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THE SOVEREIGN WOMAN: HER IMAGE IN IRISH LITERATURE FROM MEDB TO ANNA LIVIA PLURABELLE

City University of New York PH.D. 1982

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THE SOVEREIGN WOMAN: HER IMAGE IN IRISH LITERATURE FROM MEDB TO ANNA LIVIA PLURABELLE

by

MARY PAT KELLY

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in the English Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
The City University of New York

1982

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MARY PAT KELLY

1982

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 30, 1988
date

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INTRODUCTION

Anna Livia Plurabelle runs through Finnegans Wake from the first pages to the last. She is both actual river and mythic woman, and in her Joyce created a model which includes all the elements necessary to study women in the Irish literary tradition--a tradition which included two very different languages: English and Irish, and employs the spoken and written word. With Anna Livia as a guide in analyzing the roles that women, both mythic and historic, play in the Irish tradition I will focus upon a selected group of major works from various periods. These will include the iron age epic Tain Bo Cuailnge [The Cattle Raid of Cooley], and ancillary stories from early Irish literature, the verse and hagiography that flourished in the monasteries of the Celtic Church from the early sixth century through the Viking conquests, the poetry created for the aristocratic families of the middle ages and Renaissance by professional poets of the Gaelic tradition and finally the masterpieces that mark the rebirth of Irish literature in modern times--particularly James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake.

Anna Livia, in the course of her recirculation, recalls the mythical and historical women of the Irish tradition without ceasing to exist also as a concrete geographical

fact--an Irish river. In her riverrun, she recapitulates all of Irish history by making present--through a kind of verbal transsubstantiation--all the goddesses and saints, women poets and scholars, all the queens and abbesses, washerwomen and milkmaids who take such important parts in Irish literature. From the earliest legends of Queen Eire of the Tuatha De Danaan battling the invading Celts, women have existed at the center of the Irish literary imagination. Anna Livia and Molly Bloom reflect a long tradition of Irish heroines in whom independence, sensuality, generosity and, most important, sovereignty blend in a typical woman who reappears in legends and stories down through Irish literary history. Anna exemplifies both their commonplace and mythic qualities and by her physical presence makes the past present for the people of Dublin. At once mythic goddess and familiar figure, "Yes, of course we all know Anna Livia,"[1] she carries from the hills of Wicklow into the heart of Dublin a history that continually repeats itself as each generation of Irish women confronts the invaders, bears and nurtures their children and claims them for Ireland--a country continually personified as a woman. No matter how overpowering the conquerors first appear, they are ultimately defeated because the women, like Anna, are "lilting on all the time"--assimilating their conquerors without themselves ever submitting.

In the Irish literary tradition, certain of these women have been named in the tales, songs, and stories related in every period. Eire, Medb, Grannia, Derdriu, St. Brigid, the Old Woman of Beare, the women of the Clans, Grace O'Malley, the Pirate Queen of Connacht, these are not, for the people of Ireland, women lost in the mists of times past but familiar figures present in some sense in the women crossing O'Connell Street or watching for the fishing boats on Inchstrand. It is as if there is an essential Irish woman who takes many forms and yet remains one, partaking of both the mythic and the everyday, representing both the country and her people. Therefore, Anna Livia Plurabelle can be a washerwoman and at the same time "the bringer of Plurabilities." The Irish tendency is to make myth of history and history, myth. The twelfth-century scribe who attempted to put together a transcription of "The Cattle Raid of Cooley" from fragments of earlier texts, seems to disapprove of the mixture:

> But I who wrote this history or rather fable put no trust in this history or fable, for some of these things are the feats of devils, some poetic figments, some apparently true, some not, some for the delectation of fools.[2]

Such disapproval seemed to have little effect because even in recent times the penchant for "poetic figments" continues.

When Maud Gonne traveled through Donegal in the early 1900s, rallying tenant farmers to resist unfair evictions,

the Irish peasants called her the "Woman of the Sidhe," and were convinced she had come from "the otherworld" to save them. Evidence of mortality such as her eating, sleeping, or being the daughter of an English officer bothered them no more than their ancestors had been bothered by the inconsistency of the Abbess, St. Brigid, transporting herself into the midst of battle, winning a victory for the Leinstermen without seeming to leave her abbey. Nor would the existence of parallel incidents in legends surrounding the Celtic goddess Brigid distress them in their striking similarity. Both are preserved. History and fable become mutually enriching sources for literature.

Many of the women characters of Ancient Irish literature appeared again in the Irish Literary Revival, when Lady Augusta Gregory, W. B. Yeats, Standish O'Grady, and J. M. Synge "accomplished their astounding feat of recreating, for readers of modern English, a literature and a mythology which had been moribund for nearly a thousand years."[3] But the revival authors depended mainly on German translations of the Old Irish texts which they retold in English. Now, however, we have translations direct from the Old Irish to English by writers who are poets as well as scholars such as Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, Frank O'Connor, and others. These translations present a quite different picture of the heroines than did those of the Ascendancy, where Lady Gregory--a Victorian lady, after all--renders a line from

"The Voyage of Mael Dulin" as "Will ve ask her would she may be your wife?", Frank O'Connor, translating directly from the Old Irish, gave us "Will you ask her to sleep with you?"[4]

The sensibilities and cultural backgrounds of the Revivalist authors seem to have colored their presentation of women in these stories. The Irish Literary Revival was a largely Anglo-Irish phenomenon where the descendants of the very group which suppressed Gaelic culture sought to revive it. How much did class and cultural division between the Ascendancy and the Irish Catholic peasants and townsmen influence the manner in which the Anglo-Irish writers presented the cultural heritage of the natives? Certainly, prior to the translations of the ancient texts by the German philological scholars, there was no respect in the British cultural sphere, which the Ascendancy shared, for the Irish language or traditions. Before Johann Casper Zeuss published his Grammatica Celtica in 1853, it was generally held that Irish did not even belong to the Indo-European group. And, so successful had the English been at eradicating Gaelic through the penal laws, only the poorest and most uneducated people in Ireland spoke it. Therefore, to speak Irish was to be identified with the lowest of the low.

After the Ascendancy group discovered Ireland's cultural heritage they seemed to fasten on the fanciful and folkloric aspects of the material. Standish O'Grady speaks of the

"pale phospheric radiance" lighting "a vast continent of the dead."[5] Yeat's phrase "Celtic Twilight" has more the sense of a time of mystical virgins than of warrior queens.

Yet the early texts of the Irish literature come from a vital society where:

> Until the seventeenth century, the women of Ireland and propertyly, the women of Ulster, enjoyed equal status with the men of their society at a level unknown in any other European culture. Under ancient Brehon law, the law which survived in Ulster even after the rest of Ireland had been yoked into the English common law system, women enjoyed the rights of independent property ownership, had access to divorce and remarriage, and could be respected practitioners of the arts and sciences if they chose to do so.6

This preeminence of women, protected by law, was part of the Gaelic culture which the British, whose initial colonization of Ireland began ironically under Queen Elizabeth, determined to destroy. The British were not the first to invade Ireland, of course. The Celts, themselves invaders, were invaded in turn by the Vikings and the Normans. With these groups, however, there were intermarriages and the Gaelic culture predominated. Even Christianity became Celtic and "Catholicism in Ireland proceeded along very 'un-Romish' unconventional lines, as did sex role stereotyping, until the final conquest of Ireland by Cromwell."[7]

The British, however, were appalled by both the Celtic and Catholic aspects of the culture they found in Ireland

and tried to eliminate both. To a certain degree they succeeded--more with the culture than with the religion. They forced the people to give up their language and to anglicize even their names. But elements of the Gaelic tradition persisted, contained in ancient manuscripts, the folktales and songs. In the Catholic religion there existed the important cults of Mary and St. Brigid, "Mary of the Gael," who with a host of female saints were central to the people's faith. The continual predominance of women in the religion and in popular culture underlines the essential influence strong women figures have on the Irish imagination. Queen Medb, Macha, Brigit, Dierdre, Grannia, St. Brigid--remained a vital part of the folk tradition and the myths and legends surrounding them retain references to matrilineal descent, to women's independent rights to land title and position. The multiplicity of legally recognized relationships with men, the shared child care responsibility, the presence of women in the professions would all seem to suggest a deeply-rooted and continuous tradition in which women held a unique place. In this tradition they are not defined by their relationships to men only. They are not confined to the role of wife, mother, sister, daughter, but are poets, scholars, judges, warriors, and as Queen Medb says in the <u>Tain</u>, "thigh companions" to the men of their society."[8]

Now, when scholarship has provided so many insights into the function of myth in literature, when the source texts of

Irish literature are becoming more accessible and when women themselves have drawn attention to how sex-role stereotyping can impose intellectual blinders, it is a good time to re-examine the image of women in Irish literature and see how in characters like Molly Bloom, and Anna Livia the Irish anima lives on.

To return to Anna Livia, in the literature of Ireland the women are central for it is "Us then," encountering "Finn, again!" ". . . A way a lone a last a loved a long the . . . riverrun."[9]

NOTES

1 James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 196; hereafter cited as *Finnegans Wake*.

2 Vivian Mercier and David Greene, *One Thousand Years of Irish Prose* (New York: Modern Library, 1952), p. 14.

3 Frank O' Connor, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (New York: Capricorn, 1967), p. 176.

4 O'Connor, *Short History*, p. 189.

5 Mercier and Greene, *Irish Prose*, p. 72.

6 Rona M. Fields, *Society Under Siege* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1977), p. 241.

7 Fields, p. 301.

8 O'Connor, *Short History*, p. 33.

9 Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 628.

CHAPTER ONE

EXILE AND RETURN

> --What with your name and your ideas...
> Are you Irish at all?
> Cranly to Stephen in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

I begin with a short piece of autobiography. At the same time I began my research into the Irish tradition, I traveled through Ireland in search of my own history. In 1977, I went to Galway hoping to trace my father's family--the Kellys. I had no luck. My great-grandfather Kelly left Ireland during the famine in the 1840s, before official government records of births and deaths of Catholics were kept. My grandfather, born in Chicago, died when my father was 12. I knew only that the Kellys came from Galway. Now, Kelly is the second most common surname in Ireland, and many of them came from Galway. After the registrar at the Galway County building pointed this out to me, I left his office depressed. My connection to Ireland seemed fated to remain a vague adherence to a tradition with which I had no living links nor factual grounding; a fictive memory of ancestors I had never known. But that night in a Galway guest house I had a dream. My grandmother Mary, dead since my father was five, appeared to me dressed in a silk twenties-style chemise with bobbed hair and long pearls. That was the way

she looked in the one picture we have of her. She asked me why a feminist and student of women concentrated only on my grandfather's family and ignored hers. She urged me to head for Cavan. I did. As I drove east, I tried to answer her question. Why hadn't I thought of her? I had much more information about her family than my grandfather's. Her sister, my great-aunt Rose, lived to be 88, raised my father and his four sisters, and played an important part in my life. But then, Aunt Rose did not like to talk about Ireland. She told only one story: Her father died and at 8 years old she left Ireland with her mother, but without the 4 year old who had stayed behind until my great-grandmother found a place for them in Chicago. Two years later, my grandmother came alone--a 6 year old child crossing the Atlantic. Aunt Rose volunteered no details and I sensed that I should not ask. She preferred to talk about Bridgeport and her years teaching in the Chicago public schools. But I knew her maiden name, McCabe, and she spoke of Lynch "relatives"--my great-grandmother's family, presumably. So there, I had two names plus the ages of my great-aunt and grandmother. Since both were born in the 1880s, there would be records. They why hadn't I started my search with them? Was it because I carried my father's name that I thought automatically as Kelly and discounted the maternal lines? Or had I sensed as a child my great-aunt's pain in remembering and shied away from such knowledge? My mother's family

was an American amalgam of Irish, Welsh, and German, with the emigrating generations too far back to trace, so I understood why I hadn't looked there, but with my grandmother, there was a direct link. Why hadn't I seen it?

I arrived at the town hall in Cavan full of hope, only to find that if Kelly was popular in Galway, in Cavan McCabe and Lynch held positions one and two. But, the registrar, Mrs. Sheridan, was an optimist and said if we could find a McCabe-Lynch union, with only two children, it would probably be mine. No family in those days stopped at two children unless death intervened. So, we looked through the old red books that contained the birth records of each small townland and read page after page of ornate script. After searching fifty books in the townland of Tullyvin, I found the entry, "Rose Anne McCabe born to Mary Lynch and Hugh McCabe." I remembered the name "Hugh" from somewhere. Yes, that was right. And the birthday? Yes, hers was in December. The age? A few years older than Aunt Rose admitted to, but in the right area. And then, a few pages past was another entry. Mary McCabe, born February 5, 1882 (three days after James Joyce) to Mary Lynch and Hugh McCabe, farmer. With Rose Anne McCabe (Hugh's mother and Rose Anne's namesake, Mrs. Sheridan guessed) as midwife and witness in Tievenass, Mountain Lodge, County, Cavan, Erie.

I walked out, clutching the birth certificate that Mrs. Sheridan wrote. At the bottom, in Irish and English, the

official warning read, "To alter this document or utter it so altered is a serious offence."

I had succeeded beyond all expectations already. Should I try to find the place itself? I knew better than to hope for living relatives, 1882 was a long time ago, but I would like to see the place. So, I drove toward Tievenass. A townland just means a group of farms to which no one living more than five miles away could direct me. When I pulled up at the first crossroad to ask questions, I got only blank looks. Then I presented the birth certificate--my credentials--and the defenses came down. I was more than a nosy stranger and had the documents to prove it. I was directed on until I came to a small farm. "Oh, yes, Hughie McCabe," a farmwoman said, studying my papers. "But," and she lowered her voice to break the news gently, "Hughie's dead." Now this was no surprise since to be alive Hughie would have to be at least 140 years old. Still, I appreciated both her tact and her willingness to act immediately. She got into the car and guided me up a steep hill to the McCabe farm, determined to get there before anyone else died. Here, she said, Mary Brady, niece to Eugene McCabe, son of James, brother of Hughie, had lived until only a few months before. At least she thought it was the same family. But the Lynches who lived next door would know more. So, she presented me and my document to Jemmy Lynch. In his late seventies, he sat with gnomelike stillness before the

potbellied stove in the small cottage. Above his head hung pictures of John Kennedy and Pope John. He took the birth certificate, ran his gnarled fingers along its lines. His wife, a vigorous woman in her mid-forties, and their youngest son, Martin, 7, read over his shoulder. "Ah, yes, Hughie McCabe." Again the painful pause. They exchanged glances, and in a husky voice Jemmy said, "But Hughie's dead."

"I know it. I know he's dead. He was my great-grandfather. But I wondered if anyone remembers anything about my grandmother and great-aunt. Mary and Rose Anne?"

The two little girls who went to America?" Jemmy asked.

"Yes," I said, in amazement. "The two little girls who went to America."

That was easy--a hundred years hardly qualified as history--and Jemmy remembered stories told to him by his older sister and his parents. Also, McCabes had continued to live in the cottage across the lane from the Lynches. Hughie's brother James took over the farm and left it to two of his children, Eugene and Rose Ann, who never married but raised their niece Mary Brady there. She had just moved from the cottage that year before. Then, after a pause in which tension built, Jemmy told the relatives, distant relatives, had sold the farm, only the disintegrating cottage remained. They all waited for my reaction. For a minute I didn't understand their anxiety. Then it clicked. No, no, I

assured them. I hadn't come back for the farm. But as they led me out and I looked over the land, I saw why they wondered. No wonder great-aunt Rose did not like to talk about Ireland. How terrible to lose these hills, to leave this green world. Suddenly I knew why she'd avoided my great-grandmother's story. She had not wanted to leave! I could weave a history of Irish men from fragments of revolutionary defiance in the old country, of the muscle and might that built railroads and political machines in the new, but with women's history I had to face the suffering and displacement I inherited and did not wish to feel.

Mrs. Lynch walked me across the few yards to the McCabe cottage. "There was a terrible hunger for land," she said. "They probably gave your great-grandmother what money they had and sent her off." "A terrible hunger for land," she repeated. Her daughter, Geraldine, 17 years old, whose red-gold hair and rosy cheeks seemed drawn from an Irish Tourist Board poster, nodded. She worked in a chicken plucking factory nearby since leaving school at 16.

The thatched roof of the cottage had fallen in months before, but with Mrs. Lynch and Geraldine to guide me I could imagine these small rooms warm, lit, and lived in. I could see my great-aunt and grandmother and all the generations of children before them climbing up to the loft to go to sleep. I felt succeeding years of births and deaths, the long evenings spent by the hearth. My grandmother taught

high school in Chicago, married my grandfather--one generation ahead of her in America--who had earned an upper-middle class life and numbered among his relatives and friends political powers of city and state, including his cousin the mayor of Chicago who nominated Roosevelt for his fourth term. And she was born on this dirt floor. Her son, my father, a decorated Navy pilot in World War II, was now vice-president of a company that represented all the newspapers in the country and his mother lived here. If <u>her</u> mother had not left this life, we might all be plucking chickens. That didn't appeal, but the beauty here was seductive, especially if you were only visiting. When W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory romanticized the "peasant" life, did they allow for the hardships, the suffering, and the injustice that come from the terrible hunger for land?

I left determined that before the cottage decayed back into the earth, my father would see it. Two years later we were on our way, easing toward the cottage, heading west to go east.

The first day I planned to stop early. We had flown all night. My father, in his sixties, would need to rest, I reasoned. But as soon as he turned the car out of the Shannon Airport parking lot, past the huge signs that remind tourists to drive on the left, a new energy took over and we never looked back. Nothing on the roads, neither cows nor sheep, lorries nor stone walls that dangerously narrowed the

way, could stop us. We breakfasted near Ennis, climbed the cliffs of Mohr, passed many O'Brien castles, all the time marveling at the infinitely varied green spread out around us. At noon we reached Kilfenora--a town so rich in antiquities that in another country it would be put under glass and a $10 admission fee charged--to spend two hours tracing the outlines of tenth century bishops on the walls of the parish church and reading the stones in the graveyard where some monuments dated back a thousand years.

We started out for Galway via "the Burren." The guidebook called it a relic of the ice age, a moonscape full of enormous boulders and prehistoric dolmens where flowers and plants usually found only in the Alps grew. Hard to miss, I thought, but after 45 minutes we still had not found it.

