could any mom stand for that?

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Insolent, practically naked. Radiating sex--yes (the last offense) even on this icy June day" (144). Angel objects to the way Sally has made her way in the world: she is not about to relinquish the staid spirit of Owlbeg to this "floozie from a New York nitery," who has affairs with youthful aviators and actors and artists. To her she is an animal, "tremendously common and savagely attractive" (145). Her conquests, her seemingly unpressured existence, are too much for Angel to handle.

> Angel had never been so frightened... She waited still, suspended, solitary... Hands, eyes, stomach muscles hardened to knots and stone. That afternoon air was of fire and ice and loneliness. She was outside, for the first time....
> Here was no soft girl for her to mould, or silly to expose, but a subtler, hardier type, someone whose beauty and power of living, giving and taking would be within her own knowing discretion to expend or reserve. "Experienced type, not nice," was the phrase which best described Sally... (92).

But even Angel, if only to deceive, can say: "You're fresh blood from a new world, Sally, that's what this old family needs for its children" (188-89).

But Sally is too strong medicine. She is a foreigner, too live a force for the Anglo-Irish Pale. Her distinguishing traits exceed Angel's norms. That she is defended by the upstart heir of Owlbeg-- "Julian joined his outlaw (Sally), defending her strange quality, her condemned difference, associating himself with the foreigner of his choosing" (203)-- doesn't help her case. Sally spells change. Angel fears that Sally is behind Julian's appropriative plans for Owlbeg, and her "dislike of Sally

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mount[s] in her to a sort of horror." It is Sally who to her "seems prominent in all this change. She typified the unknown hours" (156).

What Sally is, what she can imagine, is what marks her: "'I'm human love.' Sally said these words with humble truth. Their awful strength at last seizing on Oliver's mind" (247). She is a problem because she's human underneath it all. "Human loving," that is the perilous thing that had, when he and Sally had crossed paths before, eaten Oliver. For him Sally is woeful, insubordinate in her love, and set in too high a key, despite her good intentions, for Owlbeg. All her romantic preconceptions about nursing/loving young Julian can't materialize because she has virtually no control over what Owlbeg presents to her. Her attunements are with a larger, more receptive world. She is too bloody human, too damn bold, for the confines of the Big House. Angel's assertion that Sally is the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time as regards her Julian is pretty representative of Owlbeg opinion:

> "You're a symbol... Julian's got a whole life you can't share, his engines, his boats, his broken clocks. Sally, you overestimate your importance" (218).

Sally may certainly overevaluate her importance to Julian, but there can be no doubt about her effect on Angel and Owlbeg. Angel is never too preoccupied to engage in opposition to Sally. All things being equal, it is Sally and not her son, who is "at fault." This interloper is too selfish, too "sensuous," too possessive, too "grotesque,"

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too domineering, to much to blame for these darkened days at Owlbeg. Sally to her resembles her Aunt Agatha who lived in a beech tree like a monkey. "When she thought of Sally...she felt sick and hot, pregnant with her dislike, the animal by whom her child had been taken" (213). Angel takes ceaseless stabs at Sally's age, at her physical fitness, her diets, her juices. Angel says: "You and I, I should say, are eternal strangers" (210). Angel, distressed, distracted, is driven to hair-brain plots, which only embolden her opponent:

> "She's double-crossed every soul in the house to-night, now she's going to get hers." "You dare to dictate to me?" "They faced each other--two street cats could not have been nearer toe earth, tooth and claw, fur and feather" (220).

When all is said and done, Sally, like Cynthia, is alone. She has her own standards, but finds Owlbeg's Standards are as palpable as the lives around her they command. They ultimately castigate and humble her. She may have the power of imagination to picture her life whole, but no power of execution. Owlbeg is definitely not the right soil for love: "How cozy it had sounded. How normal and unsophisticated...[instead she] found a jealous soul-eater, a cold devastator of love's purpose, with a gift...of making a girl feel a double-sexed man-eater with he-fever" (170-1). "Love itself," in fact is what Angel hates. Sally comes up against Owlbeg's Angel-formulated child world, which makes her feel so "agonizingly adult and far away," and from which she is uninnoculated. After saving

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"her baby with his row of medals and citations" from the War and then from Angel, "the destroyer," she must succumb to the mute confinement of a little stage. Her imagination, it seems, cannot quite feed the gap loveless Owlbeg has brought to her life. Her acceptance, in the end, of Oliver as a mate, is a result of pale alternatives, and seems to represent a shameful, silent burden for someone so tough on behalf of herself. It permits Julian to simply walk from her, thanks but no-thanks: "It's only because of you I've got the sense to choose--and it's Tiddley I want" (249). Sally has loosened the bars at Owlbeg but less for the benefit of herself than for others. She is a less plausible person upon departing Owlbeg than on entering it.

"Pleasing and Provocative"

Another outsider who moves, and capitulates to, a static world is Eliza Blundel of **Full House**. She is, of course, Silverue's guest, cherished there yet hardly known. She's an artist from Bloomsbury, showing her work, yet somehow unbelonging. Her young husband's death in the Great War has left her "sour" and scarred. She's an indefinable, romantical woman, somewhat more real than esthatized:

> A large gay mouth painted as bright as a door, the sweetest way of bending her head when she spoke... A little face nearly the shape of a beech leaf, lined and rather dry, brown and curling. Hydrangea eyes and dark hair.... She was her own age which was between thirty and forty. And she was her own age which was anything you pleased for wit and tolerance and kindness and large experience. She had large plain hands and feet which she used with grace and circumspection. She seemed as tall as a tree and as lovely as a tree" (10).

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She is a slender figure living in the ambience of nature (see chapter six)--

> She seemed again like a tree. She was so tall and of such gentle growth. And her painted face was as quiet in the evening light as an old woman's face by candle light. Lovely and very quiet (39).

--yet evoking, even for herself, art's proportions. Walking up the "romantic staircase" at Silverue, with its long mirror, she "admires herself very much indeed, for she took great pleasure in her own rather austere proportions" (21). She is also quixotically pleased by her own body. Putting on the green jersey that John gives her, she is stimulated by the look of her breasts: "I've been so proud all morning looking down on them." She can be a bewitching mixture of intuition and culture.

To Silverue, Eliza is a dark-faced outsider, often more creature than creator,

> Eliza came down to the sea. She stood suddenly between John and the sea and the sky like an immense poster of the tallest possible woman. Her tiny brown face was miles away from him. She was wearing John's green jersey. Sea gulls screeched in the distance behind her... She sat down and became real and undistorted, changing into dear Eliza beside him (143).

She is easily and uneasily associated with trees and birds and gardens. If she is of nature, it is one different from Silverue's timeless, spare, benign conception. For Eliza is not above the human span; her "painfully thin" (to Oliivia) shape is erect; and her serenity is closer to the wise woman's than the saint's. She is restorative but bitter, familiar but outstanding, simple but strong. "She is all

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crosses, no curves." She's practically a Pagan in desire and sentiment. To Silverue she is mystery, but that she is much more than this is what is fearsome about her.

Eliza is welcomed and yearned for at Silverue because she seems to have the personality to draw life from the blanched lives of the Birds. What Julian, John, and Sheena need from her is her generosity, intelligence, and humility. Eliza, in other words, is as certain to give love at Silverue, as she is to not get it. However, she also brings to Silverue far more than is bargained for. Along with nurturing mother/lover support, and an artist's expressiveness, she brings trouble, and hard truths. Her offer of wings and of renewal is matched by her offer of shadows and harsh light. Eliza can be as abrasive as she is kind, as troublesome as she is agreeable. And no matter how close she gets to a Bird, or to the Birds, she remains a stranger.

It is precisely this quality in her which touches off crises at Silverue. Eliza is a catalyst; her answers create new questions. The sight, feelings, and aspirations she brings to her paintings, can't help but inform her response at the Big House. She is a "bohemian;" who to boot makes her real home in Gaelic Brittany. And most critically, she has the temerity to grapple with the assumptions, in each of their individualized manifestations, which rule Anglo-Irish Silverue..

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John Bird, the Messiah son, is her first "tender trap." If Eliza doesn't share John's nightmare he will remain a pariah. Knowing about John's dreadful, mad forbears; of his suicide aunt; and of his own acute pain; Eliza has little choice but to respond fully to his appeal for her help:

> ... she would have made any gesture of extravagance to keep this spark alive. She would have put her two bare hands under John's feet. She would have broken a bone in her body (210).

But John is immutably male, and that above all is hardest to ignore. Eliza, through the sacrifice of all her being, and against impossible odds, makes him realize his full potentiality. She delivers the Master self into patriarchal Silverue and John gathers the glory of his own liberation. "He was the slightly grand, very complete creature he had been before madness had overtaken him" (213).

Julian, John's effusively private father, requires less cooing than his son, but he is no less tender a trap.

> How long had Eliza known Julian? How long had she been bewitched by him. How often had she betrayed herself to him?... He never gave back for he never allowed himself to take....
> Eliza had loved Julian. It had been long ago and rather bitter...--although it had been only an alley, lovely but blind, where she had walked alone... --a desolate but instructive experience. Sweet, unkind Julian, who required no romantic woman nearer than the very edges of his life.... Was his life not one long pretence at being himself? Well,if so his pretence seemed to occupy him very completely (32-3).

Julian builds a whole world around himself. He is a kind of self-idolater, a silent hero bearing his cross. The Lord in him offers immunity from Family and worldly matters. He is especially reticent and dissociated around women, namely one

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like Eliza who he fears will mess with the safe compartments which hold his daughter and wife. And his long held feelings for Eliza are far too reserved to suggest anything but a box for himself. Julian is simply no match for her faith, generosity, and craziness: "His feeling for her was not balanced finely and dangerously like hers for him" (127). Her art and the world of art are beyond his ken. And her truthfulness, especially as regards his wife's past, is his real bane.

When Eliza must break his cushy secret, he takes it as a bold act of insubordination. If life at Silverue has become unbearable for him, it must be made unbearable for Eliza.

> She felt lessened in her own estimation of herself and more bitterly grieved. As sad as we only feel if we discover those we love trust us a little less than we thought. Nothing is more wounding or destructive of sympathy (262).

But his righteous indignation toward Eliza, stemming in part, no doubt, from his idle, shapeless life, also precedes her unwanted revelation.

> He would prove that all... her successful pose at living was nothing. He would force from her an admission that she had not much.... Less to take and less to give than his silly Olivia for whose early faithlessness and perpetual stupidity she must not dare to pity (205).

Far from being the miracle Eliza wants, he is a psychic burden. His dispassion finally shuts the door on her.

> "I don't think accurate consciousness is the least help to an emotional woman like myself. I had better go back to London and recover my balance. I must be

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> feeling very strong and right to survive Silverue for long" (207).

In his house full of people, she is an unwanted guest.

Eliza's decision to help Sheena, who is of a lower classification at Silverue than John and Julian, is more personal and controllable. Sheena is a sweet mystery to Eliza, truly passionate and enthralling, someone without her own "half measures," but she too, like John, bears that "insincere air of oblivion," which promises and delivers distance. Reluctant to help her, Eliza nevertheless sets her sails on Sheena's behalf. She exhausts herself for Sheena, at times suffering more deeply than her tragic heroine, and promising her the world when no one can offer her a glimmer of hope:

> "Yes, we'll go anywhere in the world you want to go." Eliza made her large promise... sweeping all difficulties to one side as non-existent. What one did for these unhappy children (246).

She takes Sheena away to "her little house in Brittany" to rekindle her spirit, and to restore her broken self. Finally, it is Eliza all alone who must tell Sheena her parents' secret, because Julian is out of the question and Olivia can't:

> "You must tell her."
> "I can't, Eliza. I can't tell her...."
> "I'll tell her," she said. "And you can tell Julian I told her."
> "Oh, Eliza, would you? Would you, really? Of course it's nothing to you, I know, but it means so much to me...."
> Eliza felt cheated of all that mattered to her, a sentimental stupid woman. The stupidity of this suffering appalled her. She felt confused and disgusted (301).

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Eliza gets but a glimpse of Sheena's tender victory. Her own work, it seems, has been irrelevant even to its great recipient, for whom she seems invisible.

Eliza is a black angel at Silverue. Even her most spontaneous loving is unwanted. Once she serves the long-suffering men's and role bound women's vital purpose, she is dispensable. John, once recalled to life, and to new heights, has no use for what he now perceives to be a tarnished angel. "It had not been hard for him to leave her" (282). "Success can leave one empty-handed. Eliza felt more truly alone than she often did at the ending of a love affair" (281-2). And for Julian, once only wary of her too "accurate perceptions" and her "acid comment," she is no longer a necessary connection. Even Olivia, whose talent for beauty, and whose warmth of achievement and specialness as a mother Eliza alone appreciates--

> How strange it was that they should owe so much to Olivia, and how probable that they would live and die without any faintest knowledge or acknowledgment of their debt (295).

--rebukes her, (invoking Eliza's bitter past into the bargain) for her insensitivity;

> "That's why I must be loyal now. Can't you see? Ah, you can't, I know. Luke was killed so soon after you married him. You never knew what it was to depend on him in spite of not loving him. You haven't got a home and children" (300).

John's comparison of Eliza to Nick, the bittersweet Irishman who lives in solitude on the seacoast, is appropriate.

> He thought of Eliza and her cool destructive voice and her sweetness. Something about her was like Nick. She

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> did not even accept things.... She was his friend not his relation, smirched over with that terrible fog of familiarity. She was clear to him and rather exciting and like an interesting map of a place not known (85).

Eliza's work at Silverue is no mean accomplishment, but Silverue remains unchanged. Ironically, this woman with an edge, has taken some of the edge off a bedeviled Big House, only to consolidate its power. The crying Bird men have dried their tears to a whine, and Sheena is married to a British soldier. The Birds, if individually saved, are just a childish family once again, only more respectfully so. Sheena, for example, can sing the praises of Eliza's necessary and precious individuality, but cannot begin to approach it:

> For Sheena felt that sense of excitement and distance to be bridged of which all Eliza's friends were aware when they met her again even after the shortest parting.... She had lived and experienced a little more. She had changed a little. She was not quite the same. That was what they all thought when again she charmed them....
> Now, her little face that seemed a mile away among the wind and the steel girders was stooped for Sheena's kissing... (283-4)

Eliza does learn from Silverue, and can change from a romantic stance-- "she forever deceived herself as to the depth and meanings of other people's passions and tragedies" (65)--to that of a realist:

> What wild quality in them excites me to such ridiculous lengths of sacrifice? And they are lost to me. Except in their unhappiness I have no real share of anything with them? How accursed and tiresome is that sympathy which indulges its lust for giving, binding itself about the object of its love and sending down parasitical roots into the life it cherishes. It is all quite hideous, Eliza thought, and all forms of

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> sympathy are at times near this form. The dangers of giving are so much beyond the dangers of taking (283).

And Silverue will learn, if only through shortchanging realism. "Life will deceive them again, Eliza thought. She was ashamed of the faint solace she found in this thought..." (307). In the end, Eliza moves on, taking little with her, but a grasp of her own reality vis-a-vis Silverue's.

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Chapter Six: "Mandoran, Mooncain and the Black Stair"

> What were the names of those mountains? Their names? If she had their names she was charmed for ever. Why should she think of a horse now? She saw it from her bed--and ancient, strange horse of a wild, apocalyptic beauty. If he should speak it would be to praise their names--Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair... (239, **Mad Puppetstown**).

> Solemn and glorious is the river that flows through Sorristown. No prattling, tattling stream, this majesty of water; yet when the S's of this course bend most steeply and the faster water races, catching round rocks and lining out in swift currents, then is a joyful loveliness, a wildness to grip your heart. Like stilled dark wine are the slower waters, whereon lies a calmness that is said and of the ages, and of the place and of for ever. (61, **Taking Chances**).

> Miss Parker held her head high in the evening and walked on to the river, where a cold white fog was as high as the bridge. Her whole being was in a different rejoicing air. She felt as though should the stars sing together she could match her voice against them. She knew that if a wave came impossibly ravening from the sea to engulf, she could give herself to drowning with ecstasy (277, **Full House**).

Molly Keane is most emphatically Irish in her relationship to Ireland's terrain. No transformative event, no grand hunting scene, no major movement in her novels occurs apart from the jurisdiction of Ireland's natural world. Her characters are inseparable from her inexpressively beautiful, varied, and swift-changing topography. In featuring the natural world, she writes of relationship, of an Ireland she wants but does not have, one that is in the Pale but not of it. Where the Big House

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means aloneness, the Irish terrain means connectedness. Thus, nature is a light and mirror for her work, evoking what Ireland itself evokes: seas, stars, green fields, stone walls, bogs, mountainsides, ferrets, Gaelic culture and history. In **Full House**, she writes: "The gravel was gold in the setting sun, and clean small gravel like it is near the sea, and the evening was ravings sweet with wild music" (31). Keane's nature perspective is poetic and animate, "The night would soon be here: the night in which a garden may be alone for little and free from comment, adulation and criticism" (200, **Full House**). Nature in itself, lush, pagan, as wide as wind and ocean, is, like a rogue, and a rider, an Irish protest.

Keane's view of nature is roundly and soundly in the Gaelic camp. Her world is a non-hierarchical, interactive space for children and ponies, grown-ups and plants, horses and mountains, placed outside the Empire's map. It is an alternate venue and a close knit for her characters: "Eliza was wearing a long silver evening-gown and a green tweed coat. She went toiling up the path through the woods as though she were a tree herself" (206, **Full House**). Persons can blossom as if from trees, and flowers can be love tokens: "All colour was lost, soaked into the darkness, breathed out in scent, given to the night, given to Eliza as she walked along; her mind held in an animal delight both sharp and languorous" (257, **Full House**). Seas "create sharp expectancy," rivers help "weather private storms," and bogs

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"soften the step." Keane's natural world is never a private call to contemplation. On the contrary, cigarette smoke, hokey dogs, Rashers, and wild talk fit right in with rhythmic rivers, white mist, and holy landscapes.

Places like "the grand grass country" of **Mad Puppetstown's** glorious hunt, or the lovely, solitary mountain lake "with fugitiveness about" which introduces nature's language and Irish Republicanism to Easter and her cousins free and connect. Incarcerated thoughts and shuttered feelings break loose before springs and rivers. Hunting grounds answer domestication. Ancestral sites and artifacts weave and point up a less arbitrary history. And Gaelic place-names, with peculiar bearings, ring bell-like across the landscape of Keane's work. Out the door, is a world of transgression, an Irish dimension, as charged as the unknown and as alight as the stars.

"Mountain Woman"

Mad Puppetstown stands out as a virtual hymn to Ireland. If its terrain itself is not its star than those who evoke it are. Easter Chevington is orphaned to nature. She independently adopts the resilient and crisp air, and the boldness of life which exists outside her almost picture perfect house. She prefers the "blaze and glory of a July morning," with its "sky ...as flat as wax and as green as a leaf," even to her magical adventure books. Having flown the coup, she heads for the garden:

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> The way into the garden was as cold as a deep well. There was a creeping sense of adventure as you lifted and dropped the heavy latch and passed through the last shadows into the glorious garden.
>
> The garden came first on Easter's list. She crossed the a lawn, starting out at a line of green footmarks through its heavy white dew, plunging from the clear burning morning light into the soaking shadows of trees, along the straight turf path between clipped yew hedges... (17).

In the random life of the farmyard, watching a pig calf, "swinging on a gate" with "unthoughtful enjoyment," sitting atop a henhouse, Easter, getting down and ranging about, is in a more fertile arena:

> The dark doorways of cow byres and farm stables showed black and empty at this hour. The children went through one door. They stood a moment upon the threshold, their eager bodies soaked in the bright heat, before the gold and purple gloom of the dark stable received them, folding them away from the daylight. Above their heads a hen dived out strident and hysterical. Easter...by reaching up the full length of her arm she succeeded in closing her hand about the hot solid of a newly laid egg. She rolled it against her cheek, smelling its warmth through the cloudy thickness of the stable's air (27).

It is Easter's reliance on outdoor air which makes her days slip past like "bright ships, sailing out far beyond remembrance." Through its appeal she can postpone the painful thought of a "tennis party." Nature is her rhythm, marking out her golden days, and dispelling her loneliness. Its realness seems to brush up against her every activity. Stalking the peacock with her cousin, the "dark green jungle of shrubberies" (a marker of her turf) seems to jut out around her:

> Who can forget the shrubbery smell? The peculiar air heavy with small flies hanging where a rare open space

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> grows weeds that reach up towards the light on long pale stems. The varying denseness of the covert... Monkey puzzles, with their South Sea Island stems that never drop; berber is impenetrable... And now the sticky aromatic green savour of that sea-recalling shrub. It has insignificant pink flowers, clusters of small bells... Another thing--liking its share of sunlight it grows only on the last edge of the thicket; a landmark then, to tell us we are back upon the bounds of the grown-up world again (40).

But Easter has an awakening dream which takes her further from an old white House than its yard, into Ireland itself. There is a pagan joy, and release from a legacy of restraint, in abandoning herself to it. Her very real mountains are more cosmic to her than eggs from domestic hens. They evoke the uncontrolled, the interflowing, conveying to her the world of the early Celts, its longings and joys in and for nature, and its shamanistic belief which is communicable over time:

> Out of the schoolroom window at Puppetstown you looked across flat water...over the Long Acres, where young blood horses moved in a stately decorum of beauty, away to the chill breasts of the mountains yielding themselves only to the slow rapture of a sunset; thin and stark at any other time and remote as the grey women of Sidhie that men had seen about their secret lakes. Mandoran, Mooncoin, and the Black Stair were these mountains' lovely names, and whatever was afar and unknown and remote unto themselves in the children, was joined and linked to the dispassionate ecstasy of these mountains (83).