"Is that a moonscape?" we would ask each other every time a group of three or more stones came into view. But when our Ford Escort came to the top of a certain hill, all questions ceased. Below us, thousands of enormous rocks spilled over the hills, making the landscape not just lunar but seemingly out of any space-time. Dolmens--giant boulders balanced on huge stone uprights erected thousands of years before to mark the holy places of pre-Iron Age inhabitants--"took domination everywhere," but unlike Wallace Stevens' jar they could not make this wilderness no longer wild.

In a kind of a daze, we drove through the Burren and up to a sign that said Allwise Cave. Merlin's home, perhaps? I did not expect to find out because by now surely my father had reached his sight-seeing limit. But, no, both of us were under a spell, so we entered the great mouth of the cave. The first cavern we found a tea room and a gift shop. Waiting for the tour, we read about the discovery of All-wise. A farmer's dog fell into it in 1944. One of the largest caves in the world, it was still not fully exca-vated. As I followed my father through the narrow cavern deep into the earth, it did seem that the cave could go on indefinitely. The voice of the young woman who guided us had in it the weariness of a long tourist season almost over as she rattled off facts and figures as we passed the sur-real formations of stalagmites and stalactites.

We were a half mile in, almost at the end of the exca-vated section when I heard the roar of water rushing through stone. An underground river, our guide said, a million years old, still uncharted and formed from the thousands of streams that trickled down through the mountains of rocks above. Beyond the stone barrier, where we stood, the river emptied into a subterranean lake discovered only two years before.

At that moment, the experiences of the day caught up with me and I thought, "This is too much. I can't assimi-late all this, the ancient tombs, green hills, megaliths,

rock formation, Celtic crosses, castles, not to mention the impact made by the faces of the Irish people, who reminded me of aunts and uncles, brother and sisters, classmates in Chicago, who looked like me. And now, we've even penetrated the Irish soil to find at the land's heart was an underground river and a buried lake. How to make sense of it all? Had I always known Ireland would break the forms into which I'd placed my own life?

I felt afraid to continue the journey. This was only the first day with the emotion laden portion of the trip still to come. And already I felt overwhelmed. I looked at my father. How would he react to that small cottage from which the "terrible hunger for land," for this ancient ineffable land, had driven his mother and her mother and left us with a disconnected heritage, a rift between who we were and what we came from much wider than the Atlantic we'd crossed so easily?

But then I realized my real question was, could I face the responsibilities of becoming part of this tradition? Why hadn't I stayed in America and been content with my simplified view of Ireland? "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake," said Stephen Dedalus. By seeking history, was I exposing myself to a nightmare that could envelop me?

These questions remained as we pulled up to the roofless cottage in Cavan, my grandmother's birthplace. Here was the

reality--poverty and beauty mixed, exile and return, despair and hope. Even though the acres no longer belonged to us, did some of the dowry remain? I thought then of the scene Joyce wrote to conclude A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Stephen's mother helps him prepare to leave Ireland. She puts his "new secondhand clothes in order," and prays, he reports, "that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels."[1] A month earlier Cranly had attacked Stephen's planned revolt "on the score of love for one's mother." But Stephen cannot imagine Cranly's mother. "Old then. Probably and neglected." His own mother, who is "not old," will discuss the Blessed Virgin Mary with him, indulge such remarks as "religion was not a lying-in hospital," assure him that his restless mind will lead him back to faith and give him threepence (A Portrait, p. 248). With calm generosity she does not try to forestall Stephen's revolt with appeals to mother love, but sends him off to welcome life and learn his own heart's feelings. The clothes may be only "new secondhand," but her words are a true, valuable patrimony. And this was the same inheritance my grandmother left her son.

As my father and I stood looking over the green farm, whose loss had freed us, I knew that my grandmother had left a dowry here for me, too. Rivers seen and unseen fed these lush acres and, like them, Ireland's tradition of strong heroines could nourish the faint of heart "a way, a lone a

last a loved along the . . ." individual journeys contained in Anna Livia's riverrun. Cranly has "his grand manner on" when he uses "love of one's mother" as an argument against Stephen's departure (p. 247). The image he has created of his mother and her needs absolved him from the responsibility of considering a personal revolt like Stephen's.

That picture of the dependent suffering mother was a self-serving distortion of the Irish woman. My great-grandmother suffered. She left this farm wrapped in a shawl, a baby in her arms and no sense of what future lay ahead--surely a type of beleaguered Ireland and her women. But to end her story there would be to misread its significance. Her grandson could turn to me now and say, "What a delightful place," because she survived. Through her strengths we returned. This was the pattern I should look for in considering women in Irish literature. The pain often made it difficult for writers to see her truly, but those who could found an image of rebirth and ever renewing life.

On James Joyce's one hundredth birthday, the Irish Times editorialized that he had done Ireland "considerable honor" in writing about her and called him the "pilgrim and exile who never left home" (Feb. 2, 1982).

I think Joyce stayed connected to Ireland throughout his exile and pilgrimage because whenever he plumbed the depths of his own soul, he discovered the buried river which

carried a tradition too strong to be dammed-up by history, no matter how nightmarish. In the most ancient and enduring of traditions in Ireland, rivers are named for and belonged to the goddess of the place. And if sometimes these rivers must flow beneath the earth, their power is not diminished.

Joyce found this power when he entered the smithy of his soul to forge the uncreated conscience of his race. As he struggled to present the Irish woman in all his complexities--to acknowledge her sovereignty, understand her sensuality, probe her intelligence, and come to terms with her independence, Joyce bound himself to Ireland. In Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle he found the ancient Irish anima, alive again. In her, the pilgrim would finally come home.

Being born in a tradition is a profoundly different experience than choosing to become part of it. W. B. Yeats and the Anglo-Irish writers of the Celtic Revival chose to emphasize the Irish side of their hyphen, but Joyce was Irish and he had no choice. Yeats could control his material from the outside, using the old myths of Ireland as one frame of reference for a poetry that also used occult sciences. In choosing to be affected by Ireland, he could sympathize with the sufferings and defeat suffered by the Irish people, but, as a descendant of the vanquishers, how could he experience all of the complicated emotions evoked by that

history in the descendants of the vanquished? Psychologists write about the shame and guilt the _victims_ of muggings, rapes, and family abuse feel. It is as if they blame _themselves_ for their sufferings and are ashamed. Children of concentration camp victims say they often wish to distance themselves from the fact of their parents' victimization and feel somehow guilty themselves. The denouement of Michael Arlen's _Passage to Ararat_ comes when he realizes that he is angry at the millions of Armenians who were driven out into the desert to be killed by the Turks. Why didn't his ancestors fight back, or more to the point, why didn't they win? He sees the irrationality of his reaction, but the feeling is there.[2]

Often a victim does seemingly collude in his suffering. Think of the deer immobilized by the headlights, the mouse by the snake's eyes, or the wife who denies the injuries inflicted on her by her husband, or the child by its mother. In the well known 1960s prison experiment in a Stanford psychology class, student "convicts" became accomplices in their own humiliation at the hands of their classmate "guards" and endured real suffering although at any moment they had the power to end the experiment. Perhaps victims are immobilized because the conflict between primitive instinct of passivity in the face of greater strength and the human spirit's desire to resist results in a profound confusion that makes action impossible, thus allowing for

further mastery. I have no answers to these questions, but I think these questions would arise in 1900 when James Joyce contemplated the history of this country.

The poet who fascinated young Joyce--James Clarence Mangan, made an icon of victimhood. Joyce spoke first of Mangan in 1902 at a meeting of the Literary and Historical Society of University College Dublin. He reworked the material for the Drama and Life paper in Stephen Hero and finally presented his revised ideas in the second lecture he delivered at the Universite Populare in Trieste in 1907. "All his poetry remembers wrong and suffering and the aspiration of one who has suffered and who is moved to great cries and gestures when that sorrowful hour rushes upon the heart."[3] Mangan did not make his song "a coat/Covered with embroideries/Out of old mythologies."[4] Rather, the making of his song stripped him naked and left him hungry. Joyce said,

> His body was gaunt, his eyes, behind whose infrequent glimmerings seemed to be hidden the horrible voluptuous memories of his visions were large, fixed and vacant. His voice slow, weak and sepulchral. He descended the last steps toward the grave with frightening rapidity. (CW, p. 179)

Joyce admires poets who believe

> that their inner life is so valuable that they have no need of popular support and thus abstain from proffering confessions of faith, who believe, in sum, that the poet is sufficient in himself, the heart, preserver of a secular patrimony who

> therefore has no urgent need to become a shouter, or a preacher or a performer. (p. 184)

But he sees such a pure poet as marked out for martyrdom and betrayal just as was the pure statesman Parnell. Both are victims because that to which they gave their heart betrays them. Joyce sets up a company of victims that includes Christ, Shakespeare, and Joyce himself. Stephen theorizes in Ulysses that Shakespeare is Hamlet's father's ghost--both betrayed by unfaithful wives. While Joyce sees the victims as superior to their betrayers, he acknowledges that donning the mantle of the noble victim can result in that greatest of danger--the diminishing of poetic gifts.

> The poet's central effort is to free himself from the unfortunate influence of ideals that corrupt him without and within and certainly it would be false to assert that Mangan has always made this effort. The history of this country enclosed him so strictly that even in his hours of extreme individual passion, he can barely reduce its walls to ruin. (CW, p. 185)

Mangan passes on a tradition "loosened and divided against itself as it moves down the cycles" which he accepts "with all its regrets and failures." He personifies this enclosing tradition as a woman victim.

> The figure that he adores has the appearance of an abject queen to whom, because of the bloody crimes that she has committed and the no less bloody crimes committed against her by the hands of others, madness has come and death is about, but who does not wish to believe that she is about to die and remembers

> only the rumour of voices that besiege her sacred garden and her lovely flowers that have become pabulum apriori food for wild boars. Love of grief, despair, high sounding threats--these are the great tradition of the race of James Clarence Mangan, and in that impoverished figure, thin and weakened, an hysterical nationalism receives its final justification. (pp. 185-186)

Though Joyce prefers the way his Mangan expressed "the sacred indignation of his soul" and wrote "in noble disdain" neither falling into the easily felt sentiments of popular Irish Catholic writers or affecting the insulated position of the Anglo-Irish gentry who could never feel the pull and shame of victimhood, he himself will not follow Mangan into love of grief, despair, or high sounding threats. He, Joyce, does not seek oblivion. Exile is his defense against it.

In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Davin tells Stephen, "In your heart your are an Irishman, but your pride is too powerful" (A Portrait, p. 203). Stephen does not disagree, but replies, "My ancestors threw off their language and took another. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" When Davin suggests that freedom is a motive, Stephen reminds him of the fates of each one who did give his life and youth--the people "sold him to the enemy, or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another." For his part,

Stephen will fly the nets of "nationality, language and religion" flung over the soul of a man born in this country (p. 203). Later he tells Cranly,

> I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether I call it my home, my fatherland ("fatherland"--he remains attached to the <u>mother</u>land), my Church and I will try to express myself in some mode or life or act as freely as I can as wholly as I can using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use--silence, exile and cunning. (p. 247)

This is Stephen's answer to the constraints of Irish history--refuse victimhood and choose exile. In this he is in a sense on common ground with the early Irish saints who, through the "white martyrdom" of exile, brought Irish learning and letters to the world. For like him, they never left (to adapt Seamus Heaney's phrase) "the Irelands of the mind."[5] Columcille, "Dove of the Church," was the most famous of these early exiles. He was descended from the royal family of Gulban, memorialized in "Ben Bulben," and stands with St. Brigid as the premier home-grown saint of Ireland. His exile occurred in 563 and grew from a dispute over copyright. At a time when books were so important that each had its own shrine, he "stole" a book of psalms brought from Rome by an abbot. Columcille copied the entire text in one miraculous night. When King Diarmuid macCerbell ordered him to return the copy, citing the principle, "To every cow belongeth her calf, to every book its little book,"

Columcille refused. His royal Ui Neil relatives joined the dispute and carried into battle his book, the "Cathach," which became for their O'Neils and O'Donnells descendants a battle standard, guarded through each invasion and preserved until the present. But in this battle Columcille and the Ui Neil lost and he set sail for the small island of Iona, where he had to settle on the spot where he could not see Ireland. As he left these words are attributed to him:

> There is a blue eye which will look back at Ireland, never more shall it see the men of Ireland nor her women [Fil suil inglais/fegbas Erinn dar a hais/nocon-aceba iarmi tha/firu Erninn nach a mna].[6]

And at the end of his exile before his death he longs to be "Listening early in the Rose Grencha to the stags, and to cuckoos calling from the woodland on the brink of summer."

Here is an exile out of sympathy with the political and literary direction of his country's establishment who continues to look back on Ireland and remember his city. "This is why I love Derry. . . . It is all full of white angels from one end to the other."[7]

Joyce echoed this sentiment in 1937 in his answer to Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, a life-long friend who, with her sister Mary, served as a model for Emma in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. She asked him why he didn't return to Dublin. He replied, "Have I ever left it? In a letter to Constantine Curran, he elaborated. While not up to

"taking any chances with my fellow countrymen" by returning there after the Irish press and former friends had attacked Ulysses in hurtful and personal ways, still "everyday in every way I am walking along the streets of Dublin and along the Strand. And hearing voices. Non dico giammai ma non acora" (Ellmann, p. 717).

Through his flight from the nets of nationality, language, and religion, Joyce became a poet/seeker, taking on a role honored in the tradition of Gaelic Ireland, living it out in the ancient style, expecting much from patrons and demanding respect for his art. By his self-exile on the Continent, he, like many of the "wild geese" before him, was able to keep intact the "Irelands of the mind," but avoid the constant combat with the "straits of Irish history," and therefore could follow in his own life the advice he gave Ireland--"have done, once and for all with failure" (CW, p. 174). By rejecting victimhood Joyce avoided a fate like Mangan's.

Soon after he met Nora Barnacle he wrote to her of his mother who had died the year before. "When I looked on her face as she lay in her coffin, a face grey and wasted with cancer, I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim and cursed the system which had made her a victim."[8] This curse informed much of his writing.

In his works Joyce faced the way Irish family life stunted the development of women just as the two patriarchal

masters, England and Rome, oppressed Ireland. Ireland and her women were made to be passive victims in love with grief, longing for a male savior.

> O my dark Rosaleen./Do not sigh, do not weep./The priests are on the ocean green/ They march along the Deep./There's wine . . . from the royal Pope/Upon the ocean green;/And Spanish ale shall give you hope,/My dark Rosaleen!/Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,/Shall give you health, and help, and hope, My Dark Rosaleen.[9]

Mangan is translating a seventeenth century Irish poem from the period when the power of the sovereign goddess Erie was at its lowest ebb. Mangan's Rosaleen excites Joyce's romanticism, but some innnate sense of survival warns him that to languish in her sorrow is to lose the energy and perceptiveness necessary to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race," and animate the moral paralysis of Dublin (A Portrait, p. 253).

Joyce's women characters, unlike those of Yeats, resist the temptation to sink into sorrow. So all pervasive is the convention of personifying Ireland as a woman that any woman character reflects the writer's view of Ireland, and any picture of Ireland reveals something of the writer's view of women. When W. B. Yeats cast Maude Gonne in the role of the Countess Cathlees in the Abbey production, he expected her to follow the script in life. When she chose unrefined activism, he felt betrayed. Yeats could champion a victim but had a difficult time accepting that a sovereign woman or

country might distort the outlines of his dream. In a 1925 note to the collection Mythologies, in which "Celtic Twilight" is republished, he says of the stories, "They were, as first published, written in that artificial elaborate English so many of us played with in the nineties and I had come to hate them."[10] In "Solomon and the Witch," from the 1921 collection Michael Robartes and the Dancer, he writes "Maybe the bride bed brings despair, For each imagined image brings/And finds a real image there." The real images of Ireland presented were difficult for him to accept. Here "A drunken, vainglorious lout" who "had done most bitter wrong/To some who are near my heart" must be numbered "in the song" as a hero.[11] The real events like the Easter Rebellion of 1916 and the Civil War of the 1920s would not fit into "artificial elaborate English" nor could the real Ireland be represented as a pre-Raphaelite maiden covered in the mists of the "Celtic Twilight." Her heroes did not match the idealized forms Yeats imagined. James Joyce knew actual Irishmen and women without the insulation of position and money that cushioned Yeats' experience. One reason Joyce resisted the folklore mode, I think, was because he saw the romanticizing of Ireland as a ploy to let symbol substitute for reality. Joyce needed to confront the reality of Irish life even in its uglier dimensions in order to exorcise the guilt that came from oppression. He had to go beyond talk and carry the poets' "revolt against artifice"

into action. Otherwise, like Mangan, he ran the danger of becoming "a poet manque in a country manque" (CW, p. 186). His father provided a concrete example of how cleverness and charm degenerate when the intellect is exercised primarily in the public house. Yet Ireland, as victim, would clasp a hundred John Joyces to her bosom before she would welcome one James, finding it easier to comfort failed potential than to confront a difficult actuality. Joyce charges his country "If she is truly capable of reviving her, let her awake" (CW, p. 174), and prods her by creating female characters like Gretta in "The Dead," The Girl on the shore in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle who recall the ancient heroines, epiphanies not of a languishing victim but a sovereign woman. His recognition of the central importance of female power places Joyce directly in the stream of Irish tradition. Tim Finnegan wakes up when the women fight in Finnegans Wake. Anna Livia's riverrun renews the cycle.

Joyce knew this tradition much more intimately than is generally assumed. In fact, when he speaks of Ireland as himself and not as Stephen Dedalus, he even allows himself an expression of pride. He entitled the address he delivered at Trieste in 1907, three years after leaving Dublin, "Ireland, Island of Saints and Scholars," and explained that this exalted title "goes back to the most ancient times when the island was a true focus for sanctity and intellect

spreading throughout the continent a culture and vitalizing energy" (CW, p. 154).

The 12 pieces written for Italian audiences between 1907, two years after he left Ireland, and 1916, form, in Richard Ellmann's words,

> a single complex unit in which he voices now distrust now nostalgia for Ireland. . . . After parading Irish history as a succession of betrayals, he cannot help invoking its special beauty and worth in the face of English oppression. The Citizen in Ulysses who is so windy about Irish past glories and English injustices turns out to be an aspect of Joyce's mind as well as a butt of his satire. (CW, p. 9).

In this complex unit Joyce draws on an extensive fund of knowledge of Ireland's history, referring to her great past literature, mentioning the ancient books such as the Book of the Dun Cow and the Yellow Book of Lecan and detailing the "five periods of Irish literature" which he divides into two parts: those written in Irish and those written in English (pp. 156-157). When he speaks of literature in Irish, James Joyce exhibits a great deal more knowledge about the Irish language than he grants to Stephen Dedalus. "It has an alphabet of special characters and a history almost three thousand years old" (p. 155). He tells of how it was

> rediscovered by German philologists . . . just as these learned Germans were the first to present Shakespeare as a poet of world significance to the warped eyes of his compatriots (who up to that time had considered William a fine figure of secondary importance, a fine fellow with a

> pleasant vein of lyric poetry, but perhaps too fond of English beer), these very Germans were the only ones to concern themselves with Celtic languages and the history of the five Celtic nations. The only Irish grammar and dictionaries that existed in Europe up until a few years ago when the Gaelic league was founded in Dublin, were the works of Germans. (p. 155).

By emphasizing the real scholarship of the Germans rather than the popular use of the Ascendancy writers made of Celtic traditions, Joyce reflects an attitude summed up by the Dublin witticism that some writers translated the old sagas from the original German. He also places Celtic language and tradition with the work of Shakespeare as an example of treasures neglected by the "warped" English until the Germans pointed out their "world significance." In this, he echoes the Irish tradition of looking beyond England to the Continent for cultural and political support, a principle he followed in his own life.

Joyce goes on to credit the Gaelic League, founded in 1893, with reviving the language spoken ten years before "only by the peasants in the western coast of the Atlantic and a few in the south and the little islands that stand like pickets of the vanguard of Europe, over the front of the eastern hemisphere" (p. 55). In those last words Joyce sounds again his theme of identification with Europe, not England. On these islands "pickets of the vanguard" the language preserved "differs from English almost as much as

the language spoken in Rome differs from Teheran" (p. 155). And now, "every Irish newspaper, with the exception of the Unionist organs, has at least one principal headline printed in Irish" (p. 155). He lists the other positive achievements of the League--Irish ranked in the Universities with the other modern languages, street names in Irish, concerts, debates, socials, crowds of young people in the street speaking Irish (p. 156). Joyce's attitude here seems contrary to the one Stephen Dedalus presents to Davin:

> --Why did you drop out of the league class after the first lesson?
>
> --You know one reason why, answered Stephen.
>
> Davin tossed his head and laughed.
>
> --Oh, come now, he said. Is it on account of that certain young lady and Father Moran? But that's all in your mind, Stevie. They were only talking and and laughing.
>
> --Stephen paused and laid a friendly hand on Davin's shoulder (A Portrait, p. 202).

Davin thinks Stephen is put off by simple jealousy, but for Stephen, Emma's classroom flirtation with the priest symbolizes Ireland's need to ingratiate herself with the Church at the expense of her own sovereignty.

In Ireland, Island of Saints and Scholars, while Joyce glories in the achievements of Ireland's early Churchmen and women, for him the present Irish Catholic Church distorts the former greatness. When he recalls the careers of little

known Irish apostles such as Cataldus, Cailistius, Sedulis, Fridolimus Viator, as well as better-known saints of the Celtic Church such as Columbanus, Gall, Finnian, and St. Fiacre, he emphasizes the contributions each made to European civilization as if to correct for his audience the view of Ireland presented abroad by England, where "the phrase makers of Fleet Street" portray the Irish as "unbalanced helpless idiots" (p. 165). But, for Joyce, the Irish Catholic Church of his time subverts this heritage by serving the Vatican before its own people. "Ireland has been up to now the most faithful daughter of the Catholic Church" (p. 169). Rome betrayed this faithfulness "First by means of a papal bull and ring it gave Ireland to Henry II," and later, when, according to Joyce, Pope Gregory XIII tried to appoint his illegitimate son Giacomo Buoncompagno ruler of Ireland (p. 170). Joyce, who demands from the opposition honors for Ireland that according to the logic of his arguments he himself would deny her, complains that the Holy See which chose to "honor" Ireland with political attention denied her ecclesiastical honors

> although Ireland in the past enriched the hagiographic archives in the manner that we have seen this was scarcely recognized in the councils of the Vatican and more than fourteen hundred years passed before the Holy Father thought of elevating an Irish bishop to Cardinal. (p. 170).

This essay shows Joyce's pride in the accomplishments of the Irish Church in her native tradition though he opposed

the current Catholic Church in Ireland. Where did the Church go wrong?

A point Joyce raises in his summary of the early Irish Saints hints at an answer to what changed the Celtic Church into "the scullery maid of Christiandom" and how that change resulted in a society which victimized the women of Ireland. Joyce quotes King Alfred on his visit to Ireland in the eighth century:

> I found when I was in exile
> In Ireland the beautiful
> Many ladies, a serious people
> Laymen and priests in abundance
> (p. 159)

He then points out that

> it must be admitted that in twelve centuries, the picture has not changed much, although, if the good Alfred who found an abundance of laymen and priests in Ireland at the time were to go there now, he would find more of the latter than the former (p. 159).

The radical switch in the balance between laymen and priests which occurred in nineteenth century Ireland changed the character of the country's religion.

Before the famine of 1850 there was one priest to about 3,500 lay people. After the famine this number steadily rose until, within a century, there was one priest for every 600 laymen. Most priests, during Joyce's time, were drawn from the "respectable and fairly comfortable class of the tenant farmer" according to Father Guinain in Priest and People in Doon. This class dominated Irish society after

the famine wiped out through death or emigration, the agricultural workers and laborers who previously preserved the old Gaelic ways in Ireland. The farmers belonged to the bourgeois who exalted family life, but treated marriages as business deals where the land and the dowry of the bride held primary importance. Most of these familes could dower only one daughter and provide land for only one son. J. J. Lee, in his Women and the Church Since the Famine, one of the excellent collections of essays in Women in Irish Society, edited by Margaret MacCurtin and Donncha O'Corrain, maintains that

> a society dominated by strong farmers and providing little female employment, inevitably denies most of its children the chance of rearing a family in the country. It was therefore crucial to maintaining the economic dominance of the new order that all thoughts of marriage in Ireland should be banished from the minds of the majority of Irish youth. Temptation must not be placed in their way. Sex, therefore, must be denounced as a satanic snare, in even what had been its most innocent pre-Famine manifestations. Sex posed a far more subversive threat than the landlord to the security and status of the family. Boys and girls must be kept apart at all costs.[12]

A resurgent Irish Church drew priests from the sons of this farmer class and sent them to the new seminary at Maynooth, where "sex was equated for all practical purposes with sin." Along with this came an unconscious adherence to "Victorian middle class morality which simultaneously idealised and repressed women." A prudery absent from

pre-Famine Ireland "seeped through Irish society and came close to being equated with morality itself" as the Irish language and Gaelic values declined. The agents of this new society were the clerics whom Lee sees as the "moral beauticians" of a sick society. They shared and perpetuated the delusions of a society determined to see itself as a "beacon of spiritual light in a world deluged in a materialistic sea" when in reality it "counted every step to the altar to the last avaricious farthing."[13]

Here is simony in a personally destructive form, the sin of not just selling spiritual favors but of putting a price on the spirit itself. No wonder Joyce chose to highlight this seemingly obscure sin at a time when greed disguised as virtue could pervert the intimate life of Irish people.

Stephen Dedalus and James Joyce rejected the particular historical manifestation Catholicism took in Ireland, quarreling not so much with faith but with morals. He deplored the political use to which the Church put its morality as in the case of Parnell. The Church fought England only until it gained a measure of freedom and then took an official policy against the revolution. The Vatican wished Ireland to remain within Britain, hoping that Catholicism might, by osmosis, seep back into England. This position reflects an institution that thinks in centuries and has watched the rise and fall of a thousand earthly powers.

Also, the Catholic Church in the last part of the nineteenth century was dominated by a Roman Curia which Hans Kung describes as

> unable to perceive what was positive in the revolution, what was true in modern philosophy literature, natural science, what was good in democracy and national consolidation, in liberal tolerance and freedom and eventually also in the socialist critique of religion and society.[14]

Vatican I, 1869-1870, represented an effort "wholly under the influence of neoscholastic theology, fostered especially by the Roman Jesuits, to restore the medieval outlook, in particular that of Aquinas," and, with its definition of the primacy of the Pope and his infallability, sought to exalt the religious authority of the Vatican in proportion to the decline of its temporal power as one by one the Papal states were lost. Pius X (1903-1914) engaged in a "fierce struggle," says Kung, "against all those theologians who had dared to come to terms with the modern age and who were discredited simply by being called 'modernists.'"[15] Until the 1962 Vatican Council II, all clergy of the Roman Catholic Church were required to take an oath against "modernism." The Irish Church, tied more closely than ever to the Vatican through the new Centralisation of the Church, endorsed Rome's view of the "modern age." This stance served the aims of the British government who then allowed the establishment of Maynooth Seminary so as to prevent Irish clergy

from studying on the Continent and being exposed to revolutionary thinking in France and Belgium. In his speech to the House of Commons on March 19, 1869, the member for the University of Dublin (Trinity College), John T. Ball, complains that the government has increased its grant to Maynooth and reminds the House of the original "grounds" assigned for the grant by the Irish Parliament five years before the Union.

> The Irish Roman Catholic Clergy had up to the time been principally educated abroad. Mr. Pitt, Lord Castlereagh and the Government of that day feared that if this continued, they would, during their education, be exposed to the influence of Republican principles then prevalent on the Continent. To avert this, and provide them means of their education at home, Maynooth was founded.[16]

The Irish clergy thus remained isolated not only from secular progressivism but from those theologians who resisted the Vatican I model for the Catholic Church--a resistance that continued and finally bore fruit in Vatican II.

The Irish Church became less proudly Gaelic and more servilely Roman. "Duns Scotus has won a poorer fame than S. Fiacre who, legend sown in French soil, has grown up in a harvest of hackney cabs," Joyce wrote in his Trieste notebooks. "If he and Columbanus the fiery, whose fingertips God illumined, and Fredolinus Viator can see as far as earth from their creepy stools in heaven they know that Aquinas,

the lucid sensualist has won the day."[17] Here, as with the literary traditions, Joyce objects more to the perversion of the philosophy of Aquinas for political reasons within the Church than to the philosophy itself. The Pope can rationalize support for the English and

> reject the messengers of the people who never in the past have renounced the Holy See, the only Catholic people to whom faith also means the exercise of faith [and] favor messengers of a monarch, descended from apostates who . . . on the day of his coronation [declares] the rites of the Roman Catholic Church are superstition and idolatry. (CW, pp. 198-199)

Like Stephen, however, Joyce decides against complete repudiation of the Church to become a Protestant. "--I said I had lost the faith, Stephen answered, but not my self-respect. What kind of liberation would that be to forsake an absurdity which is logical and coherent and to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent" (A Portrait, p. 244). For Joyce, the Protestant Church meant England and it existed "only for the well-being of a few thousand settlers" (CW, p. 169). Stephen tells Emma, "I was born to be a monk" (A Portrait, p. 219). He remembers this remark after he writes out the stanzas of the villanelle in which he evokes a woman, whose "eyes have set man's heart ablaze" (p. 218). When "knotted flock" under his head brings back the "knotted horsehair in the sofa of her parlor," he remembers Emma's home. There the print of the Sacred Heart, a byproduct of the romantic religious renewal in the Church, repels him but

Emma's appreciation of his singing attracts him. "At certain instants, her eyes seemed about to trust him, but he had waited in vain." The girl in white who dances toward him with eyes a little averted not quite giving her trust, holding back a little after so many betrayals, is a figure of Ireland for Joyce. "At the pause of the chain of hands her hand had lain in his an instant, a soft merchandise." Merchandise recalls the way Ireland and her women are bought and sold, political deals and the other in the dowry system.

> Emma says to Stephen:
>
> --You are a great stranger now.
> --Yes, I was born to be a monk.
> --I am afraid you are a heretic.
> --Are you much afraid?
>
> For answer she had danced away from him along the chain of hands, dancing lightly and discretely giving herself to none. (p. 219)

She asserts her sovereignty, dancing lightly away, passing along the chain of hands, but giving herself to none. Neither Joyce with his Elizabethan songs nor any of the other young men in this house where Christian names are used a "little too soon," can capture her. Joyce chooses the pose of a "heretic" Franciscan to attract her. "Willing and not willing to serve, spinning like Gherardino da Borgo San Donnino a lithe web of sophistry and whispering in her ear." But this image does not really fit Stephen, rather it reminds him of the young priest in the Irish class whom she looks at "out of dove's eyes." The priest, Father Moran,

tells Stephen that the "ladies are coming round to us," that is, to support of the Irish language and the restoration of the old ways. "And the Church, Father Moran?" Stephen asks, reminding the priest that the official policy of the Church is opposed to the national movement. The young priest will not confront the issue directly but instead patronizes Stephen: "The Church too. Coming around too. The work is going ahead there too. Don't fret about the Church" (p. 220). But this accommodationist posture disgusts Stephen.

> Bah, he had done well to leave the room in disdain. He had done well not to salute her on the steps of library. He had done well to leave her to flirt with her priest, to toy with a Church which was the scullery maid of Christendom. (p. 220)

Ireland, by continuing to submit to the Church, forces Stephen to consider exile. But still he sees her image everywhere.

> On all sides distorted reflections of her image started from his memory; the flower girl in the ragged dress with damp, coarse hair and a hoyden's face who called herself his own girl and begged his handsel, the kitchengirl in the next house who sang over the clatter of her plates with the drawl of a country singer the first bars of By Killarney's Lakes and Fells, a girl who had laughed gaily to see him stumble when the iron grating in the footpath near Cork hill had caught the broken sole of his shoe, a girl he had glanced at, attracted by her small ripe mouth as she passed out of Jacob's biscuit factory, who had cried to him over her shoulder, --Do you like what you

> seen of me, straight hair and curly eyebrows? (p. 220)

He is angry at her, but "his anger was a form of homage." He knows that "he had left the classroom in a disdain that was not wholly sincere." He senses that "perhaps the secret of her race lay behind those dark eyes." Yet he feels excluded and cannot connect with this girl who is "a figure of the womanhood of her country." He is cut off from

> her batlike soul waking to consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness, tarrying a while, loveless and sinless, with her mild lover and leaving him to whisper of innocent transgressions in the latticed ear of a priest. (p. 221)

He recognizes the power of the women of Ireland--working girls and kitchen help as well as young ladies gowned in white--but says in Stephen Hero that he is "puzzled and often maddened" by their attachment to a religion that relates them to "darkness, secrecy and loneliness."[18] Offended that she should "unveil her soul's shy nakedness" to one who fulfills only a "formal rite" and not to him, "a priest of the eternal imagination" (A Portrait, p. 221), he rails against the clergy who impose their farming class values on the city, making the Irish Church a slave for Rome and Irish women creatures of "menial fear" and "burgher cowardice" (SH, p. 221). Yet, Stephen admits that "baffled pride" distorts his image of both Emma and the priest (p. 221). As Lee says, "The real tragedy for women in post-famine Ireland

lay in the conflict between the visciousness of the system and the kindness of the individuals operating it."[19] The impulse that led Irish women to collude in their own victimizing came from the spiritual parts of themselves that found little other means of expression in the society. In the Epiphanies recorded in Stephen Hero, Joyce comments on Stephen's disapproval of Emma and the myriad women in whom he sees her image refracted.

"It did not strike him that the attitude of women toward holy things really implied a more genuine emancipation than his own and he condemned them out of a purely suppositious conscience" (p. 287). Where young Stephen may not understand this "more genuine emancipation," James Joyce will follow the image of women through each of his major works on until she leads him to the core of his artistic self where personal liberation and racial identity do not conflict and he can at last comprehend her not through breaking up her image but in communion.

The journey begins in Stephen Hero when, while walking down Eccles Street, where Molly Bloom will one day live, he passes a young lady "Standing on one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis"; as he passes on his "quest" he hears fragments of their colloquy out of which he receives an impression keen enough to affect his sensitiveness very severely" (p. 287). The bywords "Irish paralysis," "quest," and "colloquy"--a term

used in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius--set up the importance for Joyce of the young lady's discreet drawl. "'...O, yes.. I was... at the... Cha..pel..' The young man's answer was an inaudible I...I to what she replies softly, O.. but... you're... ve..ry.. wick... ed." This observed exchange sets Stephen both to composing his "Villanelle of a Temptress" and to collecting other such moments, as epiphanies. All is separate, though--the young lady's "O, yes" blurred and the fragments of a "Cha... pel" separate her from the young man whose "I" is muffled and whom she both attracts and holds off with her soft-voiced appreciation of his "wickedness."

Joyce's quest will continue until that hidden "yes" becomes Molly's strong affirmation and the first paralysis dissolves in Anna Livia's riverrun. The first step for Stephen in A Portrait is to trust Emma and deliver to her the villanelle. If she reads them out at breakfast, "amid the tapping of eggshells," her brothers will laugh and her "suave priest" uncle "admire the literary form" while keeping the content at arm's length (A Portrait, p. 222). In this case, male ridicule of feeling and the patronizing attitude of the educated members of the clergy serve the same end in hampering the true expression of feeling in which a man and woman may connect. For it is union Stephen seeks. As he says about his villanelle, "The radiant image of the eucharist is the force that can overcome his bitter

and despairing thought" and allow him to voice his hymn of praise (p. 221). When he goes beyond his fear of her male relatives to thoughts of the girl herself, he knows she could not betray him. "He began to feel that he wronged her" (p. 222). They had shared an innocence, taken for granted until each lost it--he through sin and she when she first menstruated. "Then first her soul had begun to live as his soul when he had first sinned" (p. 222). The mature artist who will make Molly's menstruation a symbol of renewal and fertile love exists in embryo in this young man who ponders "the dark shame of womanhood" but at least realizes that her soul lives as his does (p. 223). In communing soul to soul each might, through desire, wake from the "odorous sleep" that is so like paralysis and go beyond the limits represented by her brothers and the priest to discover a new way of being.

In a passage that prefigures his description of the return of Anna Livia to her father the sea, Stephen imagines that her eyes

> were opening to his eyes. Her nakedness yielded to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavish limbed enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life; and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery flowed forth over his brain. (p. 223)

Not only do the false barriers keep men and women apart, they fracture the individual spirit and keep dammed up the

"liquid letters of speech" the words of the soul. Early in _Stephen Hero_, "He toyed also with the theory of dualism which would symbolize the twin eternities of spirit and nature in the twin eternities of male and female" (_SH_, p. 287). Now dualism dissolves into union and the act of love rather than ensnaring the souls releases it to create.

This woman whom Stephen loves is familiar to him, a friend from childhood, the sister of a schoolmate. She is the first of many women characters whose very commonness and physical immediacy make communion and transcendance possible in a way that Yeats, "starved for the bosom of his faery bride," did not understand until late in his life.