Like Jane Eyre's "blue peaks" from Lowood's window, the mountains deepen her observation, her breadth of thoughts and feelings. And they constitute a love of place which is the very color of this novel.

It is the hunt, with its rhythmic terrain--

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> In the steep trough of a pale stony hill a young strong stream leapt out across the road. There was a little bridge for foot people to one side , hollowed and curling, and gorse with a faint scatter of gold flowers darkened the brief steep valley and the thimble-shaped hill behind. the sun wa slow now and the red lamps of a crooked thorn died in the evening. A bleak and heavy heron rose from his fishing on poetical strong wings and flew slowly down the valley (90).

which brings Easter fully into this tangible, holy dimension. It brings these nobly peaked mountains into a perspective of relevance. Jer Donahughe, the Master of hounds, steeped in the Irish landscape, brings Easter to the forthright splendors of his great horizontal world:

> Free from wire that country... Jer Donahughe's white mare was a milky beacon before the children in the grey light as he led them across bank and stone wall and bank again. His hounds were hunting at a faster pace now over this grand grass country (92).

> Down a glen of grey hazel the hounds ran the wet bank of a little river and turned short from it to strive and scramble up the rocky face of that steeple glen. Jer Donahughe jumped off and plunged down towards them on his feet. "He's in the rocks, by God!" he said. And the old mare stood with her lean, proud head up, like a faery horse on the edge of the dark glen, while the last light was a slow spear thrust behind Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair (93-94).

The hunt becomes a piper's song in this Irishman's presence:

> And Easter's laugh shrilled out on the frosty air. Jer donohughe's coast was the colour of blackberries, his hounds were slim ghosts and his horse a fanciful white moth: Life was delight, and the stars rang faintly in the skies (96).

The willful delights of hunting with Jer mirror the strong unoccupied terrain of the hunt.

The Ireland of Easter's focus, however, is quite the reverse of Puppetstown's erstwhile guest, Captain Reginald

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Longworth: what her faculties can take in is what his "perfect evenign" in Ireland cannot:

> But he did not look out at where the mountains sank themselves against the winey stupor of the sky, he did not hear the peace of the evening lapping Puppetstown quietly about. There were great hanging cushions of purple catmints growing as lavishly as love over the grey stone of the terrace walls, yes, and small Irish roses, each with a voice of its own for whispering spells, and the crafty sweetness of stocks that mounts quicker of the brain than the scent of any other flower (65).

The virile soldier is beyond environmental stimulation: his Ireland is visually replete, and evokes nothing because his investment in it is one of control and ownership. Besides, easter's terrain is forsworn against him and his kind. And soon after, as he is forced to submit to a merciless storm from one mountainside, Easter is gently prodded to intuitive leaps by the other.

The event which makes Easter's mountain image concrete is her determined hike to Man, into the teeth of the Troubles. During it, Easter calls upon her courage to face the rockier, and more perilous terrain existing apart from her hemmed-in life in the valley.

> The children pedalled towards distant Mandoran. White dust was thick on the bramble-laden hedges along the road and on the flowers... Just below them as they rode along, the river coiled and uncoiled its shining way, beech trees, darker than purple, glooming beside the water in the heat of the day, and willow trees were a dark strange silver, like foreign coin when the least wind turned their leaves... The they came to the village of Clohamon.... From here a smaller road... pushed up its gradually steepening slope with the wind contrary. The fences on either side grew stonier and the turf more clipped to the bone of the poor land. A thin air from high spaces spun the faint tang of excitement that nipped their unthinking beings (137).

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The nomadic passage to Mandoran is finally opened up by the "mountainy" Republican man who, like "Mooncoin, Mandoran, and the Black Stairs was a retreat and a harbour for the fugitive." With effort behind her, a new light, color, texture, sound and feel in nature seem to greet her:

> The secret sweet lamps of wild strawberries hung low in the banks... Above the lane little stony fields hung, the sun yellow as butter on their thin grass. The fields dropped to their netting walls and dropped again, little field by little field, to a river beyond which, defeated by the heather and the rocks, they ceased. And this was where Mandoran's lonely roots gripped into the land. Stepping stones, set to balance exactly a man's stride, led the lane across a young river, its waters like brown clear wine this day, and curling out round the stones with small and gentle patience. A wind as young as the river ran its fingers through a thin wood of hazel, where water dripped form tall rocks darkly to rusty pools and the bracken was all sword run with foxgloves (140-141).

The dynamic behind Easter's image extends itself with each advance and after "a fruitless contest with a goat" the cherished revelations of Mandoran itself happen:

> But at length and at last round the jealous shoulder of Mandoran they saw it there before them, the little lake, keeping its waters and its secret so dark unto itself--high in the hands of the mountain.... There was a tree of mountain-ash--its berries still as green as china apples... And the colour of heath was in the air. When you shut your eyes it was still there. Only in the lake waters the bracken met its reflections, green as foreign birds (142-3).

Nature's recesses mingles with Easter's deep thoughts, and her steps are a coming to terms with place and self. Seeing herself in the present seems to offer her leverage: she is learning to perceive wholeness, the rhythm of which she, her cousins, and the Irish land celebrate at day's end.

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> There was a hymn in the evening. It carried their feet on down the mountain-side to the happiness of its rhythm. We have endeavored: we have wrought skillfully... The evening sang it for them, setting theses words to the music of a green sky...and to the lonely height they put behind them (150).

The mountains of Easter's dreaming have appeared. And she goes courageously along with them. They are now her personal logo, and will belong to her rising. Her years in England amount to exile, and resolve in a longing for Ireland, which equals that of the exiled native Irish:

> "England," she thought with the point of divinity that the night may sometimes lend to imagination, "would be marvelous if you were very old or very happy." And as she lay back...there came to her a thought of mountains--mountains of the a clearest violet, and a cold, thin wind blowing, and in the clean air a flock of philippines were wheeling, their white bodies gleaming like fish in a net. What were the names of those mountains? Their names? If she had their names she was charmed for ever. Why should she think of a horse now? She saw it from her bed--and ancient, strange horse of a wild, apocalyptic beauty. If he should speak it would be to praise their names--Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair... The charming spell was hers now. Never would she escape it and so in delight she slept (239-40).

Ireland, its space and spring, its freedom and intimacy, are the blessings of a dream.

When Easter climbs the road to see "the smallest house in Ireland" (see chapter seven), her secret vision is finally disclosed as a fact. Her grasp of reality is not an end, however, but a herald of a deeper imagining and living.

> And without, Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair leaned nearer than a dream, wilder than the strangest dancing. The charming spell was laid on her again. She was entranced and delight and excitement sang in her when at last she went downstairs again (287).

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"Guerilla Woman"

Grania Fox of **Two Days in Aragon** seems to grow out of the Irish terrain. The novel's beginning words establish this bodily relationship.

> Grania Fox was eighteen. She was alone in a wood she knew very well, far beyond the house and above the river....
> Now she took in through her body the streaming pallor of the spring light spread across the wide shallow valley beneathe the woods; the river without any glare on its smooth, lit flowing; the fields, warm and living as flesh under the sun; the smells of honey and gum from the blue larches and the gorse (5).

She seems to be written into the wild system of plants, flowers, and animals:

> She had a bunch of primroses, their pink stalks damp in her hand, fisted as in childhood to hold them--their scent as dry as powder--the lightest most affecting scent....
> A little black deer came flying through its forest of game, a little black unicorn without its horn; flying back from its other life, its great and wild life...
> Now she thought she had time to get some watercress before her lover came to her. In the ditch just outside the wood there was plenty of watercress, excellent watercress, growing cleanly and richly in the steep dark ditch (5).

Grania needs the space of nature. She needs its chaos and eros. The deep woods, the fenceless fields, the mountainsides are hers, like a deer's, to be claimed. Yet as much as Grania may be destined for nature, she is at least equally driven into its arms.

For Grania finds Aragon, her ancestral home, to be intolerable, both of herself, of course, and of the greater outside world. True, she's attached to its specific landscape:

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> Aragon stood high above a tidal river. So high and so near that there was only a narrow kind of garden between house and water It was almost a hanging garden, as spanish as the strange name Aragon.... If you sat on the wall you looked down into a grove of ilex and beech and cherry trees. You looked down... into rooks' nests and into the stone pine where herons built, you might sit and stare, and breathe up the fogged scent of Portugal laurel flowers on the heavy river air (16).

but only because it reflects and overlaps her wider environment.

> Directly underneath the house and this grove, the river swelled and shrank with the tides. You could look deep into the river bed, and up its slow turns towards the mountains and downs its straight way to the sea (16).

> She might keep many things she loved a secret for always. The way she thought of the silent pleasure-ground at Aragon, of the still river air feeling its way with watery quiet into the drawing-room..." (62)

Behind these features, Aragon itself is too stingy, confining, and permanent. Its chaste air and undisturbed conformity thwarts her growth while its murky past and hallowed traditions topple her spirit. Aragon is a fortress, which can no more open its mind to her than it can its doors to the Irish. Like her only pal, Aunt Pidgie, secreted away in its imprisoning interior, she, as an indicting dark-skinned presence, must look outward for escape. Because Aragon cannot contain her girlish sins and exuberance she must seek the taboo and "unordained and apart" realm of the wild.

Thus Grania's natural niche is as much Big House society's doing as her own. Nan and Foley, her chief

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detractors, are her opposites in every way. They have and control things and people. Nature, which is a hopeful part of their Irish youth, is but a backward glance in their English-identified adulthood. When Nan hears that Grania is pregnant (with desire), her enragement is a "big and terrifying thunder cloud." Nan's resentment and pronounced distrust of Grania becomes an order of estrangement: "[Grania] was in a very dark country, she was swayed by fear," which "made a dark frightening grove of the present, a close little wood of fears" (157). Nan's profound indifference to Grania's needs in this baby business is matched by Foley's: "You're like Nan. You're so cruel," (209) says Grania, countering their hatred with rage, but feeling "sluttish" and as lumpish as dirt. Grania survives in nature, they thrive on might; she is soft and lazy, they are "hard and strong"; she is banished to the backwoods, they rise to civilization. Nan's rationality is supposed to be big enough for everyone (it certainly is for her son), but all it can offer Grania is an abortive chemical from a apothecary. While Nan and Foley are nothing if not sharp practitioners, engineering, and domesticating life around them, and looking out for themselves, Grania is subject to the whole damn living world around her.

Yet in this is Grania's enduring strength. She is part of a richly laden terrain which includes her own Aunt Pidgie, as well as the Irish trio at Clonomore: Doatie, Aunt Gipsey, and Mrs. Bohane, but most especially, her dear dog,

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Soo, who is more human than anyone properly belonging to Aragon. Soo is Grania's "human companion," "a person," an independent dog who knows her thoughts and her feelings. "Lovely, Soo **thought,** it was the best morning for a long time. Birdies and bunnies and horses all flying before her." (53) Soo can "suffer terribly," especially when caught in men's traps: "She could not even cry; but crunched and licked her wound in the cold dewed grass near the dark of the rhododendrums" (57). Soo is inseparable from the whole animal kingdom, and is compared to a slew of a little black beings ranging from ferrets to wild pigs.

> Grania sat on the wooden stump of mounting block, her short hair pouring over Soo as she bent her head... She lost herself in thoughts of Soo. Soo was like so many things. Smooth as blackbird, supple as a cat, fast as a tiny deer. When she laid herself down to gallop... she would be off at a wicked bullet-like sped... a black bee with no wings... And there were quite a few pictures of Soo looking like a monkey or a cat or black satin shoe, but not the least like a dog. Not the same person that Grania parceled down in her rug inside her basket at night. Down she would settle like a bird in her nest and... Then came out of her cosiness like a little black snail out of a brown shell (144).

Yet Soo is a dog and a particular one at that: "No photograph resembled her. She was too rare. She could not be caught and hung on the wall... (144). As a hunter, she never comes home, "her mouth too weak to hold her prize," "full-stomached and bloody." She is unabashedly pro-Grania, being never far behind her in crisis; Soo and Grania are indeed the dark Irish counters to the British world of Aragon, specifically to Sylvia whose pure white terrier,

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Titsy, never "jumped up" for Ireland nor "ever got in the family way."

Aunt Pidgie, Doaty, and Aunt Gipsey are as earthbound as Grania, and being made of the same raw material as she, have a synchronic relationship to her. Doatie, a "dark little image," "common" in word "rude and vulgar" in act, is an inheritor of her native terrain, viewed here through her eyes:.

> The sun shone out more kindly as they rode along.... The blackthorn blossom was laid along the banks thick and quiet as wreathes on a grave. Willow trees flowered and dropped their yellow dust sadly on the low shine of water beneath them. A grass road as old as anything in Ireland took them past the arches and broken towers of a castle. It was flung up high against the sky and the hills. Sky and hills were framed like light cold water-colours in its windows and doorways. Rooks flew across and through the airy roofless heights of walls and towers (44).
>
> A wide field sloped up and away from them. Here many a contest had been won or lost under cold grey skies with wind and rain driving, and on bright hot mornings with flowers in the drenching grass and the grey and gold of honeysuckle alone the banks and groups of foxglove spires all furred in dew (46).
>
> Donatia's heart turned with the gull that wheeled chalk white in the strong air: the wind across the bog blew on her coldly, but the wind never blows warm across a bog, and far off the mountains turned chill, a chill indigo... (51).

Doatie, independent and gypsyish, is as much unwanted by Foley as Grania.

Aunt Pidgie is, of course, associated with the magic and matter of this other world. She brought up Grania "spoiling" and "fascinating" her "with stories of her Diblins," and the outdoor world which alone welcomed her.

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And the same dark, meandering lands, produces Aunt Gipsy, Doatie's mother. The two women, Pidgie and Gip, are "dream-like creatures" as often compared to birds and cats as Soo is to humans; and like Grania and Doatie, they are no one's property. Each of these women is of course subject to Nan's ridicule and, being of the soil, is off limits to Aragon proper, and its culture of light.

If Aragon is a world unto itself, Grania Fox looks to a world unto others. Her kinship with the earth is as tangible as her body, and as free as her loving.

> She had all the unashamed and natural dignity of her wild blood. For so young a creature she was superb and at her ease.
>
> Afterwards she lay in the dark heather laughing at her lover and talking in deep low voice (80).

The green world mirrors her radiant sensuousness. "Grania's hair was blown back like the grass behind her head. Hair and grass had the same strange shining life in their pallor as the wind caught and turned them in the light."(48) Bicycling along the edge of its bogs, minnowing and fishing in its streams and rivers, schooling and ponying, she is perversely herself. And the solitude she finds in this outside world is a welcomed retreat, while her beatitude seems borne of the woods and fields:

> Grania was glad to be alone again. She went slowly with a delicious weariness up the path, and when she got back into the sunlight she felt overcome by her own well-being and happiness (15-16).

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The Irish terrain matters to her. It relieves her, in consequence, from the tensions, and mind-bending frustrations upheld by the Occupier.

> ...all through her life there would be spread flat places of unbelievable calm where her idle mind could laze unreproached by any better self and her body could indulge itself with cruel recrimination from a soured and defeated sense of the supposed right. She had the exact reverse of her sister's nature in working or playing. (98)

Nature to her means a lack of strain and restraint, and the felt freedom which promises personal development. Grania blurs boundaries with her ragged dress, and her upstart emotions.

> Laziness was behind Grania's failure to play tennis. The same laziness that left her clothes in holes and her hair unbrushed and her mind in a wild chaos with only the most immediate questions uppermost.... She had the exact reverse of her sister's nature in working or playing. There was no nicety about her or her skill, only eagerness and strange aptitudes which she hardly or never followed through to any conclusion. And for that very reason her aptitudes would keep their charm and novelty for her. They would never be worn smooth by much attainment (97-8).

Leaning against a river bank, she is "bold and uncaring." Her bedroom, its wallpaper, curtains, and furnishings, is covered with animal and plant imagery. Grania is bounteous, a "soft blond" resented by Foley for "not working:"

> Foley did not understand her careless chatter born of the idleness and centuries of rich living behind her. Her absurdities and importance were like those of a child to him (82).

and for "starting a baby." She has no need to satisfy Aragon's greed for appearances. "I am myself," she says, when Nan presses her with abortion. Her difference here is

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born of nature, of seeing it alive in its spontaneity and irreverence.

"The woods and other out-of-the-way places," removed from the drawing-rooms of her Big House, alone offer her a venue for loving and growing. They not only offer her emotional, and physical being, but an objective reality. In her ventures beyond the Pale of lineage and youth, she learns to "act with freedom" within nature's inexorable laws. The world around her can assuage her rejected love but it cannot answer it. Her active pursuit of Foley right up to his timber (deadwood) ship of exile at Bungaron, at which "he kisses her cheek, not her mouth, and leans away from her again," (211) is prompted and closely witnessed by the Irish terrain:

> There was a high-stone built quay where the sailing ship waited, its masts and rigging wild as a dream against the low-built town and ribbed mountains above. Now in the evening it was easy to look at the bright sea as it is to look up at a church (210).
>
> She felt very cold. She could not make herself leave the chill sea wall where little never-breaking waves sucked and lipped at the stones--there was a star out now, she could see it high over the ship's rigging, high above the mountains and the town.... The headlands were faded out, ruled no more one behind the another, the mountains were theatrical, violet cardboard now... (211).

Grania, looking now out past the peer head at the flat dark sea experiences the pitch of nature: "... nothing except a strong and natural fear of death kept Grania from wading through the surging weeds into the tide of the sea and the river current..." (212) Less deadly is the next precipice,

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where in the form of a car accident, in which Grania goes "skidding and hurtling and diving into a deep ditch," nature drives her self-discovery. As she "reaches...Aragon's gates...and enters the grove of lime trees..." Grania experiences "the exquisite relief of waking" from the long folly of her pregnancy. And for the first time, standing outside, homeless, before Aragon's charred edifice, free of being told what do and what to think, she makes contact with her inner self.

"Tree Woman"

For Eliza Blundell in **Full House**, nature is a testimony to her self, one she cannot expect from Silverue proper. It alone offers her a return on her lively awareness to her immediate environment. The trees, sea, and mountains not only offer relief from her tarnished existence, but seem to shape her identity. "She seemed as tall as a tree and as lovely as a tree." (10) Her body is a tree. "She went toiling up the path through the woods as though she were a tree herself walking (10). Trees calm her. Trees are seeds. Trees are thoughts and memories and landmarks. And they join the color of the vitally distinct nature spectrum that is Eliza's context.

> A pause took place in her sad thoughts when she sat herself down up there by herself in the heather.... Behind her on the mountains there was an even pale light. The heather and fern near her were clumsily brown and green, but farther away were those spaces of water-green light on the young fern, like counties marked in a map, but phantom and changing. Far below her was the sea like a cup of half-full water, one could see so little of it, and what one could see was

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> only a repetition of the young birch leaves' colour; an ice, green, still sea, as unallied to the grey skies as the far fern (207).

Eliza has a close sense of the sea. She has a house by the Brittany coast. Her taboo artist's depth mirrors that of the sea. The sea is a quiet marvel, a breath of identity:

> Eliza came down to the sea. She stood suddenly between John and the seas and the sky like an immense poster of the tallest possible woman. Her tiny brown face was a mile away from him. She was wearing John's green jersey. Sea gulls screeched in the distance behind her, somewhere near the level of her waist. She sat down, becoming real and undistorted, changing into dear Eliza beside him (143).

The sea gives her something of peace and support. "Eliza went to the window and picked up a hot sea shell which somebody had left there on the sill. She sat there feeling it in her hands and considering Sheena..." (22) The sea is intelligible, where Silverue is not. Don't Silverue's "mighty" arms submerge her for her heathen healing? As part of the natural process of life with rhythms all its own, it instills acquiescence and acceptance:

> Eliza went upstairs thinking: I shall look out at the June sea now and that will give me great pleasure. When she got to her room she leant out of her window for some time looking and listening. Monotonous, distant , quite uncaring, the sea's whisperings smote on and on. Past to-night and pain and all time into quietness. Eliza felt steadied and chilled from all her unreasonable fever soon, and her mind turned gladly to the fact that she really was tired, dead tired, and only faintly unhappy now (77-8).

Mountains offer to Eliza and to the young persons of **Full House** substance and direction, a past and a future.

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> Rupert stopped the car. They were at a great height over the sea now, but there seemed to be still the same height of mountain behind them. And no sky. They were mountain enfolded. All the sky dropped to the sea to the lost past horizon below them and before them. Back in the mountains the heather was burning and along the farther mountains that were nearer the sea fires burnt too. Strange and romantic, fire on the mountains on summer night. And the sea white and quiet and without waves of life (56).

It is Eliza who seems to have these awed admirers ear, and know their secrets, "that hunger" which "expressed a need that would never be fulfilled, something within and hid" from others. The seductive shapes of these enormous rocks create for her a world under a spell, the serenity of a no mans land. Their material reality, the air and perspective they offer seem to revive her, and impart a concrete aspect of herself which Silverue denies her of. The Irish mountains stand as a whole vertical world which can lift her across the borders of the Pale.

Eliza is through bodily kind and color--slim and swift, brown and green--like wildlife. She contains "an animal delight," and "animal grace." She swoops into her life and rises above others like a heron:

> She was all crosses, no curves. But there was some wild length of beauty in her. As one perceives this in the exquisite gauntness of a heron., so in the same way it was apparent in Eliza (75).