> It was the dream itself enchanted me:
> Character isolated by deed
> To engross the present and dominate
> memory
> Players and painted stage took all my
> love
> And not those things that they were
> emblems of.
> ("The Circus Animals' Desertion")[20]

Joyce looked to "those things" rather than "the dream." Molly Bloom is a middle class woman and "We all know Anna Livia." Stephen witnesses that very ordinary scene on the stairs and "this triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies" (_SH_, pp. 287-288). His definition of epiphany is that he seeks that which is behind the emblems:

> First we recognize that the object is _one_ integral thing, then we recognize that _it_ is an organised composite structure, a

> thing in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point we recognised, that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. (p. 289)

Joyce found a kind of epiphany in Yeats' 1897 story "Adoration of the Magi," whose title recalls the liturgical feast of Epiphany. He wrote in The Day of the Rabblement that it "shows what Yeats can do when he breaks with the half-gods" (CW, p. 71).

His opinion influenced Yeats, who wrote in the preface to a new edition of these stories, "I do not think I should have reprinted them had I not met a young man in Ireland the other day, who liked them very much and nothing else that I have written."[21]

In this story, the three Galway fishermen are sent by Michael Robartes, Yeats' spirit guide, to Paris "where a dying woman would give them secret names and thereby so transform the world that another Leda would open her knees to the swan, another Achilles beleaguer Troy."

When the old men find the house of the woman, they want to turn back because a "wisdom could not have alighted in so foolish a neighborhood." And, in fact, they do not recognize her soul or whatness, but instead, are themselves recognized by the old woman who attends her. "You are her

kinsmen from Ireland." Only when death ennobles her in the same way it changed the rebels of 1916, "utterly" allowing "a terrible beauty" to be born, do the men see her as a vessel for the immortals. Joyce, on the other hand, appreciates the injunction to "bow down" before a seemingly common woman precisely because in her "heart all follies have gathered" and in her "body all desires have awakened."[22] But for himself he rejects the Yeatsian notion that only death brings real transcendence.

Instead, Joyce chooses life. Stephen writes on April 5 in _A Portrait_, "Wild Spring. Scudding Clouds. O Life! Dark storm of swirling bagwater on which appletrees have cast down their delicate flowers" (_A Portrait_, p. 250).

The dark stream strewn with apple blossoms _will_ ultimately become Anna Livia who says of the one leaf that "clings still" as she completes a cycle of her riverrun, "I'll bear it on me. To remind me of."[23] Memory cannot impede Anna Livia. She moves forward bearing the past into renewal--the direction Joyce set himself in _A Portrait_. There are "eyes of girls among the leaves. Girls demure and romping"(_A Portrait_, p. 250). And these recall childhood. "Certainly she remembers the past." But after all, the past "is consumed in the present" which lives "only because it brings forth the future" (p. 251). Joyce saw danger, not refuge, in the melancholy contemplation of old stories about dying beauties. While Yeats, from his privileged position

as outsider/insider could view the sufferings of Ireland and of the women which personify her through a haze of his own imagination, Joyce must resist the pull toward victimhood.

As a priest of the imagination he wishes to transform the bread of ordinary experience into everliving life.

> Michael Robartes remembers forgotten beauty and, when his arms wrap her round, he presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. Not this. Not at all. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world. (p. 251)

Not this for Stephen. Not Mangan's worship of an abject Queen, nor Yeats' unrequited love for a cool, self-sacrificing aristocrat. Instead he seeks the chance "to learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels" (p. 252). It is to this prayer of his mother that Stephen answers, "Amen."

To learn what the heart is requires real experience and an actual partner. It means embracing the present and "what is" in order to move toward the future. The alternative is paralysis. Richard Ellmann points out how even in his early stories, "Eveline" and "After the Race," both published in 1904, Joyce challenged the work of his compatriots.

> Yeats' The Countess Cathleen had extolled the virtue of self-sacrifice. "Eveline" evokes the counter virtue of self-realization. When Joyce's character is held by Ireland, she reduces herself to a "helpless animal" as if surrendering the very qualities that had made her human. (Ellmann, p. 170)

Ellmann contrasts Yeats' choice of Red Hanrahan, the half-legendary hero in his story, with Joyce's use of Jimmy Doyle in stories designed to show "illusion and disenchantment." He concludes: "Yeats's story is Celtic. Joyce's Irish. Yeats is melancholy and warm, Joyce is meticulous" (Ellmann, pp. 170-171).

In leaving Ireland, Joyce rejected the Celticism that fed the cult of the "blood sacrifice." He did not believe "nothing but our own red blood/Can make a right rose tree."[24] This was the political analog to preferring fading beauty to an actual woman. Stephen welcomes life, not death. The affirming act of love rather than a passive ennobling through death.

He could accept that Ireland's liberation might require violence and wrote "Any concessions granted to Ireland, England has granted unwillingly and it is usually put at the point of a bayonet" in the article on Fenianism he wrote when John O'Leary, the old Fenian leader, died (CW, p. 188). But he respects successful shows of physical force such as the raid by the Invincibles on the prison in Clerkenwell and the stabbing of the English Chief Secretary and the Under-secretary "to death in broad daylight" in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Both events appear in Ulysses (p. 44).

Still, he prefers a rebirth out of love, not violence. Joyce, unlike Stephen, did not leave Ireland alone. Nora Barnacle, his lifetime companion, model for his women, and

the "one from whose love and in whose company I have still to learn the secrets of life," sailed away with him (Letters, p. 169). She was not a stereotypic "colleen bawn" peasant, a wilting queen, but a woman of the West where language and tradition connected the people to an older Ireland. Galway was a city with an international history of trade conducted on equal footing with the great powers of the world. Nora, who worked from age 14, first in Galway and then in Dublin, recalls an older tradition of financially independent women whose labor counted for much in the economy. She is sister to the Irish women in America who earned passage money for entire families by their work and laid the foundation on which rose one of the richest and most influential immigrant groups in the United States.

James Joyce made Bloomsday June 16, 1904, the date he and Nora first walked out together.

To set Ulysses on this date was "Joyce's most eloquent if indirect tribute to Nora, a recognition of the determining effect upon his attachment to her. He would tell her later, 'you made me a man'" (Ellmann, p. 163). And an artist.

> Everything that is noble and exalted and deep and true and moving in what I write comes, I believe, from you. O take me into your soul of souls and then I will become indeed the poet of my race. My body will soon penetrate into yours. O that my soul could too! (Letters, p. 169)

In Nora he found a woman who recalled in a direct way the heroines of Irish literature, spirited, sexual, sovereign and alive--not dying beauty but everliving life.

"Are you Irish at all?" Cranly asks the young artist. In the creation of his women characters, James Joyce will answer the question most eloquently.

NOTES

1 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: Penguin Books [Viking Critical Library], 1977), p. 253. [Based on] the definitive text, corrected from the Dublin holograph by Chester G. Anderson and edited by Richard Ellmann, published in 1964; hereafter cited as A Portrait.

2 Michael J. Arlen, Passage to Ararat (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1975), pp. 285-290.

3 James Joyce, The Critical Writings of James Joyce, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1959), p. 184; hereafter cited as CW.

4 W. B. Yeats, "A Coat," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p.125; hereafter Collected Poems.

5 Seamus Heaney, Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978 (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1980), p. 150.

6 Gerard Murphy, ed. and trans., Early Irish Lyrics: Eighth to Twelfth Century (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), pp. 65-70.

7 Richard Ellmann, James Joyce (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 717.

8 James Joyce, Selected Joyce Letters, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1975), p. 25.

9 O'Connor, Short History, p. 153.

10 W. B. Yeats, Mythologies (New York: Collier, 1978), p. 1.

11 Yeats, "Easter 1916" and "Solomon and the Witch," Collected Poems, pp. 177, 174.

12 Joseph J. Lee, "Women and the Church since the Famine," in Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension, ed. Margaret MacCurtain and Donnacha O'Corrain (Dublin: Arlen House, The Women's Press, 1978), pp. 39-40.

13 Lee, p. 43.

14 Hans Kung, Does God Exist? (New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 511.

15 Kung, pp. 511-514.

16 John T. Ball, The Irish Church Question: Speech Delivered in the House of Commons on March 19, 1869 (London: Rivingtons, 1869), p. 5.

17 James Joyce, "Ireland," in Trieste Notebook, in A Portrait (Viking Critical Edition), p. 295.

18 James Joyce, Stephen Hero, in A Portrait (Viking Critical Edition), p. 286; hereafter cited as SH.

19 Lee, p. 43.

20 Yeats, Collected Poems, p. 181.

21 CW, p. 71, n.1.

22 Yeats, Mythologies , pp. 311-312.

CHAPTER TWO

APPARENTLY TRUE

> utterly impossible as are all these events
> they are probably as like those which
> may have taken place as any others which
> never took person at all are ever likely
> to be
>
> Finnegans Wake

Joseph Campbell concludes the statement of thoughts "On Completion of The Masks of God," his mammoth study of comparative mythologies with the above quotation from James Joyce. It recalls the comment made by the Irish scribe in the tenth century Book of Leinster version of Tain Bo Cuailgne, "some of these things are on the feats of devils some poetic figments, some apparently true, some not, some for the delectation of fools." After twelve years of study Campbell found confirmation of his original belief in "the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but its spiritual history." He found the same motifs repeated in various cultures

> in the manner of a single symphony, with its themes announced, developed, amplified, and turned about, distorted, reasserted, and, today, in a grand manner fortissimo of all sections, sounding some kind of mighty climax, out of which the next great movement will emerge.[1]

Anyone concerned with charting the motifs through which the "uncreated conscience" of the race is expressed must first acknowledge the mystery at the heart of the endeavor. Recent studies of myths allow for that mystery by taking a broader view of the stories and rites called myths. One aid in such a study is the replacement of the quest for "the true version or the earlier version" which Claude Levi-Strauss sees as "one of the main obstacles to the progress of mythological studies," with a definition of myth "as consisting of all its versions." When Levi-Strauss includes Freud's use of the Oedipus story along with that of Sophocles as two acceptable variants of the same myth, he clears the way for dialogue rather than contention. For there need be no argument about the existence of an original myth upon which all others are mere embroideries. "There are no true versions of which all others are but copies or distortions. Every version belongs to the myth."[2] Levi-Strauss would enlist mathematicians to express in symbols the multidimensional relations and the "bundles" of meanings that emanate from every myth.

William Irwin Thompson extends this view by accepting not only variants of the myth, but the seemingly contradictory readings of myth by various scholars.

> Every new school of thought teaches us something and adds a new tool to the scholar's kit, but in the process every new school of thought overgeneralizes its contribution and ends up by trying to

> shape all information with its peculiar monkey wrench. Whether we are dealing with Marxists, Freudians, Jungian or Structuralists, we are dealing with scholars who end up by reducing everything to their own schemes. The structuralists throw out the semantic and poetic dimensions of Genesis and reduce the meaning to the structure. Since anthropologists spend decades studying kinship structures . . . it is not surprising that Edmund Leach would look at Genesis and see nothing but a mystification of an incest taboo, where Marx would see nothing but alienation and division of labor after the fall, and Jung would see an archetype of the process of individuation and the dawn of consciousness.
>
> Luckily the problem does not reduce to a matter of either/or, for they are all correct. A myth can reflect light from many facets . . . all the modern schools are the equivalents of variations of a myth, and all must be taken into account.[3]

Denis Donoghue's survey of current literary theories, Ferocious Alphabet, makes a similar case for breadth of mind. He points out that what we admire in literature, "a tense relation," "a principled opposition between the constituents of the mind," is suppressed in criticism by those who take the hedgehog approach and impose "one big idea"--an ideology designed to eliminate opposing views. He points out the importance of the play of opposites and gives as examples self and soul in Yeats, time transcended and time redeemed within its own dimensions in Eliot, Stevens' "quarrel between earth and sky."[4]

An appreciation for "the play of opposites" is necessary in approaching Irish studies because the scholars who studied the myths revealed in the literature of Ireland often disagree and each discipline looks at the material through its own lens. Thomas F. O'Rahilly writes in his introduction, to his "Dall Cach i gceerd or-oile, which freely interpreted means that one generally makes a fool of oneself when one intrudes into a subject which is not one's own."[5] This statement explained why he

> refrained from attempting to reconcile the results I have reached with any of the conflicting theories put forward from time by archaeologists. . . . Whatever merits this book may be found to possess, one of them, I venture to think, will be the fact that the conclusions I have arrived at are in no way dependent on archaeological speculations.[6]

When Gearoid Mac Niocaill discusses O'Rahilly's book in his 1972 Ireland Before the Vikings, Volume I of the excellent Gill History of Ireland, he awards it

> pride of place . . . less for his positive contributions (many of which seem to me wrongheaded) than for the admirably destructive criticism against other scholars' views on an enormous range of aspects of the period . . . it has been fertile in so far as it has provoked dissent.[7]

Perhaps if Levi-Strauss, Thompson, and Donoghue's insights apply, then that "destructive criticism" is not such a necessity. However, O'Rahilly reveals still another dimension when he writes,

> Of those scholars whose names I have had occasion to mention most frequently in the following pages, few were alive when the printing of this book was begun. Of this small band, three have to the loss of Irish studies, passed away when the book was on the eve of publication, namely John Fraser, Eoin MacNeill and A.G. von Homel. The fact that I have frequently found myself unable to accept their views only accentuates my desire to pay a sincere tribute to their memory and their work.[8]

O'Rahilly's expression of loss suggests the intimacy of the group engaged in Irish studies and may account for some of the intensity in a struggle not to have just a correct theory but to have the only correct theory. The world of Irish and Celtic studies is like a large family where the pioneering work of the first generation is close to that of the second generation, causing a sibling rivalry compounded by the way political implications were read into even purest scholarly assertions. A look at the history of Celtic studies helps place in perspective not only the work of Irish scholarship but the literary uses to which this scholarship would be put.

Before 1853 when Johann Casper Zeuss published his Grammatica Celtica, Irish was thought to be unrelated to the other Indo-European languages and regarded as the badge of the beaten race, the property of the vanquished. As Matthew Arnold pointed out in The Study of Celtic Literature, in 1867:

> One constantly finds even very accomplished people who fancy the remains of Welsh and Irish literature are as inconsiderable by their volume as, in their opinion, they are by intrinsic merit; that these remains consist of a few prose stories, in great part borrowed from the literature of nations more civilized than the Welsh or Irish nations, and of some unintelligible poetry.[9]

But among the English "Saxons" this ignorance was not passive but active. Arnold remembers that

> my father in particular was never weary of contrasting them (Teuton and Celt). He insisted much oftener on the separation between us (and them than on the separation between us and any other race in the world); in the same way Lord Lyndenhurst, in words long famous, called the Irish, "alien in speech, in religion and in blood." This naturally created a profound sense of estrangement which political and religious differences already made between us and the Irish. It seemed to make this estrangement immense, incurable, fatal. It begot a strange reluctance . . . to further--nay allow--even among the quiet peaceful people like the Welsh, the publications of their ancient literature.[10]

This reluctance surfaces in the story of the British Ordnance Survey office in Ireland. In 1830, an English officer, Lacom, undertakes a topographical survey of Ireland to provide the English government with accurate maps. To do this, he must send surveyors into the field who can speak Irish, the language of most of the country people at this time. He hired two of the greatest of Irish scholars, John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry. I have read O'Donovan's Ordnance Survey report on Donegal and understand why Frank

O'Connor characterized the Ordnance Survey office as "the headquarters of a conspiracy to give the people a real education."[11] As will be seen when we look closely at the literature itself, much of Irish history and myth is memorialized through place names. Thomas Kinsella calls the concentration on the origin of the name of some physical feature "a continuing preoccupation of early and medieval Irish literature, which contains a whole class of topographical works."[12] He points out that in the chief epic of Irish literature, Tain Bo Cuailgne, certain incidents "seem to have been invented merely to account for a place name." For example, in the climax of the Tain,

> the final battle (toward which we might assume the action is leading) is treated very casually while attention is directed in detail to the wanderings of the mortally wounded Donn Cuailgne [the bull who was the object of the cattle raid] around Ireland, naming the places as he goes.[13]

This preoccupation places in a certain context Joyce's insistence on using the actual names of pubs and shops in Dublin even at the cost of publishing delays.

So, when a member of the Ordnance Survey office asked a resident of a remote village in the west of Ireland the name of a mountain or town, he got not just a name but a history.

When reading the letters O'Donovan wrote back to the office from Donegal, it is hard to decide who is more excited by the flow of information, the questioner or his sources. Over and over again, O'Donovan marvels at the

accuracy of the oral memories of the people--one man recited his genealogy back fourteen generations. In the Donegal letters there are references not only to the relatively recent times of the O'Neills and O'Donnells (1600's), but also stories of Niall of the Nine Hostages, Gulban, and St. Columcille--all connected to this spring or that mountain. It must have seemed to the people that at last some respect for their native traditions was being shown after centuries of deliberate efforts to eradicate them. The memory of Cromwell's soldiers cleaning their boots on the ancient illuminated manuscripts of Ireland stayed vivid in the memory of the Irish. But then as the letters continue, the withdrawal of support from the project becomes obvious. O'Donovan writes again and again asking for the few pounds of his salary, imploring at least something for expenses since he was at present taking sustenance from people who themselves had barely enough to survive. In desperation he asks at least that a coat be sent him as freezing winter settles into the mountains. He receives an answering coldness.

The British authorities, horrified at the deep seams of nationalistic feeling thus revealed and at "such details as the names of the original owners of confiscated properties" that a topographical survey involves, "clamped down on the whole transaction."[14] Frank O'Connor calls "astonishing" what "those associated with it achieved," even though _to_

this day Ordnance Survey letters have not been published.[15] The same "Ordnance Survey gang" was also used and then abused in another official project that Frederick Engels, who shared with Karl Marx and Jenny Marx an intense interest in Ireland and wrote extensively on Irish history and politics, sees as a prime example of English "jobbery," the use of "public office to one's own advantage or that of relatives and friends. . . . The English Colony in Ireland is the main Centre of jobbery."[16]

In 1852, the English government appointed a commission to publish the Senchus Mor--the ancient laws of Ireland. Engels describes the commission as consisting of

> three lords (who are never far away when there is state money to be spent), three lawyers of the highest rank, three Protestant Clergymen and Dr. Petrie and an official who is the Chief surveyor of Ireland (Lacom). Of these gentlemen only Dr. Petrie and two clergymen Dr. Graves (now Protestant bishop of Limerick) and Dr. Todd could understand anything at all about the tasks of the commission of these three. Petrie and Todd have since died.[17]

He goes on to say that though they employed the "best people," O'Donovan and O'Curry, "who copied and made a rough translation of a large number of manuscripts, both died before anything was ready for publication."[18] After 18 years, only two volumes appeared since after the death of Petrie, the other gentlemen of the commission

> confined their activities to drawing their salaries conscientiously for 18

> years. . . . With the money that the wholly unscrupulous commission wasted, the entire unpublished historical literature could have been published in Germany and better.[19]

Engels concludes that the original compilers of the Senchus Mor, the collection of ancient legal decisions from which the only two volumes were published, who according to tradition included St. Patrick and three lawyers--Dubtach, Fergus and Rossa--"no doubt did their work more cheaply than the present, who only had to publish it."[20]

Such efforts to publish the early Irish literature suffered not only from inefficiency and "jobbery," but also from the attitudes of the English establishment from which members of commission were set up to study the early sources were drawn. There was great concern about some members of the Gaelic League founded in 1893 that the directness of the early Irish and their acceptance of the physical aspects of life and love would reinforce the prejudices of the English scholars. When Douglas Hyde published his Love Songs of the Connacht in 1893, Father Peter Leary complained that "these love songs are doing great harm to Irish"[21] because as David Greene explains, he feared that their improprieties "might turn respectable people against the idea of learning a language which the British establishment was already attempting to dismiss as a worthless peasant patois."[22] Greene goes on to point out that "only a few years later, Mahaffy, Trinity College's best known Classical scholar, was to tell a

government commission that where Irish literature was not religious, it was silly and that where it was not silly, it was indecent."[23] This hardly created a climate for the study of Irish literature, especially when Mahaffy, who as Greene points out, "notoriously knew no Irish," was

> solemnly supported by Atkinson, Trinity's expert on the subject, who went even further in his denigration of the older literature . . . had in fact stated that "all folklore is abominable" and said plaintively that he had urged Irish speakers to "Translate Robinson Crusoe or something of that kind and let the people have something they can read."[24]

Atkinson was carrying on the English tradition of undermining native Irish tradition. To return to The Study of Celtic Literature, even as Arnold supports further research, he cautions Irish scholars against a show of too much enthusiasm about their subject lest they become "Celt lovers" to thus fall victim to the "Celt haters" who are "clearheaded skeptics."[25] As Engels points out, this reflects the tactics of the "supercunning world of English scholarship who seek any pretext for throwing everything Irish aside as arrant nonsense."[26] When even Arnold, who wishes to be sympathetic, goes on and on with his facile delineation of the "Celtic nature," it seems that the nineteenth century world of English scholarship is the real purveyor of "arrant nonsense," and that the work of scholars like O'Curry and O'Donovan have more real substance. Yet Arnold accurately reflects the climate surrounding Irish scholarship for two

generations. English publishers chose as writer for a definitive History of Ireland, Thomas Moore, who, according to Arnold, "without knowing anything about them, spoke slightingly of the value to the history of Ireland of the materials afforded by such manuscripts as O'Curry studied."[27] When Dr. Petrie took Moore to the Ordnance Survey, he saw for the first time the ancient books of Ireland which he so blithely dismissed. O'Curry says that he and Dr. Petrie explained to Moore something of

> the history and character of the books then present as well as of ancient Goedhelic documents in general. . . . [Moore] turned to Dr. Petrie and said, Petrie, these huge tomes could not have been written by fools or for any foolish purpose. I never knew anything about them before and I had no right to have undertaken the History of Ireland."[28]

Arnold concludes the story by saying that Moore "lost all heart for going on with his History of Ireland and it was only the importunity of the publishers which induced him to bring out the remaining volume."[29] But Moore did publish and earned money from Ireland's history while a true scholar like O'Donovan was reduced to begging that his meagre salary be paid so he could buy a winter coat and reimburse the poor of Donegal who, by feeding him, actually supported Irish scholarship to a greater extent than any of the various commissions.

Given this history of Irish scholarship, how could a defensive climate not develop? The present generation seems

to have moved beyond the need to be right, to correct any colleague who might offer "them" a chance for an easy criticism, but the generations of struggle against the supercunning world of English scholarship left its mark.

So did Arnold's stereotype of the "Celt" which grew from what Frank O'Connor calls his "absolute acceptance of a contemporary racialism not so very different from that of his father."[30] So, in an essay which, as O'Connor goes on to say, "added greatly to the effect of German scholarship in making Ireland and things Irish dignified in the eyes of our own people," Arnold says much that to a contemporary reader seems based on pure prejudice.[31] Arnold's explanation and analysis of Celtic art all flow from his picture of "The Celt." Arnold says that the Celt possesses "a sentimental temperament" and in that lies "the secret of its danger and habitual want of success."[32] For Arnold "balance, measure, and patience" are "the eternal conditions . . . of high success."[33] But these

> are just what the Celt has never had. Even in the world of spiritual creation, he has never, in spite of his admirable gifts of quick perception and warm emotion, succeeded perfectly because he never has had steadiness, patience and sanity enough to comply with the conditions under which alone can expressions be perfectly given to the finest perceptions and emotions.[34]

Now this judgment comes after Arnold answers the accusations against him in the London *Times*, which characterized him as

a "sentimentalist who talks nonsense about the children of Taliesen and Ossion and whose dainty tastes require something more flimsy than the strong sense and sturdy morality of his fellow Englishman."[35] Arnold does not like being accused of having "dainty tastes" but while objecting to the tone the _Times_ takes, he does not disagree with the substance of its criticism of the Celts.

> Let the Celtic members of this empire consider that they too have to transform themselves: and though the summons to transform themselves be often conveyed harshly and brutally and with the cry to root up their wheat as well as their tares, yet that is no reason why the summons should not be followed as far as their tares are concerned.[36]

For Arnold the "tares" seem to be the Celt's emotionalism "which does not allow him to buckle down to the prolonged dealings of spirit with matter necessary for great art. . . . The Celt has produced no great poetical works," says Arnold when the Ordnance Survey "gang" desperately struggles to rescue the most ancient vernacular literature in Europe from its forced obscurity.[37] Arnold, by repeating the story about Moore's first contact with the old manuscripts, shows that he knew of the existence of this literature, was aware of the German studies, but this does not cause him to in any way doubt or revise his opinions. His picture of the "fey Celt" was influential even in Ireland herself. "We have to realize," says O'Connor, "that it [Arnold's essay] underlies a great deal of the early work of Yeats and his followers.

A poem like the 'Wanderings of Oisin' would be almost unintelligible without it."[38]

Yeats, put off by the materialism and bourgeois values of his mother's relatives, was attracted to the picture of the Celtic "nature" Arnold presented. "No doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation have something feminine in them and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncracy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret."[39] Now Arnold's creation of the "feminine" is a product of the sexism he shared with his contemporaries as is his creation of the "Celt" of the racism which gave birth to stereotypes. Both seem transparent today, but the harm to Celtic scholarship and Irish studies is real and concrete. Not only were scholars prevented by the politics and cultural oppression from bringing the rich history of Ireland and her literature forward but after doing so they had to fight against a stereotypic view of the ancient Celt presented by a great prose writer of the nineteenth century and celebrated by the premier poet of the twentieth. Ancient literature reveals a complex people, intellectual, disciplined, politically astute, who would not understand the false oppositions between mind and spirit, man and woman, the objective and the subjective, between reason and faith, that Arnold and Yeats assume. Both men stand at the end of a long tradition of dualistic thinking where these divisions seemed natural and

immutable. But this is changing now. Hans Kung, in his monumental "Does God Exist?", traces philosophical and scientific thinking from Descartes through the present and argues that

> Despite all the complexity of reality, we may not explain the various strata and planes of realities. Despite the multiple dimensionality of reality we may not overlook the unity in the various dimensions. In all the planes and strata, dimensionic aspects and differentiations, it is a question of the one reality which . . . can be split up only at the expense of a full human existence in this world.
>
> Against Descartes' dualism between subject and object, thinking and being, mind and matter, body and soul as also between reason and faith, philosophy and theology . . . against this dualism the unity and truth of reality must once more be brought up for discussion.[40]

With the discovery of D.N.A. and subatomic particles "the unity and truth of reality" is again becoming clear after what Ashley Montagu describes as the shift in meaning during the nineteenth century, from the eighteenth century conception of nature as a harmony and design to nature as struggle, science seems to be returning to a sense of what Einstein called "the infinite comprehensibility of the universe"--which in itself is the greatest of mysteries. But this comprehensibility comes not from an imposed predetermined outer structure but from the full play of inner forces within. Einstein could not accept the "uncertainty

principle" of Heisenberg or the particle/wave duality of the light quanta because as Kung points out he

> remained in fact a captive of Spinoza's conception of God and nature. As he [Einstein] wrote in 1932, "Spinoza was the first to apply with true consistency to human thought, feeling and action, the idea of the deterministic constant of all that occurs."[41]

But, as Kung goes on to show, the very concepts that threatened most obviously the idea of a harmonious world order actually strengthened the ground for belief in the more profound unity of reality. As Max Born saw, in the uncertainty principle and particle/wave duality in light quanta was

> something more profound, playing a role not only in physics but in the whole field of natural science and indeed far beyond it in man's interpretation of reality as a whole: the inability of concepts to discern the whole, the necessity of the complementation of two differing aspects, what Niels Bohr called "complementarity."[42]

The compulsion to divide and classify that permeates Arnold's essay may explain the need many of the greatest names in Irish studies felt to present their knowledge in the most "scientific" (in the old sense of verifiable, codified knowledge) formulations. However, a new paradigm has come to the world of science as the indefinable makes itself felt. The Nobel prize of 1981 was awarded for a study that emphasized the unity in diversity of the human brain. This, too, is an example of complementarity. However, the new respect for and applications of the "right

brain" qualities of intuition and supra-rational perception seems a part of this movement from the dualism of thought into a radical unity of opposites reflecting a God described in a phrase of the fifteenth century Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa as the "complexio oppositarium"[43] not the reduction or even the resolution of opposites but "transcendently sustaining and immanently fulfilling everything."[44]

Alice Stopford Greene's "The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing" is an example of this integrated thinking.[45] In 1908 she attempted to present the political implication of the developing scholarship, i.e., that a great Celtic civilization had been destroyed by the English. This caused much consternation among scholars who perhaps remembered the fate of the "Ordnance Survey gang" when their research spilled over from the academic into the practical. Her work was dismissed as popular history--mere generalities. And yet as Dr. Margaret McCurtin pointed out to me, her work was grounded in scholarship and both her work and her life deserve closer study now.

There was one scholar who appreciated her efforts--Osborn Bergin. He was described by Myles Dillon, one of his students, as a "shy, austere puritan, trained with a passion for accuracy."[46] After Dillon moved to Germany and Paris to study with the "greats" of Celtic studies--none of whom were Irish--he wrote, "In the alarm and distress of contact with these great men I was helped by remembering one man at home

who belonged to their company mentally and morally and in whose presence some of them might even tremble."[47] In 1922 Bergin wrote Greene:

> I was never much good at generalizations and in Irish studies I can see only the trees near me, not the wood. . . . This does not mean one should not attempt a sketch of the present day in light of present knowledge (of the past). But also my studies are tending toward the elucidation of simple points of detail and technicalities such as whether the break in a line of 12 syllables comes after the 4th or after the 8th--a very roundabout way of getting to the spirit of the Irish nation.[48]

So I would like to, in the discussions following, move from the study of individual trees into the wood. The historical climate that made earlier scholars reluctant to chance generalizations has changed and the blunders sexism imposed on thought are lifting. In the following discussion of the women of the Tain, of early Christian Ireland and the middle Irish period, I will use the insights of many scholars and look for the ways the literature illuminates the spirit of the Irish people--a spirit that perseveres and finds expression in the works of James Joyce. I do this positing the underlying "unity of reality" in the sense that Hans Kung uses the term. In 1979 Dr. McCurtin mentioned to me that the two main flaws she found in the 1977 New Oxford History of Ireland, were the neglect first of women and second of the Irish American connection.[49] Only St. Brigid and three abbesses of Kildare are mentioned. Now, as a

woman and an Irish American I regret this exclusion and yet see it as reflective of an entire history that has influenced Irish studies along with every aspect of Irish life. I would imagine that Arnold's caricature of the "feminine Celt," in addition to the sexist orientation of English society, particularly that segment Engels calls "the super-cunning world of English scholarship" made it twice as difficult for scholars to even see the implications of their work in regard to women's place. D. A. Binchy does not see any evidence of matrilineal or matriarchal tradition in Ireland, yet it is difficult not to consider such a possibility when reading his studies of ancient Irish laws where a more emancipated attitude toward women is reflected than that in the Irish Constitution of 1937. But the specifics are to come. I wanted in this section merely to present aspects of the history of scholarship that might explain to some extent why the incredible heroines and the very positive attitudes toward woman and her sovereignty that will emerge from close readings of this literature are not better known in an era when feminists hunger for figures with the qualities of these women. I believe that because of the movement of current thought it is possible to look at the image of woman in a clearer way and to see the persistence of the tradition of the sovereign women maintained against all odds as a sign of a deeper reality of Ireland. The unique circumstances of Ireland's history, for example, her isolation, helped

to preserve the most ancient traditions not only of the Celtic invaders but of the people before them. So this preservation reflected older ideas that date back to a period that archaeology is just now revealing. These pre-Christian ideas include the once worldwide notion of the Great Goddess. These were maintained in the native Church in a way impossible if it had been more directly controlled by Rome.

Scholars have tried to explain--and in some cases explain away--the heroines of Irish literature since the earliest studies. Zimmer concluded in his 1911 article Der kulterhistorische Hintergrund in der alterischen Heldensage,[50] that the behavior of characters in the Iron Age epic Tain Bo Cuailgne reflects the moral looseness of the Irish in pre-Christian times. Zimmer, along with O'Curry and Windisch, whose monumental work provided a foundation to all further scholarship, believed the Tain was history. Cecile O'Rahilly in her introduction to her 1967 translation of the Tain from the Book of Leinster writes that because of the work particularly of Thurneysen the older hypotheses were shown to be untrue and "nowadays it is generally acknowledged that the characters and the events of early Irish sagas are purely imaginary and have no connection with history proper."[51] However, she points out that

> the sagas are important in that they contain genuine traditional material and the picture they give of early Irish life and civilisation tallies in many points with the accounts of those of Gauls and Britons before the Roman invasion.[52]

Classical authors like Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Caesar present a picture of the tribes in Gaul that corresond with the heroic society of the Tain. These authors derive their material from the last work of the historian Posidonius,[53] and it was H. D'Arbois de Jubainoille's use of these sources as elucidated by Windisch that convinced the early scholars of the historical basis of the Tain. Diodorus Siculus describes the Gauls in words that could as easily apply to the world of the Ulster tales.

> They have also lyric poets whom they call Bards. They sing to the accompaniments of instruments resembling lyres sometimes a eulogy and sometimes a satire. They have also certain philosophers and theologians who are treated with special honor whom they call Druids. They further make use of seers, thinking them worthy of high praise.[54]

In addition, the Classical writers refer to battle customs among the Gauls such as beheading enemies, the use of war chariots, and fighting in the nude that have exact analogs in the Irish epic. T. F. O'Rahilly, however, asserts that

> the Uladian tales are wholly mythical in origin and they have not the faintest connection with anything that could be called history apart from the fact that the traditions of warfare between the

> Ulaid and the Connachta have been adventitiously introduced into a few. . . . Cuchulainn . . . can be shown to be in origin Lugh. . . . The other leading characters, such as Cu Rai, Fergus, Brecciu, and Medb are likewise euhemerized divinities.[55]

This can be read as an extreme reaction to the early tendency to overstress the historical basis for the tales. Kenneth H. Jackson provides a corrective in his The Oldest Irish Tradition when he says that "The stories provide us with a picture--very dim and fragmentary, no doubt, but still a picture of Ireland in the Early Iron Age"[56] and goes on to argue that the conservatism of Irish tradition evident in the incorporation of motifs from the La Tene period (5th century B.C.) into early Christian art holds true in the literature and the Ulaidian tales which were preserved through oral tradition until they were written down by the early 900s. However, Jackson places the formulation of the stories at about the fourth century A.D. rather than the first century, which is the traditional dating.

Thurneysen saw the eleventh manuscript which is the earliest extant written version of the Ulster cycle as a conflation of the two ninth century manuscripts which were in turn derived by oral tradition from an original written in the seventh century. This first written version recorded an archaic oral version which was among the recitations in the repertoire of the fili--the learned class who preserved the history.

However, given all these options, perhaps it is best to see each one as a stimulus to thought and an evidence of complementarity. Seamus Heaney writes that there is a particular kind of poetry that has a mission unto itself. Through poetry as divination the poet becomes part of the "restoration of the culture to itself." He goes on to say, "to forge a poem is one thing, to forge that uncreated conscience of the race, as Stephen Dedalus put it, is quite another and places daunting pressures and responsibilities on anyone who would risk the name of poet.[57]

Those who transmitted the Tain orally through the long centuries of Ireland's prehistory were representatives of a religion supposedly at odds with that of the monastic scribes who wrote the epic down. And yet both were practicing "poetry as divination" and were already "restoring a culture to itself." From such exchanges unity in diversity comes.

NOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

AN APPROACH TO THE WOMEN OF THE TAIN

> They all write about some woman in their poetry
>
> *Ulysses*

Obstacles

Medb of Connacht emerges from the *Tain Bo Cuailnge* as chief of the series of women who represent, for Thomas Kinsella,

> the greatest achievement of the *Tain* and the Ulster cycle . . . on whose strong and diverse personalities the action continually turns: Medb, Derdriu, Macha Nes, Aife. It may be as goddess figures, ultimately, that these women have their power; it is certainly they, under all the violence, who remain most real in the memory.[1]

Kinsella expresses an appreciation for the role of women in the *Tain* in the introduction to his 1969 translation, absent from earlier studies. The traditional focus is on Cuchulainn as when Lady Gregory entitled her retelling of the Ulster cycle *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. Yet it was his discovery of an earlier superior version of the Derdriu story which drew Kinsella to the *Tain* project 15 years

before and his subsequent work on the epic confirmed his interest in its heroines. Inspired by the early Derdriu he resolved to study the entire epic. The source W. B. Yeats drew on for the poems and plays in which Cuchulainn, Medb, Derdriu, and Conchobar appear, were paraphrases, not translations. That this paraphrase by Lady Gregory gave "the best idea of the Ulster stories" emphasized to Kinsella the need for a new treatment. Lady Gregory's book "seemed lacking in some important ways refining away the coarse elements and rationalizing the monstrous and gigantesque."[2] In addition, the Tain Bo Cuailnge, which is the oldest vernacular epic in Western literature and the core of the Ulster tales, seemed to him inadequately represented.[3] With the help of the "new generation" of Celtic scholars such as Proinsias MacCana, David Greene, James Carney, Kinsella set out to present a readable version of the Tain--not romanticized, bowdlerized, versified, dramatized, or made into a fairy tale but a translation that could recover some sense the power of this tale and why it endured first in oral form and then in various manuscripts for over 2000 years. Certainly much of that power does come from the women of the Tain.