In another flash she might be "an exotic woodcock." Nature responds easily to her, giving her thoughts, voice, and an opportunity to use her sensory perceptions. (She would sleep in Lady Bird's garden "if she had the courage of her

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romantic convictions.") Her self-identity is suggested and inseparable from her rich natural surroundings.

> She saw the deep, low shining of lake and sea, and the shadows of the clouds moving as the shadows of wings flying and changing on the mountains. For a moment things would be real to her, as when they drove round a wide turning in the road and saw a thatched yellow cottage standing in the embrace of the turn, plum-coloured mountains and a violent green field beyond it, and hanging over the stone wall an elder tree heavy in fruit. So heavy the berries had grown that their flat growth fell forwards and downwards showing their backs, a web behind their berries, like pigeons' red feet. But only by moments such as this was she entirely conscious (286).

Nature, like her art, is her choice. It is not a category, not a copy, not Silverue. It is an exchange producing moderate and immoderate, high and low outcomes, including a playfulness of mind:

> A pause took place in her sad thoughts when she sat herself down up there by herself in the heather; one of those queer mental rests when one thinks of absurd things like the first bicycles or the cost of a cine-camera, and for a moment one's desolation becomes of less importance. Eliza sat on picking with a thumbnail at little pieces of lichen on her rock and thinking.. of how much money she was prepared to spend on new bathroom there [in her London flat] (207).

Its presuppositions, deeper than Silverue's own, answers the Big House's ever narrowing boundaries, and its unmerciful power to obscure and distort. It invites adventure, foolishness, and self-forgetfulness. And it makes contact with all local and inconspicuous life, shunning interference from on high.

Eliza simply experiences nature in a way she can't experience Silverue:

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> Now the evening was more silver than it was grey, and when the birches thinned and scattered there were rocks among the scabious and the bell heather where you could sit and see an angle of the house which was like a dream of a place that you will see and have known before you see it. Not a very pleasant or comfortable dream (206).

The Irish terrain, personal and companionable, is like her Celtic Brittany. She knows its cadences day and night and is gratified by its breezes and branches. When inside, windows connect her to its landscapes, seascapes, and new moons, and take her outside the dark of her own head. Owned body and soul by an entire family, the natural theater affords her a relief from its niggardly resentment, and a chance to make herself her own. It keeps her alive to herself, to her memory, to her art, and to Ireland itself.

"Garden Woman"

Diana in **Rising Tide** also knows the gift of flowers and trees. Gardens and woods are the places which most suggest her volitional identity. Literally "sickened" and "choked" by the oppressive airlessness of Garonlea, by it tight reins and long shadows, she maintains a visceral relationship with an airier domain:

> Diana spent the rest of the afternoon in the woods in a fret of rebellion and disgust.... Now, as she walked through the woods, there came to her their undefeated certainty of life to be, the strange strength of woods in winter-time, their arrogant loneliness and sense of power from within. Sitting on a fallen tree that seeped itself wet and rotten and almost back into the wood's life, Diana gave herself over to the warmth and comforting thought of Cynthia's presence and sympathy.... A passionate creature, she sat on there in the wood, all her dreams and theories so true to her, there she sat in her green serge... She had a god

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> and waited there alone, for an hour of worship was near (67-8).

The woods, reopening her life and imagination, make claim to her youthful passions and emotions. And she cherishes their unfolding presence. But her solidarity with nature does not exact from her selfhood.

> Diana bicycled through the day feeling separately pleased by all these things in the detached and finished way that people can who have never confused the spring weather with their emotions. Connect such a day with a memory or with a hope about love,and it loses its edges and that sharp ring which such days as these have for the very young. Diana had kept this quality of seeing days as days entire and unconfused (84).

That nature is distinct, separate, and therefore univocal, is Diana's plea on its behalf.

But if Diana is not nature itself, she does attune to its music, color:

> It was one of those curious autumn evenings, perfect completion of the clear day. There was a light and particular distance and glamour over near and familiar things, as though one looked down through sea-water into the end of the day.
>
> In her garden, Diana came to a group of lilies in half a drift of faint smoke, a mist of pale apples on boughs behind them. Their thrilling animal scent was blown across the faint smell of burning weeds (155-6).

And at times one might mistake her for a wildflower or wildlife. Animal-like, she is "unnaturally quiet," a bit desperate, and "cross, dark and uncommunicative." She can be a sleeper, lying low, but capable of a "sharp, aggressive" response. Her hair is dark, straight, long, and very thick. "[Her] face [is] like a little bird's pale egg, one has to look for whatever it has near beauty" (88). Her

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bones are brittle and birdlike. And her voice is described as "going on and on, as emotional as wings in the dark beating on."

Diana's uncanny resemblance to the natural world may denote her need for it. Subject to Garonlea's dour reality, Diana's first stride is outward. Subject to its ventriloquism, nature is her core response; her disobedience, her independence. Nature is to her, at least minimally, a curative and, at times, a fulfillment. Her presence in sprawling gardens and wild grass seems to announce this calling. In any case, nature's specialness to her is obvious. No one in **The Rising Tide** misses this point. Even Sylvester and Simon, are observant of the skein of nature that marks her adopted geography:

> Over the river they were in that different air of Rathglass. here the autumn seemed less opulent, of a thinner quality than at Garonlea. It was a slight shock to see trees taking shape again. A group of ash trees posing their new nakedness in an extremity of grace and affectation against a still dark wood. Limbs turned divinely.... Fur and flesh. Ducks and shrivelled leaves. Level winds as flat as ribbons. Seagulls sitting on little fields--domestic inland birds heavy as pigeons. New grass, greener than spring time grass (254).

Neighboring Rathglass, where Diana's elderly aunts lived out their lives, and now her adopted home, shares with her its light, sentient reality. Gardening initiates this liaison with Rathglass. Her new inexpressibly flowering world has a pagan lure.

> Diana went off to weed the rock garden. She felt quite silly with delight, the days was so fine and she would see Cynthia soon. Then the purple primroses she had

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> planted caught the afternoon sun and made her wild with pleasure. The shaft of sun went through them as though they were a bottle of port (84).

One of her "chief excitements" is "her unfailing care" of Rathglass's old, uncultivated garden:

> Her feeling about this was comparable to the thrill of making a wild garden when one is a child-- and adventure and an excitement beyond any satisfaction to be got from the garden plot supervised and interfered with by kind Authority. Or the thrill of making a house in a wood that nobody knows yet." (179)

If Garonlea is righteousness, judgement, and demoralization to Diana, Rathglass is spontaneity and the bloom of springtime. Diana yearns for Rathglass like a released captive.

> She hurried back to Rathglass now, and when she was over the bridge took deep breaths of village air and avenue air and sweet, airy breath of flowers in the hall. She stood breathing it in, waiting for Rathglass to heal the sickness of Garonlea within her. Very slowly she felt the first thin returning tide drawn through her, drawn by her as though she was the moon. It came slowly, curling, falling small waves where sands had dried and bleached again in the sun that afternoon. Sands that had been covered for four years. She waited another long moment, almost as though in an embrace, as if this was a lover's breath, this warm, light smell of flowers and air (154.)

At Rathglass, Diana is part of nature's calm intention:

> Then Diana went away, riding her bicycle carefully along in the last of the dusky peach light. The evening was utterly quiet and the turning reaches of the river untruthfully apricot under he sky, and the woods were heavy like smoke against it. The edges of the old fields were enfolded mysteriously in the wood's earlier darkness and the hazel catkins in their heights and lines were only little hanging ghosts. The slope of the newly ploughed field looked rich and promising. Presently she passed Aunt Mousie's house and saw a faint twist of smoke from a bonfire in her garden and brilliant reign of these same blue scyllas low round a tree stump near a gate (92).

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Her Rathghlass almost seems to arise from the spontaneous generation of wishful thinking.

It is the naturalness of Rathglass which holds such an appeal for Diana. She cannot bear Cynthia's Dublin Horse Show with its fake horse-talk from which even its flower show is no escape:

> Here, too, she was only conscious of the horrid oppressiveness of a crowd. Her mind refused to act about flowers.... Their talk, too, made one hate everything connected with a garden, just as the talk outside reduced horses to a plane of extreme boredom.
>
> Diana nearly ran out of the flower show, hurrying past the monster rainbow bouquets of carnations and the... rich artificiality of gladioli and dahlia... (202-03).

Diana's is a small life, reticent, detached, lonely, her suffering going mainly unnoticed. But at Rathglass, her propensity is to announce the life around her. There, outdoors in her garden, protected from harshness, and free of her limitations, she can at least be human. Only there can she who has lived "so vestal a life" be herself, become "love itself." Looking out the window of Garonlea, struggling for air in the aftermath of Cynthia's one last attempt to defeat it, she yearns for the one place that strengthens:

> She went to the window, pulling back the curtain, looking out into the early metal light as if she could see Rathgalss through the mist.... The thought of purple flowers and red flowers was like wine in her mouth. The toil and peace of having your hands in earth you loved in the place where you lived came back to her, fortifying in her a curious strength for age (319).

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"Crystal Kids"

The landscape of **Conversation Piece**, a singularly plotless novel, contains all the interconnective magic of the Gaelic world. It is grand and intimate, alive and thriving, local and non-hierarchical. It is the "unpremeditated world" of Willow and Dick, the daughter and son of Sir Richard Pulleyn of Pullinstown. And most especially of Oliver, their artist cousin, and the novel's endearingly perceptive narrator whose close kinship with his cousins is wed to the Irish terrain:

> The Wednesday morning, a gleaming and gentle November morning, found me battling with the unaccountable vagaries of the Irish Southern Railway. Horse or no horse, hunt or not, Pullinstown had laid its charming spell upon me. To return there was absurdly exciting. The gleam in the day stirred adventure and romance within me. I was impatient to arrive (37).

> ...armed with a shining silver candlestick like an evening star... I sat for a while smoking a cigarette, leaning out of my window to the hushed bosom of the night. I saw a star caught in the flat water more silver than the moon. A white owl slanted by and was gone, low among the trees, and the sound of a fiddle jigging out some hesitant tune picked sweetly at he stillness.
>
> I forgot even that I was eavesdropping, and strained against the night to hear (17).

The Ireland he sketches spirals in their joined presence. It is the air they breathe, the season they welcome, the stars they contemplate. It is woven into their hunts, rides, and fishing outings in such Irish places as Cooladine, Cloneen, Tinahinch, Lennon's Flat, and Tinker's Stream. To their open-eyed, let-go, young selves, the country is great to behold.

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Theirs is an experiential relationship with a natural world as changing as they are. And they live where they are, meeting in the meadows, on banks of rivers, on beds of streams, in the woods, anywhere outdoors. There's something sweet and deep in the lives of Willow, Richard, and Oliver, and in their magical, richly varied natural surroundings:

> In the shelter of a gorse-blown bank we lit our cigarettes, the loud, small flutter of a white flag in our ears. Far and away blue shadows were painted wet and heavy on the mountains, and nearer fields of young oats were square-cut tourmaline in the flowing bright air--thickened to honey and burdened by almonds this loving air. But beyond any loving, far and unto itself, the little flame of a lark's song burned against the sky (143).

They live daily in the verdant, sunlit, sparkling outdoors. Active attention and contact with its works are what they offer in return. Here on the seaside of Portologue, Oliver reports on their shell-fishing: "Some solitariness of spirit [has] led [Dick] to a rock," where a fatal tide has made "an island for him."

> But Willow and Dick stayed on their rock together in a magnificent isolation of body and spirit--their four feet in a hot rock pool... their backs turned to the sun... Even when the sun had gone in and a salty chill hung low about us, and a cold small wind blew on the cold dark sea, they sat still on their rock ... (237).

This closeness opens up a way of feeling and seeing which is uncontainable:,

> Flung down upon blessed and sunlit grass in an interval of repose, I knew that delight of this moment was with me. And to know Delight, to put three rings about it forever before the anguish and the peril of its passing is to be as an immortal.... Now I knew the moment here: lying in the heat, the mountains on my right hand, the river on my left, I could stare down into its waters and sleep into the folded mountains from where they

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> came, and I could feel the shiver through the dark bird-visited woods behind me (261).

No wonder that Oliver names the remembrance of such moments "holy ghosts and comforters to walk by our side."

It is this be-ing in nature which seems to move the crystal kids toward freedom. Openness and unrestrictedness, the sun's shine, the wind's whirl, and "the pulse of the warm mist," are the call they answer. In the absence of rules, they launch out, zigzagging along their own trails. They learn who they are in the light and rangy world, removed from tight places like Houses, and unfixed by social or "natural" strictures. (For twin-natured Sir Richard can be "stiff and bitter," and is sadly "the Lord of Time Past and now of All Alone.") The Big Houseness of **Conversation Piece** is alone incompatible with nature. The "Time Past room" of Templeshambo, for example, kills and mounts it:

> ...my mind petrifying in its contemplation of case upon glass case of stuffed birds, gulls of every variety, their beauty betrayed forever to clumsiness; hawks primly hovering, jays and magpies perched forever; two white owls, in all the sulkiness of their unspread wings, squinted forbiddingly down their crooked parrot beaks. A stuffed fox was curled woodenly in a chair, and a badger lay for a footstool beneath a distant writing-table... And there was a little monkey stuffed, and... chained to the corner of a bookcase. (163-4)

Fixation is what the kids slip out from when they cross the bridge to life outside. The sloggy bogs, the shadow world of the Celts, and the vastness which lies beyond Anglo-Ireland are infinitely preferable to processes which would as soon stuff kids as animals. Once into this providential atmosphere, life indeed is thronged and pulsing.

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The hunt is special to this new found province. Cub-hunting, fox-hunting, rabbit-hunting are a clarion call from across the bridge. The mornings of hunts especially awaken this need for countryside. Leaving Pullinstown, a discolored, heavy world of "a morning not yet parted from night" can become at dawn a kaleidoscopic revelation:

> Dark waterfowl took to their heavy wings and flew alow across the lake as we rode by. The lake water appeared as a solid black floor below the fog, untrue and surprising. Young horses moved blockily as cattle in the fogged half-light. All beauty was withdrawn. Beauty has hours.
> We rode along silently, our thoughts shrugged together within us, hunching forbidding shoulders to any amity....
> Presently in the changing light Beauty was born unto us. Unto us a day was given. If I tell of this hour it is lost to me, forever lost to me, its gift and its secret mine no more (246-7).

The landscape becomes a zone of rich coalescence:

> The mist hung still as thick as milk about the mountains' feet and a milky bow was drawn across the sky behind the mist. On our left the wan black-gartered birch-trees flickered no noisy leaf in the still air. Cobwebs smoked about the heavy flame of the rowan berries, burning in sacrifice to some goddess of these groves. (246-8)

The land is memory itself in Oliver's narrative, it seems, holding great things in store and awakening a current of awareness:

> ... several coverts, gorse growing strong down the length of a wet bog, and a steep hill... over the curving back of a wood that smelt bitter and shrill as wet woods do smell. The road ran its narrow stony shelf under the shoulder of a rock-strewn hill, darkly crowned with heather, and rich in the dead brown of bracken. Below us a fair hunting country dropped to a vale of grass and grass again, its miles across lost in the mist and shine of the day and the farther mountains were worlds away in faery (84).

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Cub-hunting goes overboard in springing on the kids a wonder land of flora:

> The main opening , where the hounds shoved and scratched and growled in the sandy mouth was ledged below the woods where a bracken and bramble grown slope dropped its first step flights down to a curling bend of river below. The sun was on the grey rocks that showed above the stream and shadows deep in the pools behind them, and the sun striped and bathed the bank in gold, roasting the blackberries and drowsing the blue-bottles that settled upon them. And behind again the woods were dark as old ivy and hollow as mockery. Tall green stones leaned together in them and elder trees gave forth their stale smells (257-8).

to which they are invited to merge.

The hunt as a life and death pursuit presents the more demanding and forceful aspects of nature. As "the bloom on the hounds [speak] a real psalm in praise of their kennel huntsmen," the wildness of a hunted fox can invite profound passion:

> My eyes dropped from the distance to the nearer tongue of covert that curled out long and narrow in the end of the field where we stood. Quite idly I was watching, and then in one bold second of time my heart shot up to the last pounding notch of excitement. That almost insane shock of courage, which the view of a good fox leaving a covert gives one, rose choking me in its intensity (94).

Hunting, "fulfilled to the utmost limit of their young endurance," is risk, the risk of knowing one's own end."
The hounds' voice sings out the hunt--

> Anthony's were a right pack of hounds. No head and tail with a string joining the two about hem. They ran well together, their voices a tearing ecstasy in the evening, the best of them snatching it again from the best.... I saw the leading hounds as they landed off a fence; they seemed almost to turn in the air with the scent, and proclaimed it right down the edge of the ditch... (96)

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> A field in front of us the fluting crash and gallantry of the hounds' voices ennobled the evening to a wildness of glorious endeavor (100).

And the fox's death sings out life. "An instant's silence in the heather and gorse--a moment from the evening that belonged to the death of a fox--" (101).

Nature is a spacious home for the kids. The Irish mountains and encircling sea, suggesting the Celtic outdoor religion of open land and ocean music, are special in this regard. They present a whole world in which to bloom, an atmosphere to breathe:

> But in another hundred yards or so the lane would turn left-handed and the mountains bloom forth on the morning, to be my song and my delight in the morning.
> And so it was. I could not have borne it if they had been a lesser blue or less deeply grained in shadow. Nor to have them farther away. Nor at a closer distance. They were as I knew them, their blind lovely shapes the same , and I ask no more of anything.... (186-7)

> The mountains on either side of our road were blue, blue past belief, as blue as the jersey of a woodcutter's youngest son.... Presently our road took a turn towards the sea, a sea of gross peacock blue that washed to the very feet of the mountains in beauty so obvious as to be near vulgarity (224).

Sea-roads, sea-soaked air, and the smell of real ocean are correlate with mountain trails, purple mist, and a whiff of pine needles. Out of a window foreground of "young piercing green flag leaves," and the stretched "silver skin" of a pond, Dick contemplates "the mountains rise from note to note of a strange music."

Ancient mountains, fields of uncharted history, these are what the emerald isle opens up:

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> "This is a curios old moat, isn't it?' she said to me.... "Nobody knows if it's a burying place of the kings." All the brown and green shadows of the hazels and thorn that grew on that high mound troubled her eyes. "There's a glorious view from the top,' she went on ; "on a fine day you can see Poulshone Bay, through the gap between Mooncoin and Mandoran." (119)

The old country means monastic ruins, stone circles and pillars, and burial sites. It offers a glimpse into a deeper past: "the country was veined by its narrow streams of gold, dammed into frequent wide stillness, sleeping gold lakes." The road to old Templeshambe offers a sensory experience both temporal and timeless.

> A river bent strong bows and sped silver arrows through the woods that stood strong and seemly, measurely stepping down their gradual heights to its level. The purple of spring was on the birch trees--an enamored bloom, and a frail lace was dyed new in green for the infrequent beeches. A hill was gold above the woods and, steeply built into it, was the smallest castle I have ever seen (115-16).

For the kids, old Ireland is a trajectory for the imagination:

> Dick leaned forward to set the windscreen wiper working, for a shower of rain lashed bitterly towards us from the mountains. The day was turned suddenly to indigo and silver, darkly changing behind the sloped spears of rain. I thought of the fire in Willow's room where
> Dick and I would sit making toast and telling of our doings. I thought of little rivers rushing low and dark beneath blackthorns and hazel, and the hewn wings of a gull brought a pale greyhound bitch to my mind... (159).

The gratuitous beauty of this world, its dancing mornings, radiate energy, and rejoice Oliver, Willow, and Dick. Here, as they ride along the demesne wall of Pullinstown, nature seems to spring out at them:

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> On the other hand were small fields, the shadows of their stone walls lapping half across them; and open stretches of bleached bog, with deep waters hemmed strictly about by tall sharp flag leaves; and sudden patches of green, quick green that took the eye like a flame. Soon I knew we should come to a castle where jackdaws swooped importantly through the dead windows... and here we would leave the lane and take to the country, presently leaping what was known as "the small bog double... Such a gay morning, so sweet and so bright (186-7).

No wonder Oliver's stays in Ireland with his cousins are so golden, so crystal clear a note, so inviting of change.