To get closer to the essential power Kinsella chose to use for the main body of his translation the older, though more fragmented, version of the Tain contained in the Lebor na hUidre [Book of the Dun Cow] because he felt it avoided

In the eighteenth century Aisling poems the woman/Ireland became a victim waiting for a redeemer. But she is there. As MacCana sees "this pagan belief" in Staith Eren

> the sovranty of Ireland as the divine mother Erin, the solar goddess who appears under various names as "vital and formative" on that literature in the early years of its development" and "that it persisted through the ages down to the present day as a well known feature of Irish literary composition" and even "exercised influence on recorded history as late as the eleventh century.[67]

Now is the time to consider this woman in herself to see what she required for sovereignty. Medb asked a man free from jealousy, fear or meanness, and indeed, to be a sovereign a woman must be free to be sexual with a partner who is equal to her. Molly Bloom knew that and chose Bloom because "I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get around him."[68] She must be free intellectually and spiritually like Saint Brigid and her pagan double Brigid, patroness of poetry and learning. She needs political freedom. In this the Irish goddesses of war and the historical women who fought for freedom express this dimension of sovereignty.

The sovereign woman combines the sexual, the spiritual, and the political freedoms. When these freedoms are denied neither the women nor the country can be called sovereign. Ultimately, sovereignty is the freedom to choose. In the Wife of Bath's Tale and in the Ballad of Sir Gawain and Lady

Cuailnge in its entirety. But they all said they knew only parts of it."[6]

Now Senchan Tarpeist belonged to the seventh century A.D when Irish was just beginning to become a written language thanks to the influence of Christianity and the Latin alphabet that came with it. There is a sense that the poets are gathering to compile a version of the Tain to commit to writing and this would be about the time when the older professional class of fili, the learned man of Ireland who preserved the traditions of the Irish--the laws, genealogies, narratives, heroic and mythological tales, place name lore--and transmitted it orally in rhythmical prose, made their peace with the Church and the matter of Ireland began to be written down in the scriptorium of the monastaries.

The prestige of the poets of Ireland was immense and the highest ranking among the ollam held "honor prices"--the penalty that had to be paid for various offenses ranging from insult to death--equal to that of minor kings and bishops. Initially there had been tension between the filid and the Christian clerics, but the seventh was St. Columcille's century and he, as both prince of the old order and exemplar of the new, illustrates in his own person the accommodations made during the two centuries of interaction. D. A. Binchy points out that Adoman in his Life of Columcille presents the saint as a student of a famous file and a later legend has Columcille saving the poets and Ireland. "I think that

his person he shows the unification of the two streams."[7] Senchan seems to have given a version of the Tain to a "certain sage" in exchange for the book then much prized The Etymologiae of St. Isadore of Seville. Probably Senchan thought he was safe in giving the Tain away since any trained poet could recite it, but as each generation in Ireland discovered, even the most deeply ingrained of traditions can be lost. Certainly Maol Mhuire must have felt this as David Greene comments

> It is hard not to reflect that the learned men had paid a fairly heavy price for the acquisition of the art of writing; if learning had been handed down by oral transmission from father to son, instead of being committed to impermanent vellum, Maol Mhuire, with such an ancestry behind him would have been infinitely better informed than he was on the traditions of previous generations.[8]

Mhuire's ancestry is known through the research of Zimmer who traced his lineage through a family of churchmen and scholars to "Torbhach scribe lector and abbot of Armagh itself who died in 807."[9] It is interesting to note Mhuire's connection with Armagh which had been set up by Emain Macha, the ancient capital of Ulster and though by the historic period the Ui Neill control most of what is Ulster in the Tain including Emain Macha, perhaps Mhuire's connection with that part of the country influenced him, for, as we shall see, a sense of place figures greatly in the Tain.

But Mhole does make the once alien writing work for him in reclaiming the lost tradition; just a millenium later Kinsella and Joyce and Heaney will bend the alien language to their needs. In the Tain, too, the task of recapitulation goes to the younger generation and Senchon's son and the Emine grandson of Nince set off eastward for Brittany to find the sage who has the tale. But unlike Stephen Dedalus they only have to go as far as Connacht, to the grave of Fergus mac Raieh, once king of Ulster but Medb's ally in the Tain. Here, Muirgen chants "a poem to the gravestone as though it were Fergus himself."[10] This might suggest a ritual of the pagan religion. There is diffuse and often contradictory evidence in Celtic literature and art about the religion of the Celts. Though little is known about the pre-Christian cults, a later monk, wishing to connect Cormac MacAurt the legendary king with Christianity wrote that he was said to be one of the three who even before the coming of St. Patrick believed in one God and proclaimed "that he would not worship stones or trees, but that he would worship the one who had made them."[11] As H. Wagner points out, this quotation "suggests that the worship of the side [the pre-Christian Irish gods] was some kind of Pantheism, a religion which considered nature as being inhabited by divine beings."[12]

Already in the Tain sense of presences in the land itself is felt and that attention to places and the

connections with divine beings underlies the whole of the Tain--indeed, a feature of all of Irish literature. As we encounter the great women of the Tain it is well to keep in mind that the land itself was connected with the feminine--the great goddess--and to be on the alert for the significance of where a feat takes place--especially if it is in a river or stream or on a mountain or hill--the special places of the goddess. "Celtic Pantheism is linked with a general belief in the Great Earth Goddess, the Magna Mater, as she is known by historians of religion. Her presence was felt everywhere, in particular, however, in waters and heights."[13] As T. F. O'Rahilly points out, "In literature and speech river names are, almost without exception, feminine."[14] The Shannon, like the Seine, comes from Sena, the "ancient [goddess] or the old one, the Boyne comes from "Boand" "goddess"; and there are rivers named Ebilu, Suan, Brigit, and Ethne."[15] But rivers are not just named for the goddess. They are her living manifestations. The Boyne, in old Irish "Boand," is the goddess Boann the "Cow white goddess." These river goddesses represent the earth goddess. Eriu, the name of a river in Scotland, "was not only the common name of Ireland, it was also the designation of a goddess, the Earth mother who was identified with the land of Ireland."[16]

Eriu, along with Banba and Fitla, greets the invading Sons of Mil who the Celts saw as their ancestors and asks

that they call the island after her. Each of the other two asks the same thing. But it is Eriu who as Erie gives her name to modern Ireland. "The belief that Eriu (Erie) was a goddess has left an abiding impress on Irish literature and thought."[17] In order to assume the kingship the king mated with the earth goddess in a ritual marriage feast known as "banais rigi." "In early Irish belief each king of Tara or Ireland was espoused to the goddess Eriu. Local kings were similarly espoused each to a local goddess."[18] Wagner, in his 1980 article, points out the literal meaning of Bon-fheis Rigis is "woman sleeping of the king" and there the

> queen as the representative of the Earth goddess, proffers a cup of beer to the future king. The ultimate meaning of the beer-ritual can be deduced from a Sumerian text, in which a high priestess and cupbearer proclaims to a historical king that her vulva is as sweet as her liquor.[19]

The goddess embodies the sovereignty of the country and only through her can the king reign. Fertility comes through her and the drink that she offers is her own fructifying nature. So not only is the goddess present in the land in its natural features but she is essential to the political life.

In a series of three articles Proinsias MacCana devotes to the theme of king and goddess in literature, he says that his aim "was to show that it remained as a living or at least formative conception, say from the seventh to the tenth century."[20] However, after doing that he says that he

now plans to prepare a survey of the theme throughout the whole of Irish literature and history.

> The importance of the theme has long been acknowledged but it is only gradually that we are coming to a full realization of its persistance and its vigour. . . . Irish poets down through the ages persisted in identifying the rightful king as the lawful husband of the territorial goddess, until finally in the 18th century, the Stuarts were regarded as the rightful spouses of Erie instead of those foreigners who held her in thrall.[21]

Among the poets listed by T. F. O'Rahilly as those who present the king as the spouse of Ireland (Erie) are Gofraiah Heodhusa; Aagan O'Raihili; Sean na Rallheneach.[22] When Ireland was overrun by foreigners the poets sometimes blamed the goddess, calling her a faithless woman or a mother who ignores or disowns her own to nourish the usurpers. Often their insults are even harsher then Stephen Dedalus' "old sow who eats her farrow."[23] After the exile of the Stuarts, when anger turns to despair, the Gaelic 18th century poets picture her as "a beautiful but mournful woman . . . her lawful spouse is, alas! in exile and she can do no more than hope for his speedy return."[24] Though she still has supernatural aspects after appearing to the poet in a dream (thus "aisling" dream), she is no longer powerful. This is dark Rosaleen waiting to be saved, or the "brightest of the bright" weeping at her forced marriage to a churl, "The lovliest of the lovely/. . . left to languish/ Amid a ruffian horde till the Heroes cross the sea."[25] This

last lines come from a poem of O'Raihille that, as Daniel Corkery mentions, was copied over and over and treasured by the people forced to live in the "hidden Ireland." O'Raihille saw her in his poem, "The Wounds of the Land of Fodla" as "an unwilling handmaid to every withered band/ While every foreign churl shall have sucked thy breasts."[26]

The tradition continued through to the present in the revolutionary songs like "Four Green Fields," "'I had four green fields,' said the poor old woman, 'I had four green fields'"--and everyone, even Irish Americans separated from Ireland for generations, knows the woman is Ireland and the fields are the four provinces. As W. B. Yeats said in notes he made in Stockholm the day before he received the Nobel prize, "The Irish served only one abstraction and that they personified as a woman."[27] But the modern appearance of the goddess is still to come. To quote O'Rahilly's summary:

> The idea that Ireland is a goddess and is wedded to the king of the country is of hoary antiquity; yet it has preserved its vitality one might almost say to our own day. It has its roots in the time when men regarded the material Earth as a Mother, and when the ruler of the land was inaugurated with a ceremony which professed to espouse him to this divine mother with the intent that his reign might be prosperous and that the earth might produce her fruits in abundance.[28]

So integral is this theme to Irish literature that all those early tellers of the <u>Tain</u> would be most aware of it. Medb has her place in this tradition. O Maille, MacCana,

O'Rahilly, Binchy, Wagner, and Anne Ross all discuss Medb as Sovereignty.

But at this point in the Tain when Fergus is about to come in a swirl of mist to tell the story I would like to consider how the attitude of the narrator--Fergus, Senchan, Mhuire, Lady Gregory, and now Kinsella--toward this tradition might influence the telling of the Tain. Frank O'Connor in his A Short History of Irish Literature shares not only his knowledge but his passion for Irish literature as is evident in his discussion of the Tain when he seems personally offended by the copyists who distorted the original Tain. "It was once a great masterpiece; it is now a great mess."[29] He suggests that literary critics could help in bringing the mess together--which is the advantage of a poet like Kinsella translating the Tain. O'Connor sees the literary idea of point of view operating in the Tain to give it a "strong anti-feminist trend." His explanation:

> Between the earliest period of our history when women had no legal status and the later period when they had all the status their wealth could buy, there was an intermediate period--some time before the year 700--when they were entitled only to strict equality with their husbands. . . . the author seems to be implying that if women can have property equal to that of their husband they will not stop there but go on until an army is no more than "a drove of horses led by a fear."[30]

Now given the past discussion of the central position the great goddess as Earth Mother, River goddess, and

embodiment of sovereignty had in early Irish society, it is difficult for the Tain be seen as anti-feminist.

When Lady Gregory retold the story she left out the parts she felt would shock her tenants at Kilmartin, that is, the passages that shocked her, and most of these dealt with the body and sexuality. As Kinsella says:

> A strong element in the sagas is their directness in bodily matters: the easy references to seduction, copulation, urination, the picking of vermin, the suggestion of incest in "How Cuchulain Was Begotten." This coarseness was a source of some uneasiness to Lady Gregory ("I left out a good deal I thought you would not care about for one reason or another," she wrote to the people of Kilmartin) but it seems mild to the modern reader--an effect of the same directness with which the story treats killing and mutilation.[31]

Kinsella speaks here as a modern writer who saw what the inability to allow for the kind of directness and honesty in the works of contemporary writers did to the intellectual life of his country.

To read Frank O'Connor's recital of the 1942 debate in the Irish Senate over the banning of The Tailor and Antsy, folk tales and country stories collected by Eric Cross and Jim Buckley from the tailor of Guanna Barra, is to understand why Joyce could not return to Ireland. The debate was the culmination of the movement against free expression that had been building since the censorship bill was first introduced a year after the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in 1927.

Margaret MacCurtin says that post-Civil War Ireland like post-famine Ireland was a country in a state of shock, turning inward, afraid to think too deeply, grateful to turn to the Church where rigid laws and pious practices could give a sense of security as a way of assuaging the terrible internal wounds of a people who had suffered both genocide, revolution, and civil war in less than one hundred years. But whatever the causes, at the beginning of the Second World War, O'Connor says "the intellectual darkness of the country was almost palpable."[32] In the Tailor and Antsy debate Professor William Maginnis, the government spokesman, called the tailor "sex obsessed" and said that the book was still another instance of the "campaign going on in England to undermine Christianity. It is financed by American money. The society that is the main agent to put in paganism instead of the Christian creed."[33]

O'Connor summarizes his discussion of the low point of Irish intellectual life with a quote from Kinsella, who, as a representative of the new generation, saw the great stride forward of the earlier greats seemingly erased--

> The great shocked art, the gross great
> enmity
> That roamed her once, and swept indoors,
> embalmed
> Their lesson with themselves.[34]

and asks, "What have we to offer a young writer as a substitute for 'the great shocked art, the gross great enmity'?"[35] What O'Connor himself perhaps did not realize was what was

there was the old literature and young writers learned with the help of modern literature they could go beyond the fear of sex that paralyzed the society and expressed itself in laws that "protected" women into a position of subservience. Women had been active and powerful in the revolutionary period and not just through the spectacular personalities like Maude Gonne and Constance Markievicz but through organizations like Cummon na mBan which had 800 branches in 1921. Great numbers of women worked in capacities that included active service in intelligence work, scouting and nursing in the combat areas during the Anglo-English War. Margaret McCurtin after discussing the great contribution of women in this period in her essay, "Women, the Vote and Revolution," and commenting on the victories won--the right to vote, to hold office, to exercise their expertise in setting up and managing their own trade unions, to utilize to some extent the new technology that allowed more control over domestic and farm work--asked why, then, "were women content to remain subordinate in a society they had helped to create?"[36]

To some extent the same thing happened in the United States after World War II when Rosie the Riveter retired to the suburbs and the forces of the culture set about erasing her memory. It is as if when men see women exercise power, it frightens them into an overreaction that tries to force women back into stereotypic roles. Why do women allow it?

When the counter-reaction comes after a war, as it often seems to so often in history, is it that the men are there, nervous, perhaps, about the fact that the women survived without them? Probably even Ulysses would have preferred Penelope alone and desolate instead of capably holding off a houseful of suitors. Women of my generation came to age when the men were preoccupied with the Viet Nam War, whether they were fighting it or avoiding it. When the war was over, they looked around to find that women no longer conformed to the '50s model. It is often said that the women's movement grew from a core of activists in the civil rights and anti-war movements when women learned to organize politically and to use that muscle to obtain their own rights. However, as I write the counter-revolution continues and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is in jeopardy. In a sense the force of the reaction is a testimony to the power of action. Carl Jung speaks of a principle of complementarity which operates "in the psyche, in society, and the symbolism of myth."[37] Joseph Campbell quotes Jung in discussing the Greek returns "when the masters of excellence in the world of the outer deed return to their neglected wives."[38] "No matter how much we make conscious they will always be an indeterminate and indeterminable quantity of unconscious element which belong to the totality of the self."[39] When the outward conscious activities relax, the inward unconscious energies come to the fore--or the

warriors must face and make peace with that other side of themselves which they fear and which they somehow see embodied in women. Campbell says:

> I would suggest that we think of the short life full of deeds and fame, and warcraft dedicated to Zeus and Apollo as off to the right and on the left besides the old goddesses of the time and tide of Mother Right, the mystic isles of Circe, Calypso, and Nausicca, with Hermes in the role of the guide of souls to the otherworld and the knowledges beyond death.[40]

Probably now with the attention to the right and left side of the brain Campbell would switch the position of the short life and the long. The warriors return aware that in the scheme of things their war and deeds have not accomplished much. They wish to assure themselves of some continuity of life and so struggle to reestablish the conventional roles that slipped away when they were gone. After the Second World War the women who exercised the power and did their own war deeds felt the need for union and continuity and the need to give birth to the next generation, so they acquiesced--more or less. But the movement upwards is a spiral and somehow the gains of one generation are incorporated into the next in a slow upward movement. "All that rises must converge" promised Teilhard in a phrase Flannery O'Connor chose for the title of one of her most powerful works.

The frantic book banning that took place in Ireland seems an effort to place control over sexual expression firmly in the hands of the triple patriarchy of Church, State, and husband. This diffuses the power of women. O'Connor sees a similar struggle going on in the seventh century compilation of the Tain. Campbell sees a deeper battle at the heart of the epic, an example of how

> both the archaeology and the ancient literature of Ireland deomonstrate tht the patriarchal iron bearing Celts, who gained the mastery during the last three or four centuries B.C. overcame but did not extinguish an earlier Bronze age civilization of Mother Right. (p. 40)

He points out a resemblance here to the similar situation disclosed by the work of Jane Ellen Harrison in Greece who showed the Homeric myths are but reworkings of an older substratum of pre-Homeric myths belonging to the Bronze Age Cretan-Agean world whose people were overthrown by the iron bearing Dorian Greeks. However, Campbell sees a difference between Ireland and Greece. "In Ireland where the impact of the Aryan patriarchal warrior bands was reduced, the elder goddess cult survived and even combined in a wildly brilliant manner with the gods, heroes, and mad warrior deeds of her sons."[41] In later works he presents the Irish situation not as a strictly dualistic confrontation between patriarchal Celts and matriarchal Bronze Age inhabitants but allows for "goddess" influences on the Celts throughout the western drive that ultimately took them through Gaul into the

British Isles and Ireland.[42] Even in the far reaches of time the Aryan tribesmen, the distant ancestors of the Celts, "never ranked the anscestral tribe gods above the gods of nature or separated divinity from nature."[43] This enabled the Aryans "entering Greece, Anatolia, Persia and the Gangetic plain c. 1500-1250 B.C." with "the comparatively primitive mythologies of their patriarchal pantheons" to engage in "creative consort with the earlier mythologies of the Universal Goddess" and generated "in India the Vedantic, Puranic, Tantric and Buddhist doctrines and in Greece those of Homer and Hesiod, Greek tragedy and philosophy, the mysteries and Greek science."[44]

Myles Dillon, as well as Alwyn Rees and Brinly Rees and others, has written fascinatingly and with convincing erudition about the connections between Irish traditions and Indian ones. Given as one example is the custom of fasting for redress found in ancient India and Ireland as prayapavesana in Hindu law and "He who does give a pledge to fasting as an evader of all."[45] In both countries modern times saw its resurrection in the hunger strikes. The world watched young Irish men carried to graves in Ulster in 1981 though in the old laws instances of the fast's leading to death are not recorded.

So it does seem that the Aryans pictured as fierce defenders of the father right did combine their mythologies with that of the goddess worship, conditioned, no doubt, by

their reverence for nature even before their arrival in Ireland where another goddess culture flowered. There is another fact that can be stated absolutely about groups of people no matter how many thousands of years removed from us--there were women there. The women took part in the cult worship of ancient Aryans and Celts and certainly influenced the evolution of the religion. There is a continuity of women's roles, also. If we were to go to Ireland, we would find Irish women praying at a holy well now dedicated to a female saint but once sacred to a goddess. No religion or society, however patriarchal, can totally obliterate women or that society ceases to exist. The Roman Catholic Church of my youth was male-dominated on every level, and yet once a year a procession of girls escorted one of their own up to the altar to crown Mary, Queen of the May. That image resonates far beyond the ritual and in ways beyond the imagination of the Catholic pastors who encouraged them. What would have happened if some of us had said, "Just celebrating Beltaine, Father"? The relation of the Blessed Mother to the Mater Magna is a rich subject. However, it is interesting to note now when women have begun to wrest real power from the Church few would wish to participate in ceremonies like the May crowning because the statue and the girl crowning her represent conformity to the only image of women allowed. Imposed from the outside it was not a true reflection of what a woman is.

Campbell writes:

> I am taking pains in this work to place considerable stress upon the world and symbolic order of the goddess, for the findings both of anthropology and of archaeology now attest not only to a contrast between the mythic and social systems of the goddess and later gods but also to the fact that in our own European culture that of the gods overlies and occludes that of the goddess--which is nevertheless effective as a counterplayer of the civilization as a whole.[46]

Since in Ireland the mythic and social system of the gods did not exclude that of the goddess to the same extent as the rest of Europe, it would seem that she was not pushed down as far into the unconscious. Campbell, in saying "I am taking great pains in this work to place considerable stress upon . . . ," writes as a man protected by a society where the goddess has been safely contained. Campbell himself is sympathetic, in fact even champions her, but he expresses no fear of her power because it is essentially too remote from him.

I do not think this was the case for any of the tellers of the Tain--the writers of the Ascendancy excepted. The golden cup of the goddess became the pint in the pub because, perhaps, the symbol was too frightening for a generation who remembered the anguish of parents watching their children starve before they died themselves. The Great Mother had abandoned her people once--why not again? The fact that the famine came not through a failure of fertility but of

government, as huge quantities of food were exported while millions died or were forced to emigrate, was secondary. Edna O'Brien, three generations removed from the event, describes the way her teacher made the famine real. In Mother Ireland (New York, 1976) she writes:

> . . . the air as John Mitchell had written calm and palllike, a vast silence, a creeping ruin over everything , an inability to curse because human passion had been quelled through starvation; children's eyes were senseless and walls and roads were voiceless like shadows, womanhood had ceased to be womanly, the birds carolled no more, the ravens dropped dead on the wing and dogs howless and with their vertebrae like the saw of a bone sunk into the ditch like wolves and the anima mundi, the soul of the land, was dim dying and dead. A world where help and pity did not forthcome.

In a world that matched the description "vale of tears," is it any wonder that the people accepted eagerly a faith of expiation and happiness after death? Without belief in some all-encompassing guilt how could such terrible suffering be explained? Patrick Kavanaugh in "The Great Hunger" gathers the descendants of the survivors of the famine together

> Five hundred hearts were hungry for life--
> Who lives in Christ shall never die the death.[47]

But too often that same religion served economics at the expense of the spirit. Kavanaugh makes the point in verse that J. J. Lee does in his essay on the post-famine Church: ". . . O to be wise/As Respectability that knows the price of all things/And marks God's truth in pounds and pence and

farthings."[48] Patrick Maguire, protagonist of "The Great Hunger," took his mother's advice and "made a field his bride" and though he questions that wisdom now, for him it is too late

> For the strangled impulse there is no
> redemption
> And that girl who was gone and he was
> counting
> The dangers in the fields when love
> ranted
> He was helpless. He saw his cattle
> And stroked their flanks in lieu of wife
> to handle.[49]

The very beauty of the land entangles him and he cannot "rise to pluck the fantasies/From the fruited Tree of Life."[50] He is held--"a wet weed twined about his toe."[51]

Maurice Harmon finds in Kavanaugh's work "a note of love, even of physical imaginative union with the feminine earth."[52] But the "note of loss of separation through time and experience from the childhood wonder" sounds within the poems. Maguire in "The Great Hunger" cannot move into a mature life when love for a real woman, love for the land, and religious belief coexist. His capacity for joy in the natural contrasts painfully with his inability to break the circle of his life and to find personal happiness. Kavanaugh says

> He read the symbol too sharply and turned
> From the five simple doors of sense
> To the door whose combination lock has
> puzzled
> Philosopher and priest and common
> dunce.[53]

Somehow all the dangers of the "five simple doors of sense" centered on women. Though Kavanaugh purposely avoided using the ancient matter of Ireland, his poems show the death in life that comes when the sovereignty of Erin is denied and communion with the feminine cut off. The life affirming characteristics of the goddess are banished and the flowering of the earth finds no analog in human life. Thus the very land becomes suspect. Because religious orders understood how the beauty of nature can call the spirit from mortification, traditional spirituality required "guard of the eyes" when walking outside. Thus Gerard Manley Hopkins "shelled" his eyes to embrace the "double dark" in order to see the "uncreated light." Though Hopkins in his later poems moved beyond illumination by denial to celebrate the natural, in his work as in Kavanaugh's the tension between the ever-renewing fruitfulness of the countryside and the sterility of a life turned in on itself is never really resolved.

> . . . See banks and brakes
> Now, leaved how thick! laced they are again
> With pretty cherval, look and fresh wind shakes
> Them; birds build--but not I build; no, but strain
> Time's eunuch and not breed one work that wakes
> Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.[54]

New Ways

It is the next generation of poets--Thomas Kinsella, John Montague, and Seamus Heaney--who are able to go beyond appositions of soul and body to present sexual love as an ally of spiritual growth. In their work the dangers represented by the beauty of nature recede and fear of the land and the memories it enshrines gives way to joy.

Thomas Kinsella's evolution from "Baggot Street Deserta" in his 1958 collection to "Nightwalker" in 1968 charts this kind of passage. How much the experiences that inspired his poetry affected his work on the _Tain_ and conversely what influence his study of the heroines of the epic had on his work cannot be documented. His translation reflects a movement that can be seen by comparing earlier poems to later ones. It is worth tracing before reading his _Tain_. In "Baggot Street Deserta"

> The goddess who had lights for thighs
> Grows feet of dung and takes to bed,
> Affronting horror-stricken eyes,
> The marsh bird that children dread.[55]

This nightmarish figure awaits the poet who looks backward and seeks her in

> . . . a fairy bog/Alive with fancies
> double crossed
> By pad of owl and hoot of dog.[56]

But by 1968 in the poem "Nightwalker" the scene has shifted from Baggot Street to Sandy Cove, and here,

> under the shadow of Joyce's tower,
> Kinsella indicates the homing instinct
> for the artist who accepted the here and
> the now, the "filthy modern tide" that
> Yeats, he felt, had avoided and for the
> art that elicits order from experiences,
> from the "mud" of everyday conditions
> instead of imposing it from above.[57]

Joyce, for Kinsella, is "the first major voice to speak for Irish reality since the death of the Irish language" and Joyce's ability to affirm that reality without surrendering his "direct and intimate relationship with the modern world" redeems the past from its fairyland bogs and allows the artist to see the connections between "Home and beauty" (Kinsella, p. 15). In the realities of "Her dear shadow on the blind" in the "breadknife" he finds the goddess not with feet of dung but "slicing and buttering/A loaf of bread. My heart stopped I starved for speech."[58] Here the woman does provide and it is the man who has no words to equal her bounty. This woman is real, not created to serve other needs like the figure of the Blessed Virgin of the preceding stanza whose image is invoked by men who preach the merits of a constricted life.

> . . . Adolescents
> Celibates, we offer up our vows
> To God and Ireland in Her name, grateful
> That by our studies here they may not lack
> Civil servants in a state of grace.[59]

The real woman who does not stand on "a waxed pedestal" requires a response of self, not of words. She cannot be

confined to "A dying language" that "echoes across a century's silence."[60] Kinsella writes:

> I believe now that love is half
>   persistence
> A medium in which from change to change
> Understanding may be gathered.[61]

This medium can contain the older language and the tradition and restore the inheritance whose denial Kinsella feels so keenly. Love can end his isolation and place him in touch through this woman with the anima mundi, the spirit of the land. Persistence is the key for the walker as for the poet, and love provides the security needed to continue the movement through the inner and outer darknesses toward a light, the while continually tested is nonetheless continually sought.

> . . . In the mind darkness tosses
> The light deceives. A vivid ghost sea
> Quivers and dazzles for miles.[62]

But by the time "The Hen Woman" is written the speaker seems less frightened of the journey. The "I" watches with the old woman as the egg begins to emerge from the hen. "The black zero of the orifice/Closed to a point/and the white zero of the egg hung free/flecked with greenish brown oil."[63] But the egg falls, "fussed by her splayed fingers" it floats away until, recalling the moon whose deceitful light led the poet to the Sea of Disappointment in "Nightwalker," it drops to the shore.

"I feed upon it still," the poet explains in lines that could be applied to a struggle he shares with those who struggle to make sense of a country whose history and culture possesses them. Like Patrick Maguire following around his circle or anyone enclosed by old wrongs and resentments left unexplored and those not understood, for the poet there is no end. But a process is going on within the poet. Those same, ofttimes painful, mysteries

> may yet be noted/and hoarded in the imagination/in the yolk of one's own being, so to speak,/there to undergo its (quite animal) growth/dividing blindly,/ twitching, packed with will/searching its own tissue/for the structure/in which it may wake.[64]

There are Joycean echoes in the egg which recalls Molly's decision to serve Bloom an egg for breakfast as well as Anna Livia's letter found in a a mound where hens are scratching. Isn't life formed by the very same evolution where cells twitch and divide in an animal growth that cannot be retarded by intellectual doubts, the failures of systems and politics or the nightmare of history? "Packed with will" the elements of natural life, like the personal experiences of the poet and the uncreated conscience of the race, search for "the structure in which it may wake" and leave behind the nightmare of history not understood. This line recalls Joyce's last masterwork in which both the character and the work take on a variety of structures in order to "wake," to incorporate and resolve the history the young

Stephen sought to escape from. This incubator of both his poetry and his self--"an egg of being"--seems to fall for "a whole year" and, in fact, is falling still "solid and light, the red gold beating/in its silvery womb/alive as the yolk and white/of my eye; as it will continue/to fall probably until I die,/through the vast indifferent spaces/with which I am empty."[65]

It seems the poet returns to the pessimism of "Nightwalker"--though the space is now only "indifferent," not malevolent. Indeed, the egg does smash on the grating, but the hen woman does not react like a victim--there is "blank anger" at first, but "Then her eyes came to life, and she laughed/and let the bird flap away/It's all the one/There's plenty more where that came from!"[66] This hen woman who asserts the continuity of life differs from the nightmare goddess of the early poem. A fierceness still exists here, shown in her "blank anger" and the strength that then laughs at disaster. But the speaker can now appreciate the fearsome energy, and the bird he associates with this woman is one that shelters life rather than the "marsh bird children dread."[67]

Kinsella has said of his own wife Eleanor that "through her vitality and brilliance under suffering" he was able to find "a possibility of order, suggestions for a (barely) positive dream."[68] And it seems that the more he allows for

a positive dream, the more his women characters become symbols of affirmation rather than terror.

Love is the medium in which the slow animal growth that knits together the splintered elements of the self can take place and the desperation of his earlier call "Eire, Eire, . . . is there none to hear? Is all lost?" changes into an invocation of the mild mother of "Finistere." Here the speaker is among the Sons of Mil, ancestor of the Gael, sailing from Brittany to Ireland, on what Maurice Harmon calls "an other-world journey in reverse, a coming into being. The poem begins "I . . . One . . . I smelt the weird Atlantic. Finistere . . . Finistere." But this "I" does not embark alone onto the sea but drawn by the place on the horizon "Where the last shrunken ray withdrew . . . a point of light?" the I becomes "we." "Whose excited blood was that fumbling our movements? Whose ghostly hunger/tunneling our thoughts full of passages/smelling of death ash and clay and faint metals/and great stones in the darkness?"[69] As the speaker feels the pull of memories beyond individual experience, isolation changes into union. The "excited blood," the "ghostly hunger" belong to shared ancestors the speaker knows through their monuments, the passage graves and megalithic structures physically left behind in Brittany but carried imprinted on the consciousness of each voyager. These inner visions, though "smelling of death ash and clay" call forth action and provide common ground.

> We drew close together, as one,
> And turned inward, salt chaos
> rolling in silence all around us
> and listening to our own mouths
> mumbling in the sting of spray.[70]

The group prays: "Ill wind end well/mild mother/on wild water pour peace."[71] The realization that the powerful woman can be also a mild mother does not depend on trivializing her. No, the poet recognizes that she is the one "who gave us our unrest," the source of the memories that impel them on. She is the one "whom we meet and unmeet."[72] In the earlier poems, "Baggot Street Deserta," the constant confrontation she required left the poet "horror stricken" but now the "gaggle gaze" and the "holy howl" inspire art and worship. ". . . we have scraped speechless on slabs of stone poolspirals opening on closing spiralpools and dances drilled in the rock in coil zigzag angle and curl."[73] At Newgrange and Knowth, the 5,000 year old megalithic passage graves in the Valley of Boyne, the "poolspirals," "spiralpools," the "coil zigzag angle and curl" can be touched and traced today. They were thousands of years old already when the sons of Mil sailed toward them. The journey down long narrow passage into the womb of the grave reverses the birth passage and the spirals and zigzag honor the Magna Mater from whom all come and into whom all return.

The centrality of these mounds in Irish mythology and indeed their importance in all of Irish literature has been remarked. Here the voyager recognizes that this fearful

journey does not end in "the great stones of darkness."[74] There is movement "river ripple earth ramp/suncircle moon-lamp."[75] The entire universe moves with us and there is no end; unless we stop "for the strangled cry, there is no redemption" for those who refuse to follow the spiral and who pretend the line is straight, the way easy and either deny that darkness or wallow in the darkness within darkness, afraid to explore, terrified of understanding and thereby condemned to fear. She is the one "in whose out-flung service/we nourished our hunger/uprooted and came."[76] Woman reminds man of his frailty, born of her he must leave her if he is to meet her again. From the mother he comes to the lover. In a society permeated with fear of women's power, and built on her victimization this transition seems fraught with terror. But if instead of trying to subdue the woman he acknowledges her sovereignty, expects not that she satisfy him as a mother does an infant but allows her to call forth his own inner force, then the positive note can be sounded together. All the energy that went into sexual supression can aid the inner movements of the self. The other becomes not a destroyer of inner nature but a complement, a way to peace:

in whale hell
gale gullet
salt hole
dark nowhere
calm queen
pour peace.[77]

The prayer is answered and "in a sunny breeze" they enter a "deep bay" and though it still lies "open/to all currents of the ocean," they are "further than anyone had ever been/and lightheaded with exhaustion and relief."[78] The ordeal is not over and the travellers must steer "in along a wall of mountain/and entered a quiet hall of rock echoing/to the wave wash and our low voices."[79] The poet enters into the rock and finds not death and sterility but shelter. Now the individual voice returns:

> I steadied myself. 'Our Father . . .
> Someone said
> And there was a little laughter.[80]

"Our Father" comes not from the poet but just "someone" who does not chant or intone but merely "says." And the answering laughter shows this automatic response for what it is--an appeal to the newer tribal gods, the Aryan fathers whose power will never displace the Great Mother because even this new land, this farthest place, holds the spiral marked monuments of her worship rooted in and inspired by the land. So the speaker chooses "the old words once more" and steps out on the earth.