> Again to be in Ireland and again at Puppetstown; in these happy circumstances my spirit is alight and afloat. To be with these Irish cousins, their kindness mine and the quick fire of their interest changes me strangely, I think, so that all safe known values are gone from me and I am theirs..." (285)

What Oliver draws from Willow and Dick (whom, he records, possess "a love and a meaning which seldom exists between relatives" (175)) is the openheartedness of his Ireland, where reality and dream are one and the same. Here, laying himself out on the banks of a river, the natural seems to seep into his mind:

> The morning was too bright. Too bright for fishing, too bright for painting, too bright for grieving. Too hot for walking, too hot for working, too hot for thinking. But quite right for lying and dreaming in great beauty, in great peace, in that happiness which is mine at Puppetstown--that clear unfrustrated happiness. Now I lay on the steep bank where nut trees grew and aged grey rocks tilted their hoary sides to the sun and laid their split dark shades behind them. The last fires of the gorse burnt sullenly about me and beyond me. I wished to see some graceful foxgloves, but it was too early for them yet. I made a square window of my arms and looked up the river...and through my windows I sniffed that delicious smell, old and fresh, of a river... (192-3)

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But to Oliver, nature without Willow is a bit forlorn. He often paints the affinity between the two. "She lay down again and opened her book. A watery beam of light made a truthful arrow in silver on her gold hair" (209.) Her "damned menagerie" of canaries, asses, and dogs are the warmth of her portrait; while her athleticism is its motion:

> Willow was the fleetest runner. To please herself she ran and ran along the wet sea edge. Her pale wet hair was solidly painted on her head; her pale reflected legs ran below her, where the sand was wet enough to hold reflections... (235-6)

She runs "like a painting on the walls of some never found tomb or an unwritten phrase of music." (236) In the passion of the hunt, "Willow's voice [is] as low as thought in prayer." (252) Away from the shadowy House she is hardly distinguishable from a boy:

> I saw Willow and Dick ride out or the stable arch and walk their horses away from sight into the slowly silvering morning. The breathless picture they made is with me still... And you could hardly have told ... which of them was Willow and which was Dick. (19)

Oliver notes that the uncharted outdoors is where her life comes into being:

> Down a field road towards the house we were walking, and Willow delayed a little, I thought, she walked out cross the field to look at a young horse and leaned upon a little bridge that crossed a stream that fed the lake and watched the swans oaring their lovely crafts of bodies on the waters and picking placidly at gold birch leaves that floated half in the shining air of afternoon and half on the bright and silver water of the lake. The swans swam through the reflections of the gold and red and blue willows planted by the lakeside and it was as though, invulnerable in beauty, they passed unhurt through fire and smoke.
>
> "Not a doubt," said Willow, "but the autumn months are here." She lifted up her thin nose sniffing at the air, and a wind curled over the lake, its wintry reason

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> brimming the little tide of excitement that rose upon her words. Near at hand, but not in sight, the smell of burning weeds was a bitter breath about the amethyst of Michealmas daisies, before the banisters of those flowing steps, that which, dim as the miasma over the a swamp, flowered so lovely in Puppetstown's abandoned garden. The wings of the house stretched forth towards the outspread wings of the woods. 265-6

Oliver's salutes to his irresistible cousin make many a glimmering picture:

> Willow came down the straight greened path to join me. Now the sun struck yellow on the path and silver on her hair. she hiccuped--as full of radishes as a thrush of currants--and stooped to work beside me. (171)

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Chapter Seven: "Talking Houses"

> Grania opened the high latch door that led into the kitchen, and stood within, looking about her in the quiet gloom of a farm kitchen where for years food had been prepared for people and for animals, and where many people had lived in the poverty and dignity of daily life.... Common joys were new to her, making bread or making love. She was awed and enchanted by them newly, and deeply ignorant of both. She was beyond and outside herself and reality, in a world of different wonders and unguessed at values. (59, **Two Days in Aragon**)

> For houses can be as jealous as lovers and mothers, and under provocation more bitter than either. Nor do houses ever forget. What are ghosts but remembrances they shelter. (122, **Mad Puppetstown**)

Keane's houses, though less ingenious than nature, have a great deal to communicate. They may not grow or reproduce but they're "smart"; they can listen, warn, send messages, and survive. They can be strong, beautiful, and complex; and protective, loyal, and patient. They can express form and vision. They may also suffer from excess, from bigness, repetition, and permanence. Unheard, they might engender fear and isolation in their inhabitants, or prod their consciences, or conjure up ghosts--"Cynthia would never lay the last ghost of Garonlea because its lodging was in the blood and bones of the McGraths themselves" (167, **The Rising Tide**)--of their wall and roof history. Or, they might resort, in their refusal to be or become a prison, to an alignment with unimprisoning, tenanted, and Irish houseens.

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Keane's small houses may be "vagrant houses", disordered, and oppressed, but they are more "attuned" than Big Houses. Exposed to the elements, to their tenants' lives, to history's scars, they bear the burden of knowledge. As stewards for Ireland, they record the acts and omissions of plantation estates. Never abandoned, never "truly" owned, never subject to edicts, they never really shut up. They speak for abandonment, destruction, and invisibility. In this and in other matters, they are as persistent as their Irish care-takers, some of whom are poets, like Nicholas of the Rocks in **Full House**: "In every word he spoke there was life and the gaiety of life, or its sorrow" (79). "Monkey houses," as they were often called in this period, endured along mountainsides: "Little houses she saw, and their small paths of bitter smoke against the unmerciful beauty of the mountains, lovely and dangerous, beauty near to madness in the autumn evening" (265, **Devoted Ladies**). Keane's turf homes are clearly about hard luck and resistance. The Big House with its "power misused and grown weak," and its "hidden grief," needs the reality of its native counterpart to oppose its own corruption.

For instance, "Mount Spring" of **Taking Chances**, housing the hell-bent Catholic Conroys, exacts a powerful, perhaps cleansing, revenge on Sorristown's blunt indifference to its Irish neighbors. While the true savior of Puppetstown is not its Jacobite ancestors, or Aunt Dicksie's loyalty to

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place, but Easter Chevington's rising, inspired by the "small slut of a house," "the smallest house in Ireland."

> The one square window was an orange flat of light far in below the stooping birch thatch, and from the chimney of the smallest house, turf smoke went up, incense to the single beauty of a star. Shrill sweet music piped out a quick twisting tune. Easter's feet hurried past to the catch in the dancing music; a dark, bold-faced little man played it in the doorway of his house... (285, **Mad Puppetstown**)

However, Grania Fox's insights gleaned from "Mountain Brig", once "Clonamora", is not enough to save Aragon from its cruel past of torture chambers and servant suicides. In the end, the position of Law and Order grand houses is as changed or unchanged as its condemned counterparts.

"Mount Spring"

Mount Spring, of **Taking Chances**, one of Sorristown's numerous tenant farms, is one such small, non-complicitous house. It is a rather dreary and fettered place, housing a "slaving family." It is "crampy," "ugly," its staircases recklessly "steep." Turkeys and barking dogs run about it, and it's encircled by "mucky cow-byres, and horse-boxes." Obviously ill-begotten, its demeanor is that of a piece of rubble wrenched off from Sorristown proper:

> The dwelling-house of Mount Spring farm is a two-storied, unloved building. On a day of hopeless storm towards the end of October the rain washed in green pools about its surrounding manure-heaps and beat with long, wet fingers against the dark, uncurtained windows. The yellow-dashed walls of the house were flaked and crumbling...(22).

Yet "its new slated roof [is] tight and weather-proof for many a year to come," and next to other Sorristown cottages

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it's a gift. Which is exactly what it is to its newest inhabitants, the Conroys, who count it as immediate compensation for Roguey Sorrier's dalliance with Lizzie Conroy and as reparation for having borne for years a wretched hovel up in the hills.

Mrs. Conroy herself is the initiate of this bold deal. She counts the new farm "gotten out of the sir" a real gain over the old farm: "Wouldn't cows stand and stiffen on the hills before they'd pick a blade of grass in it?" (26). And Jerry, her son and cohort, agrees. To her scared daughter, however, she has to push her point:

> "You're in as tight and snug a place with as good land to it as any in Ireland, and ye may thank your brother Jerry and myself for that--only for us fixing him so tight y'ed be the way y'are and not one ha'penny the better of it. Such a lady you're getting, we may all slave ourselves into the grave before ye'd stir..." (23)

But Lizzie, at whose expense the place has been won, is unconvinced. For Mount Spring doesn't change her victim status one iota. Her mother, despite her ranting and raving, knows this even better than she does:

> "Haven't ye brought down enough disgrace on yourself and annoyance on your family, without ye'd go gadding out o' the house at every old motor-car passes on the road? It's horrid behavior.... you needn't be thinking your gay Baronet'll be down these parts looking for you. How likely indeed. Once a man gets what he wants, he don't want it any more--or not from the same woman" (23).

"The thickened lines of Lizzie's young body," the "dank chill" of her bedroom in which "the tawdry and dreadful picture of the bleeding heart of Jesus" alone stares down

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from her bare walls, attests to Lizzie's rank. She is sex-used and as such no more worthy in Sorristown's eyes than Mount Spring itself. "Her mother's deft twisting of the sordid matter to their best advantage," (24) if anything, only compounds Lizzie's injury;

> ...but the one fierce, stark thing, which she had desired too much to fight against it with either art of conviction. Not ignorant, but young, greedy and helpless, she had given, given till desire failed. Then came the days of pitiable waiting and terrified realization... (24).

And she must await "this inexperienced, awful thing, coming daily irrevocably nearer." (24)

> ...through the weeks, and months in a dull stupor, a miserable mental twilight, shot through by futile hopes, scourged to sickness by daily disappointment... each hope meeting its inevitable small, painted death, for Roguey never came." (24-5)

Roguey, like all the Sorrier masters before him has taught Lizzie Conroy "self-hate." But more importantly, he has, through her, awakened Mount Spring. For in going too far along his sex-slinging track, he has come up against the skeletal frame of Mrs. Conroy. She and her mucking son will not succumb to the deadly equanimity--

> He had done handsomely by the Conroys in the matter of payment for his pleasures; any further re-adjustment of the matter was away beyond his thought. The thing finished for him, he shut his eyes easily to the fact that the consequences, however well paid for, were hardly pretty (25).

of another Sorrier. Their Mount Spring is too long-poor in background to endure any more of Roguey's kicks, not when their eventual outcome is to be a mutant child. His violation has aroused the dead and even the unborn of his

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unpeopled lands. And Sorristown, after generations of sowing babies and amassing poverty along its estate, is in jeopardy. Its old patterned world, its unmolested rule, is no longer secure. For as dismal and unpromising as Spring is, it is ready to assume its task. Mount Spring, in demanding concessions, in showing its face, and in conveying aggression against the Big House, proves that its segregation and subordination are beyond decree. Mount Spring, in fact, is presently about to spill across its boundaries. Born of century-deep ground, it can breathe the very downpour of this day, which sustains a certain wild beauty on an otherwise stagnant plot of land.

> A few spruce firs shot up, irrepressibly healthy, among the rank grass; and hunched thickly against the house was a hydrangea bush, its heavenly blue flowers and exquisite protest of colour in the drab squalor of the place.... The rain...seeped with soft penetration into the heaps of manure... (22).

It is as fertile as a marsh and bog, but as aroused as a stormcloud.

For Mount Spring is relative to the mountains around Sorristown:

> Beyond the river again rise the low hills--near and friendly, their small houses so plainly to be seen... And last, but always watching over Sorristown with love and brooding, are the mountains, beautiful with a secrecy like death, and kind as solemn mothers (61).

It may be quaint in good season but "sad and bad" too; more often muttering than mothering. Like other houseens, it bears the metal of the mountains as well as the recuperative power of the land. This link between cottage and terrain is

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what is lost on Sorristown's dead eyes. The Big House can't recognize the wholeness of the cottage, because its mastery is wrought on its back.

But that wholeness, nevertheless does manifest, and it does so most explicitly at the moment Jer Sorrier delivers Jerry Conroy's message to Roguey. Roguey is fixated on making love to Mary and is vexed by the disturbance. Jer draws him aside: "'Now what the devil's the matter?' Roguey began wordily," commanding his brother to cease stammering. But hardly a word about Lizzie Conroy's crisis is out of Jer's mouth than his tall white brother in dress and conscience to match becomes "curiously blank, then horrified:"

> "She's dying d'you know."
> "Dying? Well, the whole place will be rotten with priests. I'm not going."
> "Roguey"--Jer was nearly crying--"Jerry Conroy says it's, it's, it's--"
> "For God's sake try and say what you mean."
> "He says it's not like a person at all." Jer rushed out into words in dreadful sick confusion....
> "I'm telling you, damn you. Your beastly bastard's a beastly deformity, and the girl's dying" (203).

Roguey is "incredulous, and lastly obstinate." He refuses to descend the stairs and face Jerry Conroy. Jer pleas: "Someone's got to." "Why in hell should I? Where is he? God, I can't see him.... God, y'know this is more than any fellow can stick!" (204). Jer can afford to feel sorry for his "careless rottenness," but Jerry Conroy of Mount Spring cannot. Having to return to his sister, he leaves a letter for the Master, whose Home he has made bold to enter.

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Roguey's crime finally strikes Jer: "It was fantastic, out of order, totally unreal. ...and now to face such a matter and deal with it in hideous privacy was appalling" (206). He attempts to soften this blow more for himself than for Roguey: "...it was drugs and trying to do away with herself and all that sort of thing that did it" (206). But Lizzie Conroy's suicidal past means zero to a man who can't even acknowledge her present extremity. He burns Jerry Conroy's letter, and is determined to keep its evidence from his darling wife. He will not appear at Mount Spring. Lizzie can die. Her humanoid buried. Jerry Conroy, that curse on his life, can go to hell. And good riddance to that mud-hole Mount Spring. Sorristown lives on.

But Mount Spring has gotten inside Sorristown proper first via a damn horse, then through Jerry Conroy and his bad news, and now just when Roguey seems to be winning the battle with his conscience, though another one of Conroy's bloody, preternatural bribe horses. Upon securing Mount Spring, Jerry confides in his horse:

> "Well, whatever he done for us, he didn't kill himself doing it. Stand over now." This to the young horse. "And it could be the sir'll get the dirty end of the stick yet" (26).

Jerry's horses are inseparable from Mount Spring. Maeve Sorrier, for instance, views these "bought" horses as all wrong, foreign:

> " I never know why you bought that horse. That beastly fellow Conroy never does have the right one."

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> "What's the matter with the horse? The horse is all right. Dammit, I hope I'm proof against Conroy's sticks! Well, he's not everyone's horse...but he suits me all right....Oh, I'm pleased, right enough. Matter of fact, though, he's a rotten ride. He's a dirty brute. You'd never see a hunt on him" (48).

Jerry Conroy's warnings about his bloody horses are meant to challenge the Master, to abet his fears about his manliness, and his riding and, in the end, to defeat him. After the shattering news about Lizzie, Roguey tries, in part to cover-up, in part to regain his composure, to return to his routines of hunting, house business, and horses, but with no real sense of disburdenment this time around. More than Conroy's , it is Mary's "forbidden escapade" upon Conroy's "impossible" race horse--that "swine of a horse" in Rowley's words-- that afternoon that has Roguey in a tether.

> Then he thought of the bay horse with fired hocks that Mary had ridden that day, and dwelt sadly on the thought. Always something to play hell with you and that was the very devil. From the bay horse, his mind swung with sick unwillingness, to the horse's owner... Roguey's mind flamed as he thought of Jerry Conroy and sank again helplessly, as it did twenty times a day (239).

Mary Fuller and Jerry Conroy. He would love to save the one and destroy the other, yet to a man trying to wash away the muck of Mount Spring, they're a pincer movement. His wife must never again ride that Irish scoundrel's bloody bay:

> Now, if he'd guessed she was going to ride that horse this afternoon, he'd have had the brute out and shot it, and damned the consequences. A light, horrid sweat broke out over his body as a vivid memory of her bad riding and complete nerve swept over him.. Little champion she was--his, too, the darling fool." (240)

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But Mary, like Jerry Conroy, makes up her own mind about just such things: she decided to ride Jerry's stubborn, "dirty" and "broken down race-horse" and she rode it. She's a perversity, like the horse, like Jerry Conroy. Roguey would like to bend each to his own will. But he can't let them loose. Roguey is bedeviled now, in a tailspin, his mind saddled with defeat, paranoia, and vengeance. Mary must never, at any cost, find out about his philandering. And Jerry Conroy, that ingrate Mick, that "swine," has backed him into a corner. For Roguey the world is no longer flat: Sorristown is vulnerable.

But he will ride the horse if only to lessen his mind's burden. And on the morning of the hunt, as the silent censure of his brother attests ("hating his brother almost to the point of tears), his gentleman's confidence and cockiness is hardly absent from his usual preparations. If Sorristown itself seems held by fate, he himself appears the presumption of order as he rides off.

> Roguey rode silently away into the brilliant morning, his house like a wraith left behind, doubts and despairs cast off from his mind, his whole being concentrated on the one important matter of riding his horse that fidgeted between his knee, its ears unkindly laid, its back tucked up and coat roughened in the bitter bright air (245).

But his command of the blood beast is incomplete: one good leap over a stream and Roguey, thrown over his mount's foaming shoulder, is separated from life.

Jerry Conroy, like an avenging angel, is first on the fatal scene. We next see him leading his leased out horse

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back to Mount Spring, and having to halt the passing motorbound Jer, who "did not for a moment recognize the big blood bay, leading so badly, as the horse that Roguey had ridden that morning (265).

> Jer stared stupidly at both before something familiar about the saddle on the lead horse smote him. Do farmers such as Jerry Conroy carry wire-cutters on their saddles? Certainly they do not. Nor do their saddles and leather achieve the hallowed age of those on which he was staring still without recognition (266).

Conroy feels "shamed" in Jer's presence, but not venal before Jer's gauging "Well?" His response to Jer's apprehensive question about Roguey is firm:

> "Yes, he's hurted bad." Jerry Conroy raised his head and looked out past Jer to the distance of the mountains. "He's killed," he said with a certain dignity that was not without awe (266).

Jer is fretted and "wayward." Sorristown is at sea in betrayal. He wants to hang on to laughter, but "to laugh would shock Jerry Conroy so much." Only one discernment is possible to him: Mount Spring has risen.

> Jerry Conroy was pouring out words, words that explained nothing to Jer's numb mind. All he gathered was a general impression of Roguey, in his most deadly obstinate and foolish mood. Roguey had said that he would qualify the horse and be damned to it. And that was madness. Jerry Conroy had told him he couldn't ride the horse in a hunt. But Roguey had laughed at him and cursed him (266).

But Jerry Conroy's faithful description, in the illiterate's "photographic memory," of the event --"And not one mark on him, you could see, he said."-- snaps Jer into proper righteousness. He refers to Jerry's "dirty work"-- "you had

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your whack at him,"-- but Jerry Conroy of Mount Spring, reserves the last punch-packing word:

> Jerry Conroy gathered up his horses' reigns again, fidgeting them to start. "Maybe there's others," he said , without looking at Jer, "will have worse yet. And for the matter o' that"--he jutted his chin dagger-like at Jer--"did I choose what come to happen?" (267)

Jerry has his "strange" horse back and Roguey is dead. For once, a Sorrier has had to pay. Mount Spring, through an old, laid out race horse, and out of its own mud and muddled tenants, has acted irrevocably. And by doing what **isn't** done it does declare a belief in life. Mount Spring has spoken, not about hope or faith, but about partition and forced compliance. The deeds of Sorristown have not been written off, but once again in illustrious Sorrier history, a mere horse has seen fit to serve justice. And Mount Spring, acting as an inner conscience of sorts, has quelled one of its illustrious neighbor's unbecoming noise.

"The smallest house in Ireland"

Mad Puppetstown's Puppetstown is a Big House in good standing. Under the Chevingtons it has been an integral part of Westcommon society, of the Irish countryside and, one might say, of Ireland itself. But under Aunt Brenda's uninspired leadership, in the time of the Troubles, with the Republic boys lurking on the neighboring mountainsides, it begins to lose rather than gain resolve. Aunt Brenda's thick-headed catering to British soldiers, and her "wicked risks," even in the teeth of Irish resistance, are hardly in synch with Puppetstown's past insistence on being an Irish

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house on Irish soil. It is one thing for her to have supported "the great machine called Winning the War," on the continent, but to attend dances at the Curragh, and return the favor under the watchful eyes of the Irish can only spell disaster or retrenchment. Puppetstown, despite its good standing with the Irish people, must relinquish its "dignified calm," and in its present stance, be vulnerable to attack.

Puppetstown Irishness must go back to the original Chevingtons who, having supported King James at the Boyne, seemed to display, in addition to their disloyalty, a streak of "madness." Perhaps too its nativist tendencies might be attributed to its undistinguished or "dismal locality," with its nonetheless heartrending mountainscape. Or to the Irish themselves with whom, given the British order of things, they were near. Whatever the case, under the wear of time, this peculiarity lost its edge, and Puppetstown itself, as Aunt Dicksie is only too willing to prophesize, is in jeopardy:

> But as they walked after Brenda through the slow turning evening light, there seemed to Aunt Dicksie a falseness in the evening peace of Puppetstown, a leaning, listening quality, as though Puppetstown had lost her honour and stood now betrayed and forsaken and most desolately in sin and shame before the world. A lonely, wicked old woman of a house. Through her this had come to pass--of that very quality of warmth and of fun and of golden careless laughter that was in Aunt Brenda and the house alike had this come. And now Puppetstown was to be left desolately, a dead grey house leaning blind-eyed down her valley, her beauty gone and her gladness withered and shrunken from her (165).

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It is the assassination of one of Puppetstown's officer callers that drives the Chevingtons from Ireland. Aunt Dicksie chooses to stay on, protecting, clinging to her venerable and beloved estate. "She'd rather be shot there by accident than live... [in England] on purpose" (214). Correct in her old faith, she is able to reckon with the fact of the IRA and win Puppetstown from their burn campaign:

> There were those who watched Puppetstown that night. They had seen the soldiers come and go... The house crouched into the night like a toothless grey wolf, and only Aunt Dicksie went from room to room with a wandering light... nowhere could she fortify her sorrowing spirit (172).

Aunt Dicksie is someone who enjoys a fight against the odds, especially when her enemy is believable to her. In 1914, she welcomed the outbreak of the Great War:

> After that Christmas, Aunt Dicksie and her war-maps and the blood-thirsty cartoons which she had fastened to her bedroom wall with pins, became an ordinary part of life... (114).

And, now having saved Puppetstown from the Irish, she has won it for herself. Casting blame for its near defeat on Aunt Brenda, she ceases Puppetstown for herself:

> "My niece Brenda," she reflected, "is a vulgar and a selfish woman--and **hard.**" Her eyes came back into the dim, lonely room, her spirit seemed to be outside herself and to hover almost greedily about the house she loved and served. She was fanatical in her devotion. "And if she teaches my children not to need Puppetstown"... "for whom shall I keep it? For whom and why?" And from every side the house whereon she had spent herself whispered and answered: "For yourself. Forever" (176).

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Now in Aunt Dicksie's hands, retrenchment, as a reflection of her "lone wolf" guardianship, is in order: "No more did the lavish hospitality of Puppetstown flourish before the countryside. An empty house and blinded, Puppetstown leaned down her river valley" (177). Its unkind and vacant demeanor becomes abideable, as does the servantless kitchen, that "forsaken ship." Aunt Dicksie shrinks its space, and concentrates its life:

> So Puppetstown possessed Aunt Dicksie and as the weeks and months and dim hours slipped and shuffled into seasons and into years, more and more she grew at one and at peace with this Puppetstown that was hers alone (176).

When Easter and Basil return to their "laughably named" Irish home which is "everything England is not," Puppetstown's reversal is evident:

> The turkey hen, rearing its pale head like a horrid weed in that dark corner of the hall had shaken him queerly. It was an insult to their Puppetstown--a lousy bird that hissed and stank. And now the old white bitch came stiffly up the steps to peer at them out of her sunken eyes, and raise a hoarse clamour when her slow mind had taken in their strangeness (252-3).

Their disillusionment is confirmed by their unwelcoming aunt, the agent of this depressing transmutation. To them she appears to be negativity personified.

To Aunt Dicksie, the very presence of the children casts the shadows of interference and inheritance.

> A long and sinking moment it was for Aunt Dicksie too. Since she had heard them racketing at the door and heard them blowing horns and shouting in their pride, she had known that the time was at hand for her lonely, passionate watch on Puppetstown to end. Young and greedy and unkind, the children had come back, not to

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> her, but to Puppetstown, to take it from her for their own.
>
> Now she came towards them and kissed them both in the grave, chilly way that they kiss who have other than human ties and likings. Her face that had always been so clear was as brown as mould now, with a faint moustache mossing her mouth and chin. Her calm eyes were holden secretly. She smelt, Easter thought, just like an old bush. How did she dare to be so unlike the graceful, useful aunt they remembered (255).

The place is so dauntingly her own that it bears a physical distaste for these young suitors.

> They padded together down the high, empty corridor. Far below in the dank well of the hall a cat squalled hideously. It seemed to Basil as though the evil of decay that had set its fungus in his Puppetstown cried out against them both in that riven, dreadful voice (264-5).

Passing time offers no conciliation between Puppetstown and its handicapped aspirants, and Easter, in particular, is thoroughly discouraged:

> "But I don't know what to say to her. She's so sour. She's as difficult as--as the house is. She's worse than the plumbers. She doesn't want us any more than the place want[s] us. Luck's against us, Basil, everything has gone wrong..." (276).

Basil, disturbed by Puppetstown's resemblance to an English home he and Easter had recently flown, is also embittered. And his terseness around Aunt Dicksie is unleashed:

> "...people belong to houses--not the other way about--either living people or dead. Easter and I've just been staying at a house that belonged to ghosts--it was so awful. Now we've come here, and Puppetstown and you belong and we've no share at all in either of you--you wont let us in.
>
> "I mean that we'll never do any good at Puppetstown--your Puppetstown, not ours--with your ill-wish" (279).

But Puppetstown is not entirely withdrawn, and it is from the youthful alienation of its guests that something strong

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and new is promised it. In a different light, Easter and Basil, "had come to find a refuge and had found instead Adventure." (265)

Bunclody, "the smallest house in Ireland," is the voice that makes the difference. Snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, it comes to serve as Easter's Rising and Puppetstown's transformation. It was Patsy Roche, Easter's dearest friend and Puppetstown's longest inhabitant, whose own little "castle," the "boot and lamp room" at Puppetsown, the walls of which "Patsy and his predecessors had scribbled their names (together with their low opinions of all immediate domestic superiors) in the soft damp of the walls" (36), and where the ferrets which kept Puppetstown free of rats ran freely and carelessly, who first mentioned Bunclody to Basil. And Basil thinks of it as one last chance of holding Easter at Puppetstown. Bunclody he believes will affect Easter's heart, and perhaps break the stasis at Puppetstown.

> "Easter," she heard him calling through the house; "Easter, Easter." ... "Come to Bunclody with me. You must.... I wont go without you darling Easter..." (280).

Easter can't resist the invitation, and even before she actually begins her ascent up Patrick Street, in the poor "mountainy" Irish town of Bunclody, that town with "an unattractive marker-place" and a "lovely name," Aunt Dicksie's intransigence, as if through some homing message,

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is broken. It is as if the small house has made direct contact with the Big House.

> Six o'clock and a silence setting heavy as the mason's dust on Puppetstown. All the workers who had brought their changes there had left. Aunt Dicksie was alone with her house, and a flame leaped in her. This her house to the children.... From her window she saw the young horses she had bred for them, moving in all their strong beauty of action against the soaking gold of the evening. She saw the children, strong, beautiful and brave, riding a hunt on them (280-81).

One observes that Easter and Basil are still her "friendly dependent children," but "her way was chosen" (281).

Easter, climbing up "past the Rathgarry Road and the Place of the little Crosses" is enlisted, her senses summoned, by the different gravity of this Irish world:

> Bunclody was below her now. Her feet were set on the road for the smallest house. A little and winding road it was too, and a stiff way to climb. To the left and right of her as she went along were small fields, grey and close as sheep folds, the shadows of their stone walls lapping gigantically across them in the evening.... Mountains and sky were pale as green glass, and in the nearer foothills that climbed up to that greater loneliness there was no colour at all.
>
> A dim little road Easter was on now, uncertain and full of apology for where, after all, was it leading but to the smallest house? The low stone walls saw no more reason now to protect the way from the trespass of goats and lean calves" (282).

She walks further, her road shared with sheep, "Up, still up..." "And was it here at all." Her self-awareness decreases as her anticipation increases.

> Two white goats, spancelled and smelling dreadfully, clanked solemnly on before her. Now the untidy hand of use was on the wild path. She was coming very near to the smallest house. Round the steep corner where the bare rock shouldered out through the road and she was upon it (283).

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The "house" itself almost retracts her mood. She's nearly enraged by it.

> No wonder it hid from her. No wonder it stowed itself away in this far, forgotten place--little shameful slut of a house. What had Basil sent her so far to see?...
> Built in against a sod and stone bank was a lean-to shelter, nothing more. Rough barked boards; a roof of dark birch twigs. As for the goats off the mountains. A very poor lodging for the few hens that picked round in the narrow road (283).

It's humbling, yet it somehow absorbs her. There may be something in it of her own desires.

> But no, certainly it was a house. It was a house because built solid of mud and stones, rising square above the birch-thatched roof, there was a chimney. A real chimney... with an indescribable jauntiness and spirit, a weathercock reared itself bravely two feet above its topmost stone, witness irrefutably to the hand and habitation of man. Here, it said, you see a house, a dwelling for man, built by a man to house his love (283-4).

Easter recalls Patsy's account of the scandalous, true couple who lived there:

> The disgrace of the parish, they were, and thorns in the sides of priest and curate. Hasn't Maggie Foley a husband a soldier in the British army? And wasn't Jimmy Connor the common outlaw of three town-lands? Only he was the great warrant to play a flute at a dance or a wedding, there's no decent person would go next or nigh him. There they may live and there may die, the two light-o-loves in the hills (284).

Wasn't this life that Easter was witnessing? Life as it existed for itself, outside the confines, and Irish? Wasn't this the lack at Puppetstown that she could make up? Easter tries to fathom her experience, to pick up the small house's voice. She tries to gather in the picture before her--

> Those were his goats that marched before her. Those were his few sorry hens. That was his long white dog, curled like a snake against the door-post, with an eye

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> malignant upon her. Where was the woman for whose sake he had built the house and with whom he lived there, she remembered--alas!--in sin (284).

--but it is too painful. She is confused and rattled by her own impunity as an observer:

> Not much luck about it, Easter thought, hurrying away from the dirty little house, guarded only by its lean dog. Spy she had been, bringing her curiosity to this smallest house of sin. Up in the hills, farther--higher, she would forget the queer distress this little house had left to hang heavily about her heart (285).

But as she goes deeper into the mountains, the encounter pursues her. She retraces her steps, passing the small house again on the way back to Bunclody:

> The one square window was an orange flat of light far in below the stooping birch thatch, and from the chimney of the smallest house, turf smoke went up, incense to the single beauty of a star. Shrill sweet music piped a quick twisting tune. Easter's feet hurried past to the catch in the dancing music; a dark, bold-faced little man played it in the doorway of his house, while solemn and elfin in the steep road, his love-child danced to the tune (285).

The smallest house in Ireland is the crier who rings the bell for Puppetstown. It speaks the language of things, carrying its banner in music, light, color, and poor objects. Song and singer, Easter and Puppetstown are reconciled by its unself-conscious emotion. Out of material poverty comes the realness of the imagination.

> [Easter] had found the end of charm again.... Now as they drove there was a cold chill taste and the smell of burning weeds in the air. Deep and narrow these roads home from the mountains. Little white houses squatted low behind their burdened fuschia hedges. Easter's heart was ringed about with a hoop of flame (286).

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Now at Puppetstown, Easter can embrace her own identity as never before. Within, her Ming horses are restored to her

> And without, Mooncoin, Mandoran, and Black Stair leaned nearer than a dream, wilder than the strangest dancing. The charming spell was laid on her again. She was entranced and delight and excitement sang in her when at last she went downstairs again (287).

Puppetstown itself is a supplicant for change. It has begun to clear away the underbrush of Aunt Dicksie's reign and, with Easter's will and some of its old Irish spirit back, is ready to stand clear. Bunclody's leverage has been felt in everything and everyone, including, of course, Aunt Dicksie, who has made contact with her own ancient magic:

> All the gaiety and wildness that had been silent so long at Puppetstown were present in Aunt Dicksie's voice; in the rings on her fingers; it was there in the fire that went singing and whispering up the chimney of the morning-room, and into the mists of amethyst flowers that smoked against the mirror over the mantel-shelf. From nothing had Aunt Dicksie brought forth this graciousness of beauty. From flowers and fire, from strange rings on her fingers and sudden passion for life in her voice (287).

And Puppetstown, after bearing the weight of fixed relationships over the span of generations, and after bearing the solitariness of a prison, can experience now the release that comes with human consciousness and contact.

"Clonomore"

Aragon, the Big House of **Two Days in Aragon** is of two natures, its own and its owners. It can express itself, but in its dominant mode, it must express, in line with its oppressive history, the will of its Fox masters. The Aragon

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we first meet is fully embodied within its gorgeous panoramic environs (chap. six). This Aragon, its tyrannical past muted in favor of an exceptional beauty, holds the promise of its roots, of a Spanishness (historically) entwined with indigenous Ireland.

> The house itself was long and pale, but it did not share in the coldness and obscure gloom proper to so many beautiful houses of the georgian age in Ireland. Perhaps because of the deep shelter that surrounded it there was a calm and a kindness about its lines... Beauty so correct and satisfactory since then there has never been: so much dignity and so little heaviness
>
> (17).

Nor is it entirely out of sympathy with its current manager, who, despite her tight British identity, and her Fox blood, is of Irish woman born.

Nan Fox's entry into the Aragon universe is charted from birth. She has no choice between her mother, a dismissed Irish servant at Aragon, and her true father, Hubert Fox, the master of Aragon; no option between the falling Irish sky and the security of the Big House.

> Since Nan was a child Aragon had been the dream in her life. The house was spoken of by Nan's mother hushedly, secretly. Tales of Aragon were never told before Nan's father, but when the child and the mother were alone they would pour between them (107).

That Aragon was a house of horrors for her mother might be laid by Nan on her mother's lowly Irish status:

> Nan's mother was a stupid loquacious slattern with blackberry coloured eyes and honey-coloured hair. There she would sit and talk by the hour... Looking out of the door toward the mountains, tears would start in her purple eyes as a new torture inflicted on her in the past by Ann Daly, the head housemaid was composed and related (107).

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Nan's only future as her step-father knows--"she had a fineness with her strength that came through her breeding--" (111) lies in her Fox blood, and he is glad to guide her in that direction.

> Strange enough he loved Nan, and the gentry side of her made her take to him for he had the lonely free aristocracy of outlook that comes from living hard on mountains and rivers, with dogs for company and fish and birds to care (108).

By sending Nan off to Dublin to learn nursing, he heralds her high and mighty re-birth.

> In 1900, Nan had got to Aragon. Even now she could remember her first day breathing its air, the feel of door handles as she opened Aragon doors, the consciousness of dead Fox's stirring in her blood. She was not yet aware of how Aragon would drown itself in her power and love... Nan was going to stay in Aragon (110).

Almost from the first, Aragon is a monarchic womb for her. Her servant status is a mere initiation rite. The "narrow wooden (servant's) stairs" with its "hideous" "black plastic nigger" on its landing, for instance, must soon surrender to the plushly carpeted main staircase with its gilded family portraits. For to be a Queen in a house of a King, Nan must learn to separate herself from that messy matrix, that "separate piece of her life" that she has left behind her.

> Power must grow with secrecy. Power is force controlled , and there is no control like silence. To have kept silence a life-time is to be strong (106).

Nan will not, at any cost, be made sport of like her Mom was, nor be exiled like her to life on "the heather with the lonely grouse." (109)

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As her tenure lengthens, Nan's casting period at Aragon ends at a point where she is nearly unrecognizable as Irish:

> She went down the wide staircase, her hand touching lightly along he smooth bannister. She took this way to lend herself a kind of stretch, to borrow resistance from all the pale Fox's. The intensive vanity, the highest end of snobbery made passible the connection between Nan and these pallid brown portraits... They did indeed influence her to a denial that was then close to martyrdom (117).

She is now more than a member of this society. "Little by little Nan had achieved the ruling of Aragon" (123). Her "octopus like quality" is felt everywhere inside its walls. "She was to be Aragon and Aragon to be Nan Fox." Working on her linen, an "emblem of Nan's sound position at Aragon," she can sum up her success:

> All her life was as clear to her as if she opened an atlas and looked at a map. It would be a map of Aragon with the blood of her life and the strength of her mind and her body marked on it in strong visible ways.
>
> The bright rich surfaces of the furniture. How many slave girls had she driven to the polishing? The exquisite store of linen, the children's straight backs. Miss Pigeon's subjection... (106)

And once Hugh Fox, "her master and her half cousin" and "her love, [and] her little boy," is accidentally killed, her commitment to Aragon becomes a mission. The potent combination of a sacrificed love for him and the power vacancy at Aragon left by his demise produce a kind of retributive will to power, which more deeply binds her to Aragon's cruel past:

> She would live to hurt somebody for this terrible wrong she had done herself. She would twist a revenge out of life yet. She knelt a long time in the cold room above the cod river... (119)

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She marries Aragon with a vengeance. She hires the servants, gives the orders, and supervises the doings of the house. Work and action are her panacea. Playing by the King's rules, she becomes an icon of rule, hording power, standing alone, and saving Aragon from Irishness.

This is her destiny. And she is well suited and calculated for it. She has already succeeded in erasing the name--"in its less smart days it was called Clonamore. But Nan thought Mountain Brig sounded much more civilized, as indeed it did" (35)--and most of the reality of her husband's home:

> Foley O'Neill's house was up near the mountains. Near, but not very near. There was a little valley ...and a wild hill covered with bracken and gorse and crowned wildly in dark fir trees between his house and farm , and the real mountains. Once there had been a rocky little laneway... But Foley and Nan had civilized the approach. There were solid bright white gates now...and inside the dark walls ...were white timber rails, rather like a racecourse ...partly because Nan admired the smart look they gave the place...
>
> It had been a steep grey farm-house of infinite squalor, standing undivided from its wet steep yard where fowl scratched morosely at the steaming manure heaps, and housed calves bayed for food...(33)

Nan proves her allegiance to the Big House in the denial of her own origins. She feels no prick of separation in this. Her work is forthwith and aggressive.

> Things were different now. Two gay, villa like bow windows... A square of garden was divided off from the yard by a whitewashed wall. Two neat grass plots, parted cleanly by a graveled path... Two beds of begonias were there carefully minded...
>
> Foxes' masks, ruffled by faded brushes, were hung on the walls of the passage-way. A couple of hunting prints, divorced from their series took the place of

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> the holy pictures that might have been there.... (33-4).

The prominence given to the Fox family in this Irish house by way of portraits and furnishings is overkill, squeezing out all but "one picture of the Pope and a few common family photographs."

Nan does to Clonomora what Big House society did to the local Askemore Caves:

> ...these caves had been a favourite resort of picnickers from the time of their discovery in Victorian days when the passages and rock formations had been named with heavy appropriateness. The voices of many guides had uttered those names, leaving the place-tamed feeling in the sombre air, domesticating the ugliness,as though it had been painted on a souvenir mug... (179).

Nan has exorcised the demons of Clonomore as Aragon has those of the caves. But both venues, on this April day in 1920, are about to reclaim their sleeping parts. For the IRA has hold of the mountains, and Mountain Brig, from its unrenovated backside, is beginning to speak as Clonomore.

Paradoxically, it is Foley O'Neil's forbidden lover, Grania Fox, who is first attentive to Clonomore. Her discovery of the fissure between the intended and unintended part of Brig is what charges her interest.

> Grania walked across the yard, away from the smart line of boxes and toward the house.
>
> The old yard sloped up towards the back of the house...had the tall dismal dignity of a narrow old farmhouse. The outer walls were so sour and flat you supposed them to be thin, but they were built as solid as a castle. The back of Foley's house was so unlike the front of it that the contrast gave you as quick a shock as the sight of a skeleton sitting on a sofa

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> might give, or the geniality of a friend suddenly turned to bitterness and accusation (58).

Entering the kitchen, her swing of awareness continues. Now she catches some of Clonomore's history and spirit:

> ...looking about her in the quiet gloom of a farm kitchen where for years food had been prepared for people and for animals, and where many people had lived in the poverty and dignity of daily life, before the idea that masters feeding apart from their men was known, or the dreadful style of parlours (59).

When Aunt Gipsy, a woman as fit for Clonomore as she is unfit for Mountain Brig, calls for Grania's help in treating her injured niece, Grania seems to experience an epiphany:

> She put the kettle on and stirred the fire, alone and responsible for this slight act. She was curiously excited, it was absurd for there could not be a smaller thing to do, but the air in the long thin kitchen seemed as full of presage as the stars, the whitened walls leaned inward and towards her. Light rode down a lean beam from a window deeply dug in the thick walls.... there was a softness and warmth of light that melted against the lime walls and poured back from them into the air. On the table there was a wide bowl...Nine fresh eggs it held. They were so new that a sort of bloom lay on their shells. A smell of bread came strongly from the oven. She opened the door... A sweet volume of warmth came from the open oven door. (59)

In bringing Clonomore into being, every part of her discovery seems equal to its whole:

> She felt drunk with this contrast... The warmth enclosed within walls, the delight of a house, the sweetness of new bread... Common joys were new to her... She was beyond and outside herself and reality, in a world of different wonders and unguessed at values (59).

What the "smallest house in Ireland" is to Easter, Clonomore is to Grania. It exists separately and independently of Aragon and its local surrogate, Mount Brig. With its black

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hens, muddy earth, "steep stairs" and general clumpiness, Clonomore is Grania's Irish find.

Doatie, Grania's injured charge, is one of Clonomore's ears. Born and bred in this house, she, like her Aunt Gipsy, is one right Irish woman. Doatie is a dropout from "five sacred prisons" (schools), and is described as "a small strong black little gipsy," as "tough and muscular as a gypsy boy," as "deeply religious, and a terrible liar..." and "as sharp as a needle and as bright as paint..."(35). That she is a "stable slave" to Foley also associates her with Grania, but it is the breakout girl in her that allies the two young women. She is as much of this moment to Grania as is Clonomore.

And it is this Clonomore and its adherents, Grania, Aunt Gipsy, Doatie and Foley (reluctantly, of course) which Nan Fox, on behalf of Aragon, is wary of. But she is even more vigilant about the "bad ghosts" of Aragon itself. It is perhaps Nan's mixed lineage which makes her so susceptible to Aragon's spirit world. In any case, the "good ghosts," of Fox descent, appear first:

> To her this proof of her Fox blood was a wonder and a satisfaction beyond price. She accepted and gloried in their presence (121).

> Out in the dark passage above the well of the staircase...candle in hand. She was less alone now than at any time. For here she was as close as flesh can be with all the dead Fox's of Aragon; as close and comfortable with them as she was with the living Fox's... Nan was the only person who knew the ghosts at Aragon familiarly. It was like nothing for her to go into a room, and know the movement, the fullness, the stirring of air that told of its occupation (32).

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Housemaids, like Nellie McVeigh, who "let cobwebs and dust gather on the pictures of the dead Fox's" are insubordinate "sluts" to Nan.

But if mediumship brings the ancestors of light to Nan Fox, it also conjures up the nightmare of Aragon's despised. There were chambers in Aragon in which servants were tortured; there was sex there that was rape; and there were the bones of aborted babies and suicides lying in the river below. So other ghosts, their tabooed presence revealing telltale scars, emerge from deafened rooms and corridors, from under compressed layers of Big House history. Representing years of suppressed violations, they are the servants of Aragon, the Irish, and as spirits harassed by further wrongs they have more bid to Nan's hearing than do the greedy Foxes who ruined her mother.

> But there were other ghosts at Aragon not quite so happy. Were the girls such as Ann Daly had dealt with (and many a one before her) coming back with their wrongs, a crazed haunting of the beautiful house where they had been coaxed or forced to wickedness and where babies' bones were little and green scattered skeletons on the river bottom? (122).

Nan might be able to "pass off her knowing of these things with a shrug," but the shadowy existences are persistent, and if they are insufficient in their own right to effect Nan's Aragon, their presence is allied to the more embodied rising of Clonomore's. Aunt Gipsy's rare visit to Aragon-- "Aunt Gipsy, to whom Aragon was an Elysium of forbidden ground and unencountered aristocracy."-- (133) to inform Nan of Foley's arrest also unites this Aragon-Clonomore

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opposition. Her very presence there seems to burst Nan's ordered world: "Gipsy, that vulgar lesser creature, Foley's servant, her servant" (134). But her news, coming on the heels of the butler's--that "tinker bred scum"-- accusations about her imprisonment of Aunt Pigeon, and atop "the dark wind of fear" that was already "blowing in her," is devastating. And Nan's gratuitous attacks on Gipsy's lowliness do not avail against her jeopardizing news, and sharp rebuttal:

> "Ah, your airs and grandeurs will take a toss now.... But for all your gentry ways you may strive to give him he's in a British jail, now, God help him for aiding his own against the enemy I wouldn't wonder..." (136-7).

A few moments later Nan is on Gipsy's turf at Clonomore. Shaken, but determined to straighten out this Foley-IRA, Foley-Grania business, she follows the leads. But her presence in her old home evokes depression. Memory (Clonomore), and her overcoming of memory (Mountain Brig), is becoming a burden to her:

> "How now Gipsy," Nan said while her eyes swept the kitchen. A warm heavy smell came from a pot of potatoes boiling for the chickens. Nan appreciated it at good worth. She stood for a moment as Grania had stood in the morning light, but in no such transparent stillness of speculation and hope.... to-night the struggle of past years surged to Nan's memory, years past with all the old harshness unforgotten. There was nothing pretty to remember about these years she had spent here and away from Aragon. In these years she had pulled the place little by little and one thing after another from its unkept ragged status of mountain farm, from its chill and snivelling and unnecessary state of weakness and dirtiness, disorder and seeming poverty, to the tidy sound affair it was now. One thing after another she had managed and arranged and kept going--the chickens out of the kitchen, that had been

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> her first battle when she came here from the state and luxury of Aragon (170-1).

It is not surprising that with Brig slipping from her control her mind should turn to her "thriftless husband's" role in the renovation:

> He had never said "no" to any scheme of hers, but had never put forward hand or foot to help in its accomplishment. Next week, it had always been, or, when the turnips are thinned, or, when the corn is carried, the dung spread. Nan had found this uncertain obstructionism exhausting and hateful, but she met and defeated it with unfailing cheerful will and strength (171).

Foley thankfully had a will to overcome Clonomore but, ironically, he is being held in a British jail for his Fenian sympathy.

Meanwhile, as Nan sets out to track the IRA party (doing the work of the British troops), Grania is re-evaluating this Aragon. To her now "an air of unreality" marks its every breath. The house is frightening. Her sister Sylvia's cold and correct ways, and her romance with Captain Purvis, which is as fake to Grania as it is dangerous to her Foley, ices her spirit. "The gulf between love and death and danger, and this patter of drawing-room values, [leaves] Grania somewhere in mid-air, stranded in a coldness of reality which frighten[s] her" (150). She feels torn, inside and out, and Aragon torments her more than ever.

The Civil War rages outside and many Big Houses are being burned by Republican forces. Aragon is nervous.

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> A time when a bitter little war went untidily on, and news of its progresses went from mouth to mouth in whispers. Many old and beautiful houses that year had their last hours of life. They were stilled for death that summer. They waited in beauty and quiet for fire and the end. Did they have a foreknowing of their deaths? Was that air of desolate distance, of exquisite sadness, that lesser fainter appearance which Irish houses have in comparison to the stability of their kind in England, was it foretold in their stars, grown sadly in their very stones? (139).

Aragon has served the British Army since time immemorial:

> They came in dozens every Sunday afternoon, the soldiers from the barracks. They were institutions, those tennis parties that ended in supper, and cars that wouldn't start pushed down the avenue late into the night.... All the Aunts except Aunt Pigeon... had married into smart cavalry regiments on the strength of these parties. (24-5)

And the Barracks near Aragon is on alert; British troops patrol the mountains. The lads in the mountains are speaking, and the "bad ghosts" are rising: "...sometimes a strong and violent influence from bad lives and hard deaths of the past would plunge into the present of the house..." (140) Aragon can cite no appeal. It stands as a judgment on itself.

> In Aragon's basements there was a passage that ran its length to reach one room only, a room distant from any other... There had been an effort made once to turn it into a butler's bedroom, but butlers less austere than Frazer could not enjoy a night's quiet sleep in airs so shaken and petrified by long past doings.... a strange room to be found in the basements of Aragon where the hordes of servants had slept in dirt and confusion. Once the room had been hung with mirrors. Other curious contrivance were set in the walls..... "It must be burnt," Mrs Fox had exclaimed. "It must be burnt immediately" (192-3).

IRA chief, Killer Denny, having gained the upper hand on Nan, is now marching her back to Aragon to witness its

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burning. Denny served Aragon as a boy, and carries its history in his hide. However, his account of his boyhood travails in which Nan herself figures heavily, makes little impress on his prisoner who, at the moment, is much more concerned with the pain caused by a nail in her shoe, one which also serves to block out, rather than to remind of, any thought for Aunt Pidgie who she has locked away in a house which is about to be torched.

> Oddly enough, the thought of Miss Pigeon and the nail in her shoe did not cross Nan's memory then. Not so strange is reality perhaps because if Nan/s imagination had ever touched Miss Pigeon she could never have used her so unkindly for so many years (219).

Pantry-boys and decrepit old women are small potatoes to a woman who must presently defend her identity from a band of nickel hoods:

> "Oh, I know your noble ancestry, Missus--is backing the British against your own." Nan hits him a savage blow for attacking Aragon "You rat"... "You Yankee rat, keep the name of Aragon out of your dirty mouth. Even to name it, oh" Her face was white and her eyes blazing. "Bastard I am, and thankful for the blood and breed that sets me the world away from scum like your wicked little self" (186).

As her unceremonious march proceeds, however, her conceit must diminish. She looks down into the river valley before her, its "mansions dwarfed blobs,"

> Nan saw that they were making towards Aragon, dwarfed on its river height below, and she grew more frightened and breathless with every painful step she took. Her heavy heart beat against her side and leaped towards her stuffed mouth (220).

She even softens toward Denny, asking forgiveness for her treatment of him, but if there is any feeling in that, it

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isn't enough: "Her grandeur was gone, melted from her bones like style off a sick bloodhound. She would have done anything for mercy now" (222).

Aragon, meanwhile, sitting in an ominous air sown by the seed of self-isolation, nobly awaits its sentence.

> There was too much beauty round Aragon, and too much beauty is dangerous. A complete thing is near its ending. The white brooms in the garden...had grown to a false fat stature, sleek as white overfed cats... It had the lonely quality of birds in flight--only stone and water-fowl have this isolation from lush surroundings. As a wild duck might rise uncaring, from a pool of lily flowers, so Aragon was detached from the gardens and the evenings; there was no meeting place where the house yielded at all to their awful sweetness (227).

It has a great reserve but, unable to affect Fox abuse, it can only keep to itself, and perhaps listen.

Clonomore can speak now. The turning wheels of generations have come round. The dissent of this small house comes from its birthing and dying, its work, visions, music, and communal living. Grania's kinship, Doatie's and Gipsey's devilish pride, Fenian fire, and even Foley's wavering but real enough allegiance;

> Hardy as he was, Foley had a sort of passion for the things he knew. His own things. The familiar ways of Mountain Brig, Aunt Gipsy knew how long he like his egg boiled, the saddle-room he and Micky had made... The stove that boiled the linseed, a cross little affair, but he and Micky knew how to humour it exactly (205-
>
> 06).

are its spirit army. Inside Aragon, it has Aunt Pigeon, another prisoner of war, who can only dream of a another

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life, and other house, one far closer to Clonomore than to Aragon.

> Aunt Pigeon felt more and more depressed and agitated as she gazed down on the slowly sinking river... Aunt Pigeon hated the beauty and isolation of the prospect with all her heart. She would look out on the wildness and beauty she had always known, with her heart mourning for that dream cottage... where she would be her own mistress... She would set places for her Diblins at he table... The wildest fancies pleased her as to life in the little house while she gazed, as she was gazing now, at the green sky and the evening star (224).

Cut off forever form Aragon's life, Pigeon, now in danger from its chastening flames, must await the saving arms of an IRA chief.

Nan, now tied up, her heart plunging, must mutely witness the end of a creation she has shared in.

> Only she fixed her terrible eyes on the house and drank some consolation from its walls and windows... and in a moment...
> As she felt this, a terrible knowledge bounded up in her, sent her heart soaring and knocking again in her body, sent sweat in rivers down between her breasts, and every hair on her body itching with terror. For she saw that Aragon was burning. They had tied her here to watch the burning. Tied her so that she might watch her own soul burning. For Aragon was her soul (253).

Having "taken the house...into the comfort of her strong lonely life," she is crushed by her single loyalty to a perfect object.

> Now she saw the smoke and the rosy flame from her linen-room window. My linen, my pillow cases, my sheets. Like all the furnishings of Aragon, they were hers, she had always experienced a sound satisfaction in so calling things "mine...." Hers to keep from sun and moth and careless hands--most truly hers who could so cherish them... (253-54).

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All her fixing up and fixing over of Aragon is for naught. Aragon's vertical structure is being leveled by Clonomore's tongues of fire. Nan's devotion to Aragon is not separable from its spooks and rebels, or from her own lies and self-deception. Her chastening is unrelenting:

> She saw fires lighting... Flames springing... It was a stripping aside of that hushed and curtained privacy preserved so long and carefully.
> She moaned against her gag and swayed, her hands in torture to rush towards the flames and drag out such treasures as she could... And then beyond the thought of her consuming treasure there came to her with horror the remembrance of Miss Grania and Miss Pigeon locked in the nurseries.... Sobs thickened in her throat and broke against the gag. Aragon was burning (254).

Finally, Nan's ghostlike soul abandons her body to the ferocity of a British jeep on the King's Highway. And Aragon, its foundation spared, may be newly destined.

> Stone by parted stone, Aragon would fight her way against desolation and holding to her life be rescued....
> ... the house, with its five cracked plaster nymphs and light stone foxes, was to endure, purged by fire and rain and sun and frosts, of its evil and its ghosts... until the day came for Aragon to be built again by young Fox's (228).

For Aragon has been touched by rage, but also by vision. Clonomore's fires of creation belong now to Grania, who with her loss of Foley to exile, has found herself; and to Sylvia, who having aided Killer Denny in Pigeon's escape, has changed her sympathies. Both women have lost their lovers,however, -- "Neither told the other what lost love she mourned"--and there is nothing resolutory about **Two Day's** end. But if Aragon is "to rise again," it must do so upon its own ashes.

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Chapter Eight: "Speaking Gaelic"

> Paddy Fortune had been a steeplechase jockey in his day, and there was not a racecourse in Ireland over which he had not met with disaster and success. In his elderly years he was groom at Puppetstown and intimate friend and ally of the children.... Fortune answered their questions with the divine patience wherein the servants of Ireland are, with rare exception, steeped and endowed--at any rate in so far as their employer's children are concerned. (23-4, **Mad Puppetstown**)

> A fiddler came to make music before, or more properly speaking, behind us. He played a little plucking melody with his thumb before he broke into a tune like curlews calling--as shrill and wildly sad. (227, **Conversation Piece**)

> ...the poor country girls who worked in the house...had been despised and aborted, their babies, dead or dying thrown to the river, unless they were lucky like Nan's own mother and found some man to put shoes on a Fox's pleasure. All these things have happened... They have happened again and again. Cruelty and pain and tears and death had been common mates to childbirth at Aragon. (156, **Two Days in Aragon**)

In this final chapter we examine the Irish servant (and Republican) in Keane's Big House world. Her native Irish are, of course, inseparable from her rogues and outsiders, from her landscapes and little houses. To begin, servants benefit greatly from Keane's no-nonsense style. Although they are often as invisible as they are in life, they pop up everywhere in her flattened world, being heard, demanding attention, even playing major roles. From snobby housekeepers to gate-lodge keepers, from governesses to

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scullery maids, from top class jockeys to stable-boys, they come to life by breaking out of stereotypical molds. Their complexity is of the high-spirited, cunning, and blues-y sort. They are depressed enough for suicide, political enough for Sinn Fein, uncertain enough for deep predicaments. Their jobs and workplaces project competence and warmth. As individuals, they may strike a stock note occasionally, but generally they're an unbroken circle subject to Keane's and each other's sympathy and generosity.

It is their commonality that creates the aerial spirit within the Pale. Sharing chores and problems, they seem to hold, with natural reluctance, that these are reliable markers of the good life. The conviviality and companionship of their daily condition seem to be a release from the innate order and normal isolation of the Big House. They poke questions, laugh out of place, and find wisdom in confused things. As internees, they also share such unidealized modes of escape and survival, as being late, lost, or fired. Rare among them is a mean spirit or flatterer, rarer still a traitor. The one pompous servant in Keane, her one true keeper of Big House order, is an English-identified Belfast Protestant. "Frazer hated pleasure, and life, and himself, and other people and Ireland" (123, **Two Days in Aragon**). The Irish servants have their own colorful language, music forms, and dances:

> Silly-Willy danced to his mother's...wild tune, his feet flashing and tapping and glancing...Nicandra watched, moved, almost

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> frightened, as the music entered her. Then she got up, took off her hat and danced too. (32, **Queen Lear**)

Poachers, tale-tellers, baiters, clowns, singers, their Irishness means high spirits and low comedy. Patsy Roche is said to have a "certain wild competency". None wear their suffering and none are boozers. If they form affinity groups with the children and old aunts of their bosses, they do so first with each other. Their seriousness comes from the loneliness of the cursed Big Houses they inhabit (800 years of British rule in Ireland) and in living in close quarters with rats, perhaps.

The Irish Republican Army is generally present in Keane's work to serve as an elusive contrast to British soldiers, but in **Two Days in Aragon**, this distinction breaks out into full view. Republican forces here are "ill used dogs," suffering enormous hardship "against overwhelming odds," and as no more likely to beat the British than the men of the Easter Rebellion. For once, they emerge here as individuals: Captain Denny is an expelled Big House slave boy, "educated" by hardened nuns, and then subject to Chicago's underworld, where "he'd never known a lucky day." Other lads are former postal workers, barbers, or bricklayers, timid and taut. For once, too, they speak for themselves. Foley O'Neill vehemently protests to his interrogators the history of English soldiers on Irish soil: "The ruin of Ireland, Major, is chaps like you and Cromwell." We get to hear the bristling irony in Denny's

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blast at Nan Foley, the Irish traitor, at her timorous son, at Aragon proper for its history of servant abuse, and at her cowardly troops: "You talk of a fair fight, when you have the whole British Army." And this is an army which Keane makes abundantly clear is "clean shaven," well-rested, and respectable. "They seemed right and civilized," their operations fully rationalized and above ground. It is, finally, the army of Cromwell, whose brother first coined the epithet "gook" to strip the Irish enemy of its humanness.

"Live Trout"

The servants of **Mad Puppetstown** inhabit a larger world than the family they serve. Less fixed than their masters, they can accept the order and boundaries of Puppetstown, but also the heartspring wit, music, and rebellion of their native country. Through their Irishness, they seem to resonate the health and promise which permeates the novel's world. Humming through their duties and lives with nonsense and joy, they go on and on. Rarely the recipients of an indifferent eye, their sight, sound, and mutinous presence, make more than a subtle impress on the Chevingtons. They are Puppetstown's unbroken spirits, radiating life to all, but most especially to their kindred Chevington kids, who share in their jokes, plots, and ways of life. That they are boxed in a Big House doesn't prevent their suggesting its grand sweep and hospitality, or relieving its daily tedium

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or, by being part and parcel of its domestic kin, enlarging its identity..

All the servants at Puppetstown are human. Paddy Fortune, the fantastic "steeplechase jockey," and now old stable-hand is typical. "In his elderly years he was groom at Puppetstown and intimate friend and ally of the children" (23). His hair stands "out from his body," and he takes his port "as though he [is] taking a Sacrament." Of his favorite pony, Tom Jones, "Cripes Almighty! that's the coldest little lad in the world" (106). Mrs. Kelly, the "presiding deity of the kitchen," and all crust to her large staff, is very much a part of the natural process of kitchens, and her cooking and is geared to excellence over a great length of meals. John O'Regan, "a mountainous man" with a massy red beard "divided into two golden wings on either side of his head," a passionate temper, and a voice "like a prayer," is the "really good gardener" at Puppetstown. "His slow unimpatient work" over an odd lot of jobs is for him and his youthful observers, "a delicious task."

The servants are part of the pace and ease at Puppetstown. They are its banter, its language. Mrs. Kelly, Fortune, and Patsy Roche, for instance, are a circus in their own right, cursing each other in the "names of the Holy Family" as "lowbred," "tinkers," and "little savages." Objects and places seem to relax in their presence. For Easter, the afternoon, "that time for doing things." might

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start in the stable-yard: "There at least the presence of Fortune lends a motive to ten minutes idleness" (54). Paddy would desist from "his light and artistic labors with a rake as soon as the children appeared."

> ...Fortune answered their questions with the divine, endless patience wherein the servants of Ireland are, with rare exception, steeped and endowed--at any rate in so far as their employer's children are concerned
>
> (24).

And after dinner he was just as reliable a presence:

> Fortune they found in his saddle-room. A stove burnt brightly.... Fortune was looking at the paper when they came in. This was his evening unalterable affectation, for he was quite unable to read. But he kept up the pretence so studiously that even the stable lads were deceived... the unfailing photographic memory of the illiterate served him well... (105-06).

Of all the servants, though, of all the untamed spirits at Puppetstown, Patsy Roche stands out. He is certainly an endearing enough lad:

> A very thin boy, light on his bare feet, with ears set and pointed like a fox club's or a faun's, a dark, neatly balanced head in which blue eyes were set surprisingly and a mouth that suited his quiet speech (28).

But Patsy is "the son and grandson of a poacher," and comes from a line of fisherfolk:

> Patsy ghilled for Major Chevington. He had the sure eye and the swift unerring hand of one whose father and father's father have had fish out of the river in ways more illicit than warrantable (31).

He himself is like a fish in water, getting on and off the hook. As likely to be caught with a fish in his pocket as a ferret in his bed, he's as teasingly devilish as Irish, never missing a chance to join the rabble. "Patsy it was

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who found and gave [the kids] Edward," their pet worm. He is a sinewy, well-tested guy, as much in trouble for his race as for himself. His hazel stick, for example, is

> a slim defense against the onslaughts of the farm dogs, who broke from their sun-induced languors to rate and bate this outcast who had slipped like a sly dark fish... Dimly they perceived that, although for the moment he was, like themselves, a servant to man, yet he came of the spirit and clan whence are raiders (29).

He sleeps in the boot room with "armies of rats." Due to his delinquent nature, not a tawdry syllable is wasted on the fact that he is a terrific odd-jobber.

> Supposedly employed at Puppetstown to clean boots and knives, chop firewood and carry coals, for the nourishment of that all-consuming furnace, the kitchen range, in point of fact, Patsy was seldom at hand when any specific duty was required of him. He could nevertheless, fulfill with a certain wild competency the work of almost any servant on Puppetstown's vast and ever-changing staff (30).

It is his ungovernable nature that attracts Easter's unfixed affection. To her, he is the most responsive person around. She prefers his adventuresome company to that of her twin cousins, even if her "desertion of Evelyn's" for his means conflict.

> Evelyn felt very left out.... Even his hidden nest of kittens... failed as a solace for the secret and illicit delight of stalking through the green coverts of the shrubbery under the masterful direction of Patsy Roche (29).

No double trouble here, though, for Patsy's magnetism, even for Evelyn, is too great to question.

> But the thought that he could report Patsy Roche to authority for the neglect of one and all of his manifold duties never crossed Evelyn's mind (29).

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Patsy is the "no" sayer at Puppetstown, the pesky Irishman, and none of the young folks around challenge that. Besides, they are too enamored of him and too in awe of his active, competent spirit:

> The children loved him. That they were entirely forbidden to play with Patsy Roche lent a charming excitement to hours spent in his society. Whatever he did had about it the authentic stamp of artistry. Whether it was cooking a dinner or working a ferret, killing duck, or marking out the tennis court, he did it with the soul that was in him, and the children, perceiving here a singleness of spirit that matched well with your own, gave him the strong friendly liking of the young--friendship neither to be dimmed by years nor sated by daily familiarity (31).

He is Easter's bone-to-bone companion. His "divine talks" with her suggest both her wild speechlessness and the "luxuriant words" of all her secret thoughts. He, like Fortune, is attuned to the terrain she worships, to the aura of the mountains to which Easter pins a different and better life. His range of emotions inspire the life inside her. Patsy can be meek (when he plucks feathers for the female kitchen staff), Patsy can be the devil; but mostly, for Easter, Patsy is empathetic. Just as, in the doldrums of a tennis party, Fortune can comfort her "with benign tolerance for the eccentricities of her elders and superiors"-- "Ah, well, Heaven for comfort, Hell for Society" (26)--so is Patsy, sure and gentle, never very far from her.

But above all, their light unity is achieved by their mutual rebellion. If Easter is often suspect, Patsy, "the little tinker's herring" is the big time instigator.

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> But Nanny...scolded with a fury and a venom that knew no bounds and the object of their wrath that little stinkin' tinker, the biggest rogue in Ireland, with his thrashy dirty ferrets and his poaching (80).

Patsy's endearing tag for his pal sums up their unassuming liaison: "Some calls her Pesty, and more calls her the Devil's Needle, but I calls her the Ferret." It is Patsy who ring-leads Easter and her pals in the simmering rebellion at Puppetstown. He and Easter raise holy terror through pranks, and stalks in and around the Great House. She admires his pickpocket coat with awe, and so many of his "high deeds" which were "best left untold." And she "[can] perfectly understand Patsy's attitude towards Mrs Kelly. It was so entirely on a level with her own sense of subservient animosity towards authority" (43). Patsy aids in her escapes from Authority whether it be "frenzied" in a "purple tea gown," or as remote as the portrait of Victoria mounted in Easter's room. He knows the cost of rebellion too and manages to lift the fallen, with folksy comfort, from Authority's excesses:

> On the morning that saw Evelyn, an open rebel to the authority that sought to physic him with castor oil, betake himself for one wild and lovely day to the woods which hemmed Puppetstown darkly on two sides, it was Patsy who stayed his derange stomach with rhubarb tart, cold pig's cheek and acid drops (33).

Patsy too, takes part in the anticipation, action, and fulfillment of the kids' unforgettable hunts with Jer Donahugh. Without his effortless guiding hand throughout these splendid days, with their high risk and emotion, the hunts might have expressed something less certain and real.

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And only Patsy and the fire in the hearth can complete these intoxicating days out in the fenceless countryside.

Right at home, Patsy, coal and wood bearer, walks "up buckets of boiling water" for his youngsters' baths. As a fire blazes in Easter's room "a curtain of its scent hangs ravished about the ming horse," giving heart to her feelings. "'I love hunting and Fortune and Patsy and Basil--' Delight seizes her so that she [weeps]." Patsy brings in the hot soup as "'John Peel' twangs shakily on the air from the reconstructed gramophone." (104) Later, he is invited into the intimacy of the schoolroom for recorded music, port, and cards, which "he plays with the excitement and venom of the Irish." "Patsy was perhaps the best player of the lot of them, with an exact and unfaltering memory, but then he never, or hardly ever, held cards" (109-10). Skipping out on his chores, he makes capital of the night, "the vengeance of the morning forgotten."

Patsy's lives and roles and ways are sometimes reminiscent of a circus. Easter seems to think so: the Bunclody circus, with all its Irish flare, color, and hilarity is like a roll out of him:

> The circus tents and bright caravans stood in a field outside the village... Everywhere the crowds of barefooted children and shawled women...
>
> The band played, endlessly suggestive of the tricks the animals were doing.... A tall Irish boy introduced [the animals]and later held the pony's head while the high jumping mule cleared the grave pair....
>
> A tiny dwarf... He danced, a black cane in his hands... chasseing through the sawdust with the skill of a ball-room expert.

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> An acrobat mounted a tall swing.... He went higher, higher, higher. Up to the lights.... Easter shut her eyes.... The clown mounted a high ladder while the band played a tittuping, vulgar tune; he dipped and ducked...and climbed to the top where he rocked and swayed and fell with a roaring crash, to save himself by magic....
> At last the circus was over, but warm and fanciful its memory flowed through their beings--marvelous fulfillment of all dreams of wonder (71-75).

But there are shadows around the corner in Patsy's life, ones that weigh too heavily to be forgotten. They are as certain as his own Irishness, and as much a part of him as "his own sanctum--the boot and lamp room;"

> ...where Patsy and his predecessors had scribbled their names (together with their low opinions of all immediate domestic superiors) in the soft damp of the walls (37).

or of the ferrets housed there:

> A white ferret with her spawn came out from the shadows. They hooped their long backs in the dimness, brushing their bodies across Patsy's bare feet.... Patsy, being an artist, had sympathy in him even for the mood of ferrets (36-7).

For sure, Patsy is an Irishman first and a servant second. And in this time of Irish rebellion, the time of "the little bitter, forgotten war in Ireland," when "the fastness of Mandoran, Mooncoin and the Black Stair saw secrecy and striving and plotting;" when "through all the land no man trusted even his brother;" and when "all was silence and covet looks" and "a little knowledge was a dangerous thing;" (123) his loyalty accedes, with a wee help from the IRA's long arm, to his desire to help his native land.

> Not a young man in Ireland was there who did not belong to some secret society that compelled implicit

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> obedience or a sinister disappearance. And no questions were asked in those days.
> The Puppetstown branch of these moonlighters numbered Patsy among their ranks, and counted him with his indoor opportunities of espionage in a house frequented by the soldiers from the Camp, a not unuseful adherent (124)

But Patsy, too softhearted, like the usual Irish spy, has his committed vigilance turn to grief, when the soldiery he is spying on refuses, "even against strong discouragement from their senior officer," and even in the face of cars "being commandeered by the Sinn Fein forces," to forego the house's "wide hospitality." Puppeststown is targeted and Patsy's role thickens.

> And all this time the tyres of Patsy's bicycle wore thin with the miles covered by night when he delivered his reports of who had come to Puppetstown and when they had left and by what road... (132)

The night is turned over to dangerous whisperings and Patsy's ears must heed the messengers from Bunclody:

> Nine o'clock the night--by the Fall Rocks, "tis an order from the Hills--the column to parade in full stren'th--there's to be an inspection o' the boys--" "God save ye, Michael,. Good Night" (112).

Patsy's work flags as its objective nears. Carrying the cross for Ireland becomes an abstraction.

> Once there had been excitement and a burning flame of romance in these dark journeying to the mountains. There were nights when Patsy would slip out of the pantry window...with his heart on fire for Ireland, when his bicycle beat through the night on wings to set her free, and there was no thought of lesser treachery in this great loyalty of his to Ireland... Now these days were cold ashes and sour.... There were no ferrets now in the sedan chair. Patsy had no heart for rearing them.... ...his heart was not at one with anything that he did (133-4).

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Torn between two loyalties, "poor" Patsy operates the best he can. When the kids insist on a day trip to the lake at Mandoran, he tries to halt them--"And the mountains stiff with lads on the run"--perhaps underestimating Easter's initiative and deft sense for these mountain places, and their people. Later, Patsy, in "hand and glove with every shinner and poacher in the country," in Aunt Dicksie's words, swoops down for them, at his own risk, to guide them home:

> "... go the hilly road home. Don't go the Clohamon road at all. Hurry now in God's name, and don't say you were talking with me if one should ask. Say, a dark man showed me my road" (152).

At the end of these crisscrossings lay Aunt Dicksie's news: "Capt. Grey was murdered by the Sinn Feiners on the Mandoran road this afternoon. Your mother was with him." We learn that they shot Captain Grey "between Knocklanden and Bruffney on the Mandoran Road," that "they drove cattle across the road to stop them." (163) Patsy, she believes, has as surely held the Captain's "life in his hands" as he might have a "black hen's little egg."

Puppetstown is meanwhile undergoing a rapid transformation as "stiff" British troops, "silhouetted blackly against the mountain" supervise its evacuation. Patsy remains on with Aunt Dicksie, whose particular duties he is inclined to elude.

> Aunt Dicksie opened the door of the kitchen passage calling for Patsy... The kitchen fire was out and those solders had left a basketful of dirty teacups on the corner to the kitchen table (171).

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Aunt Dicksie's niggardly world is a determinedly weak draw to Patsy but Puppetstown is his stubborn self, and he's pleased that it has outlived Republican intent. And what a godsend he is, appearing right on the heels of Aunt Dicksie's ordeal:

> ...from the kitchen, there came the unmistakable and cheering sounds of a fire being lighted, and when she went down to look in at the door she saw the efficient maker of the fire was Patsy.
>
> Aunt Dicksie did not ask him why his clothes were so wet or his face so white and sleepless. Never had the sight of any being so pleased her as that of Patsy did at that moment... (174)

Delivered from his torturous spy duties, Patsy watches a "kettle boil with a freer mind and heart than he had ever carried under the shadow of Ireland's cross" (174). He has circled back: "That was how it started--the absolute reign of Aunt Dicksie and her able prime minister, Patsy" (175).

Although part of Patsy dies with old Puppetstown, he bears on, acting creatively where he can. He even seems to inspire Easter's return from English exile. Heartened by thoughts of him, she says to Basil:

> "Patsy? will he be there? I think he is still...."
> "Do you remember Patsy's father? He used to tie a wonderful claret. He dyed his own hackles."
> "And he always asked for a little assistance to buy himself new milk that the doctor had ordered.
> "He used to dye his hair as well as the hackles. Basil, we haven't thought about Puppetstown for ages, have we?" (237-8)

And what a contrast Patsy to a Luddington Court servant: "Jim Tucker, first whipper-in... sat on his horse, quiet and alert--a perfect tailor's-dummy of a servant, all beauty and uselessness" (189).

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When Easter and Basil gets back to Ireland, it is Patsy's world that greets her:

> A wind blew up the dust in skirling clouds and bellied them in the tattered side curtains of the ['filthy and shaky taxi']... Old women in donkey carts and children playing in the dust had as good as right to the road as any motorist, and so had stray asses and white wandering goats, while the driver slowed down almost to a stop for every cur dog... Far away the mountains held as it seemed their hands over their faces to commune a little heavily among themselves alone.... (248)

Patsy, now a "thin, pale young man with a little black beard" and the same "strange pointed ears," lights up upon seeing her. Over the next few months he will cradle her unsteady association with Aunt Dicksie's Puppetstown,--"Only Patsy and Fortune want us here" (276), she says--and hold her, if by a thread, to her House. For the real effort to save Puppetstown begins with Patsy. And it is he who mindfully serves the dinner which celebrates Easter's and Dicksie's mutual discovery for which the whole of Puppetstown is jubilate.

"Old Promise"

Conversation Piece rewards us with another splendid Irishman: James is the butler, and casual master-of-trades at Pullinstown. His entry is anything but grand: "A door opened, breaking the spell of quiet, and a wheezing and decrepit old butler came in to arrange a tea-table in the window" (3). But any match for Willow, his young rogue "mistress," is placed high at Pullinstown:

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"Run up to the Post Office, James, after your tea, and buy me fifty Gold Flake. Only I have a little job to do for the Sir, I'd go myself."
"And what about James?" inquired the old butler with restrained acerbity. "Haven't he one hundred and one little jobs to do for the Sir? God is my witness, Miss Willow, the feet is bet up under me this living minute, an how I'll last out the length o' dinner in the boots is unknown to me, leave alone to travel the roads after them nasty trash o' cigarettes. Them's only poison to you, child, believe you me" (4).

James is someone who's been around and is around. He is an ever presence as well as an atmosphere. Here, cousin Oliver, Pullinstown's guest and narrator, tracking James's "shuffling footsteps," is shown to his cozy quarters.

> James peered at me, blinking in the afternoon sun that flooded the bedroom to which he led me.
> "The maker's name is on the blade," he announced with dramatic suddenness. "Ye'r the dead pit and image of the father. God, why wouldn't I know ye out of him? Wasn't he rared on the place along with the Sir? He was 'faith. Sure meself was hall-boy under ould Dinny Mahon those times. Your poor Da could remember me well--many a good fish I stuck the gaff in for him the days I'd cod ould Dinny and slip away down to him on the river..." (5).

And James can evoke Irishness as surely as the night's magic or a fiddle. Oliver, "leaning out his window to the bosom of the night," vouches for that.

> ...a fiddle jigging out some hesitant tune picked sweetly at the stillness.
> "Play 'The wind that shakes the barley,'" a voice prompted the fiddler. "That's not it--it's the 'Snowy-breasted Pearl' yer in on now."
> "Jig it for me, you...."
> I was sorry when the fiddling ceased, but when there drifted on the air a tale astir with every principle of drama, I forgot even that I was eavesdropping, and strained against the night to hear....
> It was at this interesting moment that a window above my own shot open, and the irate voice of James ordered Lizzie Doyle and Mary Josey to their respective beds.

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> "Begone now!" he commanded, and with Biblical directions told the garden what he thought of a domestic staff that sat all day with their elbows up on the kitchen table drinking tea, and spent the nights traipsing the countryside (18).

James's domain extends to an "unbelievably young" morning. A sunshiny day at the races is anticipated, and James, the man behind this enterprising activity, is up and at it.

> ...James following them to pack a suitcase, a medley of saddles, a wight cloth, a handful of boot pulleys and jockeys, a mackintosh coat, a cutting-whip and a spare horse-sheet into the crazy brass-bound Ford car which waited pompously beneath the great, granite-pillared porch (21).

Oliver's mental palette is all attention to his peculiar vivacity and to his deluxe track outfit:

> This was my first intimation that James was to be of the party. Had I known the ways of Pullinstown more intimately it would never have occurred to me that any expedition could be undertaken without his presence. But never can I forget my first sight of him an hour later in his race-going attire. He wore a rather steeple-crowned bowler hat, green with age, and a very long box-cloth overcoat with strongly stitched shoulder patches and smartly cut pocket flaps. It... could only have been worn with compleat success by the most famous of England's sporting peers (21).

When the party's car won't start, it is James who "steps into the front seat with the master," and works the "self-starter." In fact, Sir Richard Pulleyns himself can't drive, let alone get his wits on, or function, without his old servant.

> "Have you me glasses, James? Have you me stick? Right. Come on now till we see the horses saddled for the first race. We'll have lunch then James" (26).

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In fact, James is the only servant he recognizes. For James can delegate countless jobs to a "lazy staff" and do doubly more himself. Besides which, he's the master's cook, nurse, housemaid, and handyman.

Most of all, however, James is a selfless companion to Sir Richard's kids. Wherever Willow and Dick go, James goes. Oliver happily document that he is as much around the tracks, for instance, as they are. Even James's slowness of age is no barrier from his quick charges at the Springwell Harriers point-to-point meeting:

> James and Willow and I took a short-cut down to the start. We jumped three formidable banks, pulling James after us, before we reached the place of vantage Willow had in her mind's eye (to see Dick ride) .... Over a field we ran, Willow just beating me, James a very bad third, to take up our stand beside a high, narrow bank with a ditch on the landing side (30-31).

Nor will James ever miss Willow ride: "Dick and James and myself watched the flash of Willow's blue shirt as she led round that course at a wicked pace...."(34) One of this day's incidents suggests that the kids placental connection with horses came from James, the jockey.

> "Look!" said he suddenly, stooping to the ditch to pick up a half-buried stirrup-iron and leather. He turned it over. "It's me own.' He looked at me, an expression almost of friendliness dawning in his face. "And you in trousers," he murmured (35).

James is like another inhabitant in the recess of Irish memory who Oliver happens on at the track. A perpendicular fellow through and through, he is a man whose soul and clacking tongue are all lined up with the horse world:

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> An incredible old man, balancing on the fence beside the car, grasped my hand to pull me up beside him.
>
> "Come on, Hartigan! **Come on**, Hartigan!" the old man clung to me for his balance, and we swayed together on the bank in an ecstasy of excitement."....
>
> Tears streaming from his eyes, and the wind blowing his long hair and beard upwards and backwards, this ancient votary of sport clasped both my hands and would for very little, I think, have kissed me as a salute to speed and young courage, and to the emotion of dangerous endeavor.
>
> "Bedam, he was as wise as a dog," he said, "I'd have to cry to see the poor bastard so courageous. 'Tis for a passion o' love I'd cry, or for the like of a horse race I'd rain tears from me two eyes. Did ye remark the way Hartigan did was to foster Johnny Kehoe always..." He whipped round on a dreary young friend who up to the moment had simmered unnoticed bedside him, and recommended his masterly analysis of the race (147-8).

Another idiosyncratic Irishmen of James's landscape is mad Gary who willfully attacks the rocky earth and a boar badger to save his helpless dog. Oliver taps him for recognition and appreciation too:

> I woke from this entranced reflection to see a very strange man come striding towards us through the wood. Tall he was and pale, a lean, long face and old eyes--one blue, one brown--beautiful eyes. His limbs were long and loose and his clothes past the calculation of their age (262).

Willow is "fascinated by him." And Oliver is directly taken by this "single-hearted man," who would remain in his mind.

> Never have I seen such bland intensity of purpose or so inhuman a display of bravery... (263)

> It was a strange and awful thing, wild in savagery, simple in its oblation of self to the moment.... I never saw him again, nor ever forgot him (265).

James himself, though, is much more to the kids than an old life-bound Irish character. He may be old, but there are no barriers between him and Pullinstown's young mortals.

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He is more like a priceless brother than a father, though it behooves him, given Sir Richard's clumsy parenting efforts, to be both:

> We found Willow at the car, where her father was measuring her out a niggardly drink and expressing his unstinted disapproval of her method of winning a race, while James alternately begged her to put on her coat and eat a sandwich. Failing in both objects, he presented her with a small comb and glass, and bade her tease out her hair, for it was greatly tossed with the race (35).

James can't help but suggest, from his Irish bones, the rhythmic exchange and worldly adjustments of their youthful lives. Willow takes great pleasure in both his vital old age and his Irishness. He can lift her, she knows, off the path set for her, and also from her dark moods and difficulties. And the two of them maintain a mutually protective bond.

When James is sick, Willow especially, and Dick look after him:

> "And the reason why we forgot about you (Oliver) is that James is sick and Willow and I are all day nursing him.... Will you come up to James's room? That's where we will most likely find Willow" (41).

Willow can put aside her tom-boy facade in James' presence and, in employing her techniques of care, be quite soothing. Oliver reports:

> Willow shook my hand and returned to the fireplace, where she was balancing a large black kettle on the high and narrow grate of an Adams fireplace... "Poor James is rather bad, but it's entirely his own fault... Didn't he drink off a whole Baby Powder whiskey that damned Pheelan brought him, and then got out of his bed at ten o'clock at night to hunt the maids in from their lovers in the hayloft. But it is Pheelan... that I really blame..." (41-2).

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But James, lulled by her considerations, cannot be lulled into forgetfulness of a fellow servant, even in a time of distress, and will have none of her Pheelan blame:

> "Ah, poor Pheelan; don't be too hard on him, Miss Willow." James's voice came dimly from his bed. I went over to speak to him. Sewn into red flannel by Willow, he looked like the smallest oldest woman ever seen (42).

Oliver, joining Willow in her nursing of James, makes solicitous inquiries.

> "Indeed, I'm only very poorly, Mr. Oliver. There's like an impression on my shest. There's prods in my digesture rises like flames halfway in me t'roth. Me heart bates ex-tra. Only with the help of God and Miss Willow to poultice me, I might pull out of it yet" (42).

But Willow is truly in James' life. It is her dutiful endeavors (being like his for her), and chiding concerns which lead him back to health.

> She looked more than ever like her name, Willow. A green high-collared jumper and an ancient pair of jhodpores did not appear inconvenient for her nursing mistrations. She poulticed James in linseed with efficient exactness, and clapping a heavy silver salver on his chest to top the lot, shook her head at him gravely (43).

When Dick asks James about his age, Willow slips the focus to her nearby pet ass, to distract attention from James's groans. When she finally leaves his side, she insists that Sir Richard "keep an eye on James," and is upset upon her return to learn that he has delegated this duty to Pheelan himself.

> **"Oh, Sir Richard!** You know Pheelan will be the death of James, and after all the torment I've had with him.... How could you let him in? I supposes he has James filled up with whisky now "(64).

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Willow's fury grows as "a terrifying smell" of a burning poultice assails her in the "scarcely lighted passage to James's door."

Pheelan, bent over James's bed, argues that

> "James'll be the better o' this before the night's out. Sure I seen horses kilt with a cold, and that's able to relieve them, let alone a Christian. There's no germ wouldn't lose its life in that" (67).

James, of course defends his compatriot Pheelan, who in his glory days as a jockey "knew hardly a steeple course in Ireland where he had not broken a bone or won a race," but who "under Willow's eye [is] visibly shaken."

> "Oh, God deliver us," James's voice was shocked into a certain strength. "Don't be hard on poor Pheelan, Miss Willow. Sure what little he done, he done it all for passion o' love---" and James fell back among his pillows exhausted" (68).

Willow and company stay on by the fire in James' room into the wee hours, talking comfort, encircling, and adding picture or two, via Oliver, to the portrait of their trusting friend and guardian:

> We packed the fire with turf, and ate apples of shrivelled sweetness that Dick found in the top of James's chest of drawers: below them his Sunday suits were decorously folded. We blew out the candles lest they should disturb James, and from a far corner of the room a fat little fish of red light swam suddenly on the dark--James' lamp burning continually beneath a tawdry and dreadful picture of the bleeding heart of Jesus (69).

Before dawn this inseparable grouping parts, Willow staying on till James makes the turn toward his old whole self. The morning promises the hunt they all had planned, and preparations advance, with Willow accounted for: "she

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looked brighter than I could have thought possible considering that she had sat up till five o'clock with James (73). Pheelan, having recovered from Willow's censure, is now, if only for James' sake, at her side:

> Pheelan pursued her, dusting the toe of her boot with pertinacious zeal. His blue jackdaw-like eyes were everywhere, and he was full of the imperative importance of a groom on a hunting morning (80).

The Pheelans live at the gatehouse. And his place must be passed:

> A sprite of a child came out of the deep-roofed lodge to open the gates; he hid himself shyly behind the dark thin lace of the wrought-iron work, one hand fast in the scruff of a pale greyhound puppy... (82)

Willow pulls her horse, Romance, over. She wants to know: Did he give his pup "the wormball" she sent on to him.

> "Yis, miss," hissed the shy little boy. "It's after reducin' her greatly, miss," he added, with an enormous effort.
> "Ill bring you down a good bottle of cod-liver oil," Willow promised.... "Ill bring it down to-night, Johnny, she said" (83).

But this interruption is mush to Sir Richard who sees in the gatehouse nothing but the beasty, shiftless Irish. His moment's impatience ends in a diatribe against the Pheelans: "It's a right puzzle...to know who to put in a gate lodge. Breeding long families is all they're good for" (137). Interestingly, it is young Dick who attempts to sabotage his father on behalf of Mrs. Pheelan. "'I suppose she thought...' Dick shot a look at his father in which was as much censure as he dared combine with raillery" (140).

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Meanwhile the hunting party proceeds, passing by poor Irish surroundings which steal something from the glory of the day. Once again, James's reality--and the Pheelans', peeps into the hunting party:

> At this point we turned off the narrow lane up which the hunt had ridden two buy two, passed through the unbelievably filthy yard of a farmhouse where children hid, peeping out from between the spokes of cart-wheels, and curs barked and geese hissed defiance as the hunt rode by (90).

The hunt itself, however, is sufficiently exhausting, and when the party returns to Pullinstown, it is Willow's turn for James' earnest attention. From bed, Willow needn't repeat: "Open the door for James, Oliver. He's not able for tray and all. He's bet on his feet and he's bet every way" (109). Flayed and "hooded," James appears at the foot of Willow's bed "like a sick black crow above the heavy tray with which he had toiled from the dining-room." Willow though, pale and lying there in "great beauty," is a bit taken aback when this ancient species of hers persists in knowing whether she's bathed or not:

> "O, fie! O, fie! O fie!" James clicked his tongue in lively disapprobation. "What a way to talk indeed." He deposited the tray and advanced upon her with a bath towel, which when tucked below her chin gave her a look as of some exquisite choir-boy. Dick and I, standing on the hearthrug, watched mesmerized as he sponged her face. "Show a hand, now," said he, and obedient and star-fish like, it was produced. "Now the other... And ye'll not see the colour of' food, Miss Willow, me child, till you'll brush your teeth" (110).

Your teeth is important, he says, ribbing and mocking: "brats o' lads o' dentists would pluck hell out o' ye." What a dear his cohort is to get the message:

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> "That's my good child." James straightened her pillows and arranged the tray with skill. "See now"--he swept off a cover with a becoming flourish--"that's what'll crown ye" (111).

"Eat the young rhubarb," he adds. "That's great for the body. I'll hop the lunch in now before the Sir'll eat me" (111). Oliver, noting this scene, is confirmed in his sentiment by Dick:

> As I surveyed the departing back of Sir Richard's possible alternative to lunch, I thought how well it was for Willow that James should hold over her still the authority he had wielded with nice tolerance since her earliest years. Dick, as we made our way down the long, cloistered darkness of the passage from Willow's room, echoed my feelings. "James," he said "is the only one who can get any good of Willow when she has a sickness."(111-12)

James, that not quite extinct bird of black hue, is always cued in with the Pulleyns, even when they are in earnest division. When Dick's "lovely" and "deadly" Pre-Raphaelite girlfriend (the "Stranger") is guest at Pullinstown, Willow is stiff with bitterness at Dick's love for this "smug" creature, for the Master's silly admiration, and for Oliver's infatuation. "Even James," she says, "is on her side." But James alone is realistic about this stunning woman, neither repudiating her or worshipping her like the others. Knowing "the guile of old river secrets," and possessing a mastery for flys, he is accountable to each of Dick's errant intentions in regards to his girlfriend's crying need to catch a fish. He is even willing, on her behalf, to risk a steep drop in status in his Master's eye:

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> From this distressful little summary it may be seen that I had succeeded in conveying to James some of the pathos and the pain of the morning.
>
> "Listen to me now," he said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. The Sir have a great little beggar of a low water fly some place in his fly-box. I can't rightly recall the dressing of it on the minute, but I'll ax him for the lend of it, and I'll tie one for the young lady" (197).

In this playlet, which might be called "The Stranger" James alone sees from all the dramatis personae's standpoints at once. His sympathy extends to the girlfriend's theft of the Sir's fly, and even to the ugly fish, her "Crown of Perseverance;" and it's big enough for all around, including an Oliver tranced out by this drama's handicaps.

> "Be God, Master Oliver, what a nest ye have! I declare yer as snug as a thrus---" It was James, his head surmounting a bush like an old satyr of these groves. I was glad to see him, for all this dumb distress was becoming slightly embarrassing (200).

James' unconscious efforts enclose every player, relaxing their pretence, cooling their enmity, and grafting the girl's return to England to a consequent peace.

James carries on with a zest and a readiness in tight and bright spots. What James can do and what James does are a marvel. He is a houseworker and handyman in one. Some jobs he likes doing, "some he don't." Oliver never ceases to be amazed by his endless expertise. "We were down on the river bank now, and I watched him casting a prawn with that simple precision experts use, so that it went where, and precisely where he pleased." What a luxury he is for the kids upon returning from Tincurry horse show:

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> "Why should James have to beat eggs for omelettes at his time of life--at tis time of night?" Sir Richard fired out. "What's the cook there for, miss? Eh, miss, what is the idle slut paid for?"
> "Mrs Hogan had to boil the lobsters and play the melodeon,' Willow excused her handmaiden, 'and James really likes to do a stroke of cooking--you know he does, father" (240).

James here is cook, waiter, and for Willow, "as he handed her soup," gentle admonisher of her undeveloped table manners. But James' peer relationship with Willow can't bear the strain of post-prandial boot work.

> "You might give my good field-boots a rub, James, if you have a minute--or tell one of those idle divils in the kitchen to do them for me."
> "Me feet are tired," James replied, with sullen acerbity which took no account of Willow's last command. "I must go and put them in water." (244)

For James, as Willow knows, is as much recognized for ease as for work:

> "There was one time, Oliver," Willow turned to me, "James had the influenza on him and I went down to the pantry to give him a **Faivre** cachet, and there he was, dressed up in his coat and hat, sitting on the plate rack with his two feet in the sink, and a whole bottle of my bath salts a lover gave me and a big tin of mustard in the water, and a mug of hot buttermilk on one side of him and a big drink of the Sir's best whisky on the other" (244).

In retrospect, however, Olivers knows there's a bit of a wrench in this James business. Where James might always come through for the Pulleyns, they can be diminishing to him.

> It was on my return from this errand that I passed under Willow's window and heard her laughter within the room, her laughter and Dick's low voice, and again suppressed shouts of laughter from them both--the insufferable, impious laughter of the young and unkind. I was swept by my pity for their victims... for James

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> whose lighten pantry window told that he served them still (245-6).

Yet, Oliver's soul tells him that there's much he doesn't understand about Willow and Dick or about the almost eerie beauty of their affinity with James. Oliver ponders the good and evil

> ...moods of passion that swept upon the Pulleyns of this house? How know their tenderness for one another, their cruelty to one another, their distrusts or their immeasurable confidences? I might not judge.... I have known Willow retire to her bed in the middle of the day because of bitter words which passed between her and Dick.... and their reconciliation was only effected by James who told each with secret subtlety of the other's fastings in unhappiness, so wooing them back to kindness once more (268).

James undoubtedly and surprisingly is central to their lives. Perhaps it is his plain love of life over the dark and sunny progression of days that is key.

> Now he came in to minister to my wants and to hear my version of the morning's doings....
> "I well recall," he said, "a little fox I had one time, I rared a pet. He followed me out here one evening I was fishing for trout and he slipped off up to the burra; well, I was half the night in it after--whistling and fistling and roaring and he's not come to me till near morning. Well, I was as fond of him I wouldn't bate him.... God, he surely grew to ba a noble fox and only for Sir Richard he was living yet...." Again tragedy, I thought, and related as the merest commonplace of life (268-9).

"White Heat"

The Irish presence in **Two Days in Aragon** is qualitatively different. It is a hard, bear down response to a far more oppressive world than that of Puppetstown and Pullinstown. Aragon is all strain, its pocked history a world of contrast. Existing in a thicket of past and

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present transgressions against the native Irish, and actively serving the interminable racial war of a prestigious Army, it can no longer, with that Republican Army eyeing it, conceal its buried souls.

It is Captain Dennis Cussens, a.k.a. Denny the Killer, the hide tough IRA chief, who is culled to answer the cries of blackened Irish servants who have borne Aragon's hostility and incivility in time past and present. We meet him through Foley O'Neill:

> Bold, dark, and tough... Foley shook hands with Denny the Killer, so this was him, the brains and daring behind many an ambush. When Denny was around there was trouble, dirty trouble for all. He was not sent from headquarters for nothing. Where he was things moved along. He could frighten the guts out of lonely country people, and at the same time light anew in them the burning flame of Ireland.... His own bravery and cunning and ruthlessness were so great that he required and got a higher measure of the three from others (85).

"Denny the gunman" spearheads this single Irish campaign because he is no one's fool. His hard past and fierce indifference to sentiment make him a true match for the hegemonic British forces he's up against.

> He had spent years in America, he had never known a lucky day there, and he was tough with the toughness from the underworld of big and cruel towns. There was a greater hatred in him for these things that Nan stood for and Aragon stood for than there was love for Ireland or hatred for the English enemy.
>
> He was the mercenary soldier of all time... That and something more, something worse, for he had a little education and a bitter grudge against the world for the great hardships he had known, the hunger, and the coldness of charity (184).

From the catacombs of Aragon to Chicago's gang wars, Dennis Cussens brings a white heat determination to Ireland's

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crummy Civil War. No man and no situation can stand him down.

Part of the Captain's moral authority is clearly attributable to the IRA itself. For the IRA of **Two Days in Aragon** draws both its strength and sympathy from the contrast made with the occupational army.

> Three tired grave young men were sitting in the little dark hole of a room behind the public bar.... they hardly looked as though they had been out in the mountains all night, but their eyes were tired and sly and fierce as ill-used dogs. They were all three wearing their belted mackintosh coats, because they were hunted men, at any moment ready to run, always on the watch for their lives. Three or four or five of them up here in the mountains and a regiment of soldiers in the garrison town below, yet they have no cunning to put against these three or four or five (84-5).

These are Denny's raw recruits, his trench-coat army of Tims, Mattys, Pats, of barbers, hod-bearers, and short order cooks. They've "been in gaol;" some perhaps are down and outs from the Rising. They're impudent and shy, and they pray to St. Anthony. They may snipe at a Tan, but they are mainly greenhorn volunteers.

> Tim was pale and delicate looking, he had a restless cough and a poisoned finger, and a martyr's obstinate fatality looked out of his eyes. He had left a good job in the Post Office for this shell for Ireland game, the agony and discomforts of it came cruelly hard on him...he was a nervous, tortured, rabid little patriot (87).

The "headquarters" of these fighting men is a common pub obvious to British surveillance.

> The Wren's Nest was a yellow-washed house built long and low and thatched deeply against the mountain weather. It stood at the meeting of five roads and was the only public house for miles around. A cripple man

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> and his mother kept it, and between the Boys on the Run who sheltered with them at night and the British soldiers who searched the place for them by day, their lives were kept on a perpetual rack.
>
> Foley greeted Popsy the Weasel, this was the cripple's name... His arms stretched and reached like a spider's dark limbs as he served the drinks and washed glasses without moving from his stool because his legs were withered... His little feet were twisted round the legs of his stool while his big body and pale face leaned about in the darkness, and he talked with nervous affability to everyone, and pinched the quantity of drink he served whenever he thought he could (83-4).

They belong to a fugitive world of grime, fear and subsistence that more often breaks them than not.

> The little room that saw no sun was sticky with their breath, and the smell of tired unwashed bodied. The fight for Ireland was planned and won in many such sordid sad corners of the country. Tired men afraid of one another laid plans against overwhelming odds... (87).

But they can kick and last like footballers, peek in the shadows like ferrets, and flash on a target like devils.

The British Army, in contrast, which names the sniping attacks of this underworld force "dirty ambushes and cowardly assassinations," is fighting professionally for a way of life:

> ...the British officers who persistently refused to conduct themselves as though they were at war and in an enemy's country. They must have their game of tennis, their day's shooting, their hunting too, though at every turn of the road death might be waiting (88).

They're citadel men with uniforms sponged and pressed, guns and boots polished. Even under martial law, their prison "snob" interrogators interrupt their smooth proceedings to bathe. "Their personal carelessness within a country with which they were supposedly at war" expressed enough swagger

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to scare those "natives of the countryside who were in any position to give information of their comings and goings." The crippled innkeeper is downright jumpy over the captured soldier's terrier. He tells Denny: "Take her with yous and stone her and give her the lough. You'ss have the damn' soldiers on me, God help me, with your fashionable bred dogs" (92).

The British Army is planted in Irish history, all of Ireland being its Pale by now. Its troops are soldier souls, its operations and victories as predestined as those of the U.S. Cavalry. They are the white world of the British, of Captain Purvis, of Nan O'Neill and Sylvia Fox, and of the Anglophile butler, Frazer, who gloats over every Fenian loss, and loathes every suggestion of Irishness:

> Frazer hated pleasure, and life, and himself, and other people, and Ireland. He was bitter and efficient and savagely honest. He hated Catholics.... For [Nan's] son, Gentleman Bloody Foley, as he called him from between the teeth of his mind, Frazier had a dislike equal to and beyond that which he felt for the mother (123-4).

aligned against the black world of Dennis Cussens, Grania Fox, and the women of Clonomore. Their loop of military success is as long as history. But even their "smart, hearty young British officers," as unconscious as they need be of danger, can be stunned:

> The two young prisoners... Their pale tweed coats and flannel trousers, their soft well-cut shirt collars, the scent of their hair oil, all these things were so widely at variance from their immediate killing, it was not possible to grasp that they would in such a little space of time be dead (92).

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For the resistance movement is just as long, its small acts finally beginning to signal victory.

Foley O'Neill, if only after seeing his "tricky balance" and "thorny neutrality" between "the English, from whom he made his money, and the Irish who sought to drive the English out of Ireland," (45) parted by the Troubles, must join that drive for liberation.

> The Wren's Nest. Foley did not mean to stop at Roche's public house that morning, but he saw the sign the boys used when they were there at the door. The wooden crosspiece of a plough leaning against the wall.... It was the sign of the Irish Republican Army and he dared not pass by (80).

When he stops his car, he knows that his true high-wire act is now on. And there's no use blaming this IRA call up on Grania, although he sure damn tries to:

> He blamed himself disgustedly for all that dallying and love-making in the heather and now at the Wren's Nest on the crosses, he was held up again for the Boys' Sign was out (83).
>
> He was to be a spy for their work. This was to be his cursed punishment for all he had done with Grania.... Foley's heart knocked disgustedly against his ribs, sick for his powerlessness (87).

She was an "omen" and now she is a "trap." She is too damned Irish for her English ass, and Foley is too bloody sick of the Irish:

> "I'll not play the bloody spy for you. I've given help and shelter and put myself in danger time and again for you boys when you came to me quenched with fear and cold, and I'll do it again any night. But I'll be no go-between to bring chaps to their bloody deaths, chaps that come to my house and buy my horses... Get on with it yourselves for blast the word you'll get from me" (89).

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Foley's subsequent arrest and interrogation by the British, however, thrusts him into the Irish camp: "A common prisoner to the bare light of day," he is now highly charged by his national identity. He can say to his examiners:

> "You chaps are finished, I'm sorry to say, and I'm not going to inform on the other crowd.... There's no limit to the difficulties you soldiers can put the likes of myself in this country into" (189).
>
> "I've got to live in this country and earn my living in it and work hard for my living. You chaps are only fighting in it...." (190)

That their genial horse trader's Irish was up was quite shocking to his imperious cross examiners.

> ... it got under the skin of vanity and simple pride. Coming from Foley who had always made it his business to ask opinions of horses from the soldiers, and rarely, if ever, to give his own, the bitter truthful jeers was the more venomously barbed (191).

The Major, his chief interrogator , a "social snob," who is "careful to foster the gap that so divided them," serves warning to Foley:

> "...you may have to answer for this with your life. Even the British Government is getting a bit fed up with chaps like you, and justice can be done quickly under martial law, you know" (198).

Foley, losing any feelings of recognition for these superiors of His Majesty's Army, and past compromise, goes them eye to eye:

> Foley paused. Then he said with the simple ignorant bitterness of a peasant:
> "The ruin of Ireland, Major, is chaps like you and Cromwell." (202)

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The Major can pocket this remark but the more he knows of the Irish, the more they haunt him:

> The Major, whose ancestors had fought with Charles, sniggered silently, and put the remark away in his mind to use as an Irish story. For years after the British Army had left Ireland he carried his own punishment about with him in the shape of Irish stories, stories that caused any whose interests he sought to shun and fly from him (202).

Nevertheless, Foley's back-stabbing syllables translate into exile from the place that empowers them.

Killer Denny has too much nerve, conviction, and manly detachment for any Brit advantage. Nan's "dirty pantry-boy, loaded with spitting contempt, asks why it takes a whole army to crush a mouse:

> He spat "You and your talk of fair fighting" he spat again. "How many of us are there in the country and how do you think we're to take on the whole British Army, can you give me an idea?... You and yours on any side of the blankets. Oh, I know your noble ancestry, Missus--is backing the British against your own" (186).

Denny can fight for himself and Ireland and still have something left over. But what that is, though it lie directly around the corner, Nan will never witness (not from under the tires of a Brit jeep). It will outlive her and old Aragon. Only Sylvia Fox, another one of his severe opponents, will, when pushed up against his profile in Aragon's final drama, have her preconceptions shaken. For when the show is on Denny is in it, and to the amazement of complacent and judgmental eyes peeping from only a slight distance, he is cast as hero.

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At first, in the evacuation of Aragon, Denny puts on his Cagney mask in order to get a cringing brat out of her house.

> "It's you who'll do the getting out, now see," he said going up to her, "and quick mind you, unless you want to burn along with your ancestral home... He went to the fireplace. "Not much heat out of that," he sad, "We'll soon have a better blaze."
>
> He stood over Sylvia. He did not touch her. He did not put out a hand toward her. He looked at her out of his bold little dark eyes bright as a rat's through his mask, and he turned his head on his strong neck and spat on the carpet (237).

This is what Sylvia "expects from an officer of the I.R.A." But just then, Denny notices an object on the mantelpiece--

> "I had a great admiration for that ornament when I was a little fellow," he said softly. "Mrs O'Neill got me one day with it in my hand, she took if from me and she beat hell out of me" (238).

--and his opposite begins to court a whim. When he drops the statue, she encourages him to fix it. He fits a few pieces back together. "Nothing I do," he said oddly, "would divide me from that little boy." Sylvia tells him , "I don't remember you," to which he responds:

> "One dirty pantry boy is very like another." He put the broken figure back on the mantelpiece as the boys came in driving the whispering, terrified servants before them. Even in such a pass they felt very uncomfortable in the drawing-room (238).

It is the rescue of Aunt Pigeon that throws Denny and Sylvia together. "They were alone together with the certainty and horror of Aunt Pigeon's death around them" (242). Denny, commanding the air like a falcon is above betrayal from his "too privileged" companion: "All that was tough and cold and fair in her, all indeed that was least

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pleasant went to the sacrifice" (243). Sylvia, real like never before, is amazed by his heedlessness of the swarming British presence:

> He gave her a direct look. A look that crossed fire and death and their opposite ways of living. A look straight from a tough guy to a tough girl. There was a streak of divine humour in the soft way he said:
> "Ah no. You'll get me off, now see, wont you?"
> "I will" Sylvia said and the promise was given" (244).

Denny, in shock, bears off Aunt Pidgie through the licking flames: "He was trembling and crying and holding the wrist of his burnt hand while Sylvia squeezed the flame and scorch out of his clothes" (245). The Brits, now hard upon Denny, Sylvia acts fast:

> ...a flood of determination to save him rose in her, the hunted creature must be saved. Danger is sacred; she was glad that her word bound her (248).

Now, "even Nan's death was less important than his escape." The Irishman, with his word and deed imperatives, has blazed a trail right through Aragon, singeing even its most resistant citizen:

> For that hour she had been closer, more obedient to one from whom by every law of nature she was divided, than she had ever been to any man or woman in her life. And now the hour and the man were lost to her. Before she became once more the Sylvia of tennis parties and whiter hunting ties and blue habits, the Sylvia meet and right for her Norfolk lover (heir to a respectable old baronetcy) she must know tears for all that was lost to her. A bitter and unreasoning grief that left her exhausted and unstrung (250).

The Irish have conspired and Aragon's enormous structure is blackened. This signal victory is a resounding relief. Ireland can stretch out under the guarding wings of

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its new Finn McCool, and take stock. Aunt Pigeon has been liberated, Nan is dead, and Grania and Sylvia are positioned to build a new Aragon. This is the change Ireland can muster under bad odds, a breakthrough that strengthens.

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