> . . . At the solid shock
> a dreamy power loosened
> at the base of my spine
> and uncoiled and slid up thro the
> marrow.[81]

The power is that of the earth, the possession and abode of the goddess. To support this image of female force

empowering this poet, Kinsella has "a flow of seawater" fall back with a "she-hiss." Then:

> Who
>   is a breath
> that makes the wind
> that makes the wave
> that makes   this   voice?[82]

Kinsella's poet is Amergin, but not the Amergin who speaks in assertions as in R. A. S. Macalister's translation:

> I am Wind on Sea
> I am Ocean-wave
> I am Roar of Ocean[83]

For Macalister it is a "pantheistic conception of a universe where godhead is everywhere and omnipotent."[84] A new era dawns as the Sons of Mil through their Chief poet identify with all Creation. Robert Graves devotes a chapter of his <u>The White Goddess</u> to Amergin's chant, presenting the poem as a purposely obscure ancient calendar-alphabet in which the mystical properties of each month are revealed in language only the initiate can understand. For Graves, "English poetic education should, really, begin not with the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>, nor with the <u>Odyssey</u>, not even with <u>Genesis</u>, but with <u>The Song of Amergin</u> . . . which briefly summarizes the prime poetic myth."[85] Graves defines that myth when he presents his thesis for <u>The White Goddess</u>:

> My thesis is that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with popular religious

> ceremonies in honour of the Moon goddess or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age and that this remains the language of true poetry--'true' in the nostalgic modern sense of 'the unimprovable original,' not a synthetic substitute.[86]

Graves agrees with the view that the invaders from Central Asia in late Minoan times "began to substitute patrilinear for matrilinear institutions and remodel or falsify the myths to justify social change."[87] The Greek philosophers replaced "magical poetry" with their "rational poetic language."[88] Socrates, chief of the rejecters

> in turning his back on poetic myths, was really turning his back on the Moon-goddess who inspired them and who demanded that man should pay woman spiritual and sexual homage: what is called Platonic love, the philosopher's escape from the power of the Goddess into intellectual homosexuality, was really Socratic love.[89]

Under the influence of his disciples, Graves goes on, the myths became less and less regarded, "being 'explained away' by Euhemerus of Messenia and his successors as corruptions of history."[90] And indeed this tactic was used by Christian scribes who euhemerized the Celtic pantheon into the Tuatha De Danann, earlier inhabitants of Ireland who await Amergin and the Sons of Mil in this farthest place. Now Graves' book itself favors a magical and poetic approach rather than the method of more conventional scholars but his connection of Amergin's chant with worship of the goddess

seems borne out by another section of Amergin's incantation which begins, following John Montague's version:

> I speak for Erin
> Sailed and fertile sea
> Fertile fruitful mountains
> Fruitful moist woods
> Moist overflowing lochs
> Flowing hillside springs.[91]

This incantation of the land itself stills the winds and allows the ships to land. The rewards the goddess gives to those who persist are fruitfulness, lifegiving springs; by praising the land Amergin joins himself and his people to her.

Now, why does Kinsella choose to frame the incantation in questions? The ancient song also has questions:

> Who smootheth the ruggedness
> of a mountain?
>
> Who is he who announces the ages
> of the Moon?
>
> And who the place where falleth
> the sunset?[92]

But these sound rhetorical. Indeed, Graves combines them with the "I ams" in that way:

> I am a wizard: who but I
> Sets the coalhead aflame with smoke
> [i.e. gives inspiration][93]

and in a freer rendition has Amergin say

> I roar like the winter sea
> I return again like the receding
> wave.
> Who but I can unfold the secrets of
> the unknown dolmen?[94]

Are Kinsella's questions also rhetorical or do they speak to the distance still to be bridged between this modern Amergin and his ancient ancestor? One took an identification with the goddess for granted, the other comes to it slowly, with pain. For the first, to speak for Erin means exalting a new and fertile world presided over by "Eire of high recital/ Recital skillfully done."[95] He praises "The skill of the women/Of Breise of Buagnai"; his own Chief Cremon may have conquered but it is "That haughty lady, Eire," who "bespoken" by both brothers confers sovereignty by accepting one. "Eire will be the 'high ship' of the Sons of Mil, and to them and to Lugaid son of Ith will be traced the lineage of all the tribes of Ireland."[96]

But Kinsella stands, as he says,

> on one side of a great rift, and can feel the discontinuity in myself. It is as much a matter of people and place as of writing--of coming so to speak, from a broken and uprooted family of being drawn to those who share my origins and finding we cannot share our lives.[97]

Under the goddess the people are a family united by a common mother whose love provides a basis beyond division as when Erie provides shared origin for descendants of the brothers, Eremon and Eber, who divide Ireland between them. But when the goddess is usurped, a different mode of societal organization emerges.

Elizabeth Gould Davis quotes both Jane Ellen Harrison and J. J. Bachofen on the differences:

> "When nowadays we speak of God as Father we strongly delimit the sources of life," as Harrison says. "The idea of motherhood produces a sense of universal fraternity among all man which dies with the development of patriarchy," writes Bachofen. . . . "The family based on fathernight is a closed organism whereas the matriarchal family bears the typically universal character that stands at the beginning of all development."[98]

The separation Kinsella feels is real. The family <u>has</u> been uprooted and divided. The language--mother tongue--and culture of an entire people taken away and replaced with an alien culture where patriarchal values reign supreme. As Harmon points out when Kinsella speaks of his "great loss" he refers not only to the actual loss of the early literature and his own loss of language but a loss of "the dynamic and confident sense of community and purpose available to writers of former periods."[99] Harmon quotes at length from Kinsella's address to the Modern Language Association in 1966 which illuminates but only his own efforts to reach back to a past denied him but sheds light on the struggle of every modern Irish writer who wishes like Amergin to speak for Erin and yet finds himself writing questions not answers:

> If I look deeper still in the need to identify myself, what I meet beyond the nineteenth century is a great cultural blur. I must exchange one language for another, my native English for eighteenth century Irish. After the dullness of the nineteenth century, eighteenth century Irish poetry is suddenly full of life: art in the service of real feeling--hatred for the foreign land owner; fantasies and longings rising from the loss

> of an Irish civilization (the poets putting their trust in the Stuarts or the Spanish fleet or even the Pope of Rome); satires; love songs, lamentations; outcries of religious fervour or repentance. And all of this in full voices, the voices of poets who expect to be heard and understood--Eaghan Ruadh O Suilleabhain, Donnchadh Ruadh Mac Conmara, Sean Clarach Mac Domhnaill, Tadhg Gaelch O Suilleabhain. They are the tragic end of Gaelic literature--but they are at home in their language; they have no more need to question the medium they write in than, say, John Clare writing. . . .
>
> Beyond O Rathaille, the course of Irish poetry stretches back for more than a thousand years full of riches and variety: poetry as mystery and magic in the earliest fragments and interpolated in the early sagas; poetry as instant, crystalline response to the world, in a unique body of nature lyrics; poetry as a useful profession--the repository of historical information and topography and custom; love poems and devotional poems of dignity and high technique; conventional bardic poetry heavy with tradition and craft. Here in all this, I recognise simultaneously a great inheritance and a great loss. The inheritance is mine, but only at two enormous removes--across a century's silence and through an exchange of worlds. The greatness of the loss is measured not only by the substance of Irish literature itself, but also by the intensity with which we know it was shared; it has an air of continuity and shared history which is precisely what is missing from Irish literature, in English or in Irish, in the nineteenth century and today.[100]

So there it is--Kinsella seeks art in the service of real feeling and yet finds that like Amergin his "tongue stumbles." What else is possible when he questions his very

language--the medium for putting "feeling into words." To repeat Seamus Heaney's phrase, Kinsella, like Heaney, values "poetry as divination" which belongs to the "great inheritance" available to the Irish poet but only across the two great removes.

But while in earlier poems the voice has little hope that the past when evoked can do any more than confirm the rift.

> I nonetheless inflict, endure
> Tedium, intracordal hurt,
> The sting of memory's quick
>   the drear
> Uprooting, burying prising apart
> Of loves a strident adolescent
> Spent in doubt and vanity.[101]

Here poetry comes out of a "drear uprooting" and love, already spent, belongs to adolescence. The poet finds not union or liberation but a "cramp" in the wrist under which a pulse beats calling out signals ". . . as the alien/Garrison in my own blood/Keeps constant contact with the main/Mystery, not to be understood."[102]

In Finistere the poet is no longer isolated, fellow voyagers replace the alien garrison and the "main/Mystery" is being addressed.

> Who
>   is the bull with the seven scars
> the hawk on the cliff
> the salmon sunk in his pool
> the pool sunk in her soil
> the animal's fury
> the flower's fibre
> a teardrop in the sun?[103]

The "bull with the seven scars" comes from the ancient poem and recalls the sacred bull of mythology who accompanied the Goddess, as well as the Bull of Cuailnge for whom the Tain was begun. Macalister gives "vulture" instead of hawk for the second invocation while Graves, following MacNeill, uses "hawk" as does Kinsella. Birds accompany the goddesses in Irish literature and, as in Kinsella's own work, can mean both death and rebirth. He recalls Fintan, husband of Noah's daughter Cesair, a member of the first group of invaders "who survived through many ages and through the successive invasions in the form of a salmon, an eagle and a hawk and was consequently invoked as a witness to the events of the Irish past."[104] When Kinsella's Amergin invokes the pool he adds "sunk in her soil" as if to reassert that the salmon, too, belongs to "her." The fire of inspiration in Macalister and Graves' version is ignited for Kinsella by the word that spoken by the "Who" beyond the poem, "pours out terror/the spark springs/and burns in the brain?"[105] The original Amergin, as Proinsias MacCana points out,

> . . . as seer and arbiter takes precedence of all the rest of the Sons of Mil. It is he who ensures their landing by appeasing the divinity of Ireland as who symbolizes the beginnings of their settlement by proclaiming himself the embodiment of all creation. And in his evocation of Ireland as in the triad of eponymous goddesses married to the kings of Tara we find eloquent expression of the dominant themes of Irish tradition: the personification of the land as the

> goddess who is joined in marriage to the
> rightful king.[106]

With the rest of the Sons of Mil Amergin goes to the hill of Tara, traditional for the feast that unites the king with the land. Kinsella's men meet on that same hill, and here the question that informs Finistere is most clearly stated:

> When men met on the hill
> dumb as stones in the dark
> (the craft knocked behind me)
> who is the jack of all light?

The "jack of all light" recalls both the common figure of folk tales, the "jack of all trades" and Hopkin's "Jackself," "This Jack, joke, poor potsherd" purified in the Heraclitean fire of nature which in Christ's resurrection transforms the soul until it is "immortal diamond." Indeed, the hill on which the men gather is Tara, site of the Feast of Tara or "Feis Temhra." Here, ritual marriage with the goddess of the land, "the Sovereignty of Erin," confirmed the election of the king, and effected a transformation from "jack" to sacred king.

In this setting Kinsella poses one last question, "Who goes in full/into the moon's interesting conditions?/Who fingers the sun's sink hole?"[107] Both the moon and the tumulus graves at Newgrange, a "hole" which holds the sun for seven minutes at the winter solstice, belong to the goddess and represent a cyclical movement through the dark into the light. Kinsella chooses this direction, "(I went forward, reaching out)."[108] The use of parentheses reinforces

the image of rounding out through a spiral movement. The tomb is the womb and in death and ritual all things return to the womb of the Great Mother.[109] In the excavations at Catal Huyuk James Melaart discovered figures of the triple goddess similar to that of the Celts:

> The three images of the goddess--maiden, matron, and old crone--present us with the three archetypal relationships of the female to male: she is huge and calls us from her womb; she is beautiful and calls us to her bed; she is old and ugly and calls us to the tomb. Womb and tomb rhyme in the unconscious as well as in the English language.[110]

Thompson states the three calls but the response to those calls is not automatic. Many men lack the courage to respond to what are essentially three stages of individual growth. They reject the real woman and see only an image against which they react. To thus deny the sovereignty of one woman is to remain in the grip of fear of all women. Karen Horney connects this fear of women to the fact that

> during coitus the male has to entrust his genitals to the female body, that he presents her with semen, and interprets this as a surrender of his vital strength to the woman, similar to his experience the subsiding of erection after intercourse as evidence of having been weakened by women.[111]

She speaks here of the fears of men raised in a patriarchal society which needs to deny women equal rights, to demean her in order to insure submssion and thus keep at bay the fear of what woman can be if left to bloom and develop.

This fear Kinsella leaves behind when he goes forward "reaching out." This new perspective influences his view of the women characters in the Tain. For John Montague, the Ulster poet, Kinsella is representative of the Irish poets in the late fifties who

> began to write without strain a poetry that was indisputably Irish (in the sense that it was influenced by the country they came from, its climate, history and linguistic peculiarities) but also modern. Kinsella's spearheading success encouraged others and by the middle of the following decade Irish poets began to filter into modern anthologies, especially American, so that the critic M. L. Rosenthal could dedicate a section of his study, The New Poets, to Irish poetry. This wider audience did not mean any abjuring of older allegiances; Kinsella's translation of The Tain is a landmark in Anglo-Irish poetry's repossession of its past.[112]

So in following Joyce, the rebel against the strictures of the past, Kinsella restores part of the past to the Irish people. Like Joyce, Kinsella pushed past the guilts and inversions his culture placed between men and women, came to appreciate a sovereign Erin and overcame the difficulty felt by some men when faced with a literature so heavily dependent on powerful goddess/woman figures. Similar complications arise in discussions of evidence for an ancient matriarchy.

Thompson frames the problem like this:

> The question of the existence of a historical matriarchy is difficult, because

> the subject is so connected to the emotions of the archaeologists and historians that it is impossible to discuss it without encountering castration anxieties in men and shouts of triumphant Amazon joy in feminist scholars.[113]

He cites Marvin Harris as an example of the anthropologists who dismiss the ideas of someone like Bachoven without having read him. While I do not think women scholars fall on evidence of the power of women "with Amazonian joy," they are able to view the material free of certain anxieties. Cecile O'Rahilly is as careful not to overstate the significance of Medb as any male scholar, but it is significant that it was the Tain, full as it is of powerful women, to which she devoted herself. The book Celtic Realms, of which Nora Chadwick was co-author with Myles Dillon, does not hedge on the position of women among the early Irish.

> History and tradition alike echo the high prestige of women of Celtic mythology. Roman history has recorded no male enemies in Celtic Britain of the stature of Boudicca and Cartimandua. In the Heroic Age of Ireland Medb, Queen of Connacht is the reigning sovereign. Ailill her husband is never more than her consort and Medb is the greatest personality of the Heroic Age.[114]

Perhaps because Chadwick is not uncomfortable with Medb she can be critical of the view that assumes the heroes and heroines "who appear in Irish literary and historical traditions as human . . . to have been originally gods and goddesses."[115] This way of thinking began in the early eighteenth century with German students of mythology and had a

wide effect. "This recent tendency forms an interesting contrast to the euhemerizing activities of the early medieval historians who represented the Irish gods as human invaders taking possession of Ireland by force of arms."[116] Medb is a principal recipient of this reverse euhemerizing.

> Most Irish scholars now believe that Medb, Queen of Connacht in Tain Bo Cuailnge was a goddess. The evidence is partly philological--her name denoting "Intoxication"--partly the long list of husbands attributed to her, partly her ritual marriage. In Irish tradition, however, as in Greek, characters of the Heroic Age are never represented as gods and literary tradition consistently represents them as human.[117]

Nor does Anne Ross in her prodigious study Pagan Celtic Britain hesitate to make the following connection:

> The function of the goddess must, to a certain extent, reflect the function of the woman and her most potent and striking characteristics. The emphasis laid on the various spheres over which the goddesses presided must, of course, vary according to the economic organisation and geographic situation of the different tribes but the spheres of influence must themselves be universal. For example, there is no trace of a Celtic goddess of love, but all the goddesses share in having marked sexual characteristics, and no matter what their individual departments of influence sexuality and maternity are their fundamental concerns.[118]

If the function of the goddess reflects the characteristics viewed by the culture as "most striking" than the "marked sexual characteristics" of the goddesses reflect a society where the sexual nature women was taken for granted.

So the Celts concern with the "powers of the female" which preluded the all male cults common in other early religions must have created a climate where powerful woman heroines could live in the imagination and survive even the centuries when women are reduced to servile positions. Perhaps women have an easier time than men in accepting these heroines who do not conform to the present society's imaginative forms because women know how limited and divorced from reality these stereotypes are. Sojourner Truth told an audience that was pro-abolition but anti-women's rights, that she had plowed fields until the muscles of her arms equalled that of any man but "ain't I a woman too?". Man's definition of woman often reflects more of his reality than hers.

It is significant that the artist who leaves behind the stereotypes and given wisdom of society to go forward, often reaches the core self where division between male and female ceases. Perhaps it is the alienation not only from woman but from his own soul that makes it so difficult for some men to accept woman in herself rather than solely in the way she relates to him. Kinsella, who in his poems moved from images of woman as constriction and on into one of woman as companion in the adventures of self-discovery, recalls one of the earliest descriptions of the Celtic women of the tribes Tacitus calls German:

> They think there is something sacred and prescient in women, they disdain neither their counsels nor neglect their responses. . . . The wife does not bring a dowry to the husband but the husband to the wife. The parents and relatives are present and approve of the gifts, gifts not devised for womanish tastes (Mulier res delicias) nor which a bride is adorned, but oxen and a caparisoned steed and shield with a frame and a sword. With these gifts a wife is accepted and in turn she brings her husband some of the arms: they consider this the strongest bond, these sacred secrets, these marriage gods. Lest a woman consider herself beyond the plans of valor and beyond the disasters of war, she is admonished by the very inaugurating auspices of marriage that she comes as an ally of toils and dangers, to suffer and dare the same in peace and in war.[119]

The "protection" from combat later Christian times afforded women meant they only suffered in war and no longer could "dare." But this memory of men and women as "allies" remained accessible to those whose preconceptions did not block it out. Kinsella, by moving away from the "palpable darkness" O'Connor describes and into the light, can now reclaim the _Tain_.

The Women

The first person to appear in the initial set of seven tales that prepare for the _Tain_ in Kinsella's translation is Nes. The daughter of "Eochaid Salbuide of the yellow heel

was sitting outside Emain with her royal women." She is named and her rank is given immediately. She is Chief and with the royal women has free access to the area outside the royal enclosures. The druid Cathbad walks by and she calls out to ask him what the "present hour" is lucky for. The high prestige of the druid priest/seers has been mentioned, yet this "girl" does not hesitate to question him nor he to answer, "For begetting a king on a queen." Nes, interested though she is, wants verification. The druid swears "a son conceived at that hour would be heard of in Ireland forever."[120] This promise sounds a central theme of Irish literature--poets were employed in order that their patrons "be heard of in Ireland," and twelve centuries after this the reward for valor is the same. "I write out in verse--/ MacDonagh and MacBride/And Connally and Pearse."[121] Yeats insures their memory "wherever green is worn." This is essentially the same boon and it appeals no less to woman than a man. "The girl saw no other male near, and she took him inside with her."[122] Now in many hero stories from vastly different cultures, the hero is often born to a woman who is royal. His birth is usually illegitimate, posthumous or supernatural.

Tomas O Cathasaigh applied the principles of heroic biography to the life of Cormac MacAirt and in his introduction commented on the pattern as applied in Celtic studies. First established by von Hahn in 1871 after a study of

fourteen heroes his theory became known as the Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula. Most of von Hahn's contemporaries ignored his ideas, but Alfred Nutt "found examples of the pattern in Celtic tradition" and developed a formula based on von Hahn's with variations. The formula included the hero's birth, a youth of poverty and struggle often in a foreign land, and "a return to the home and power."[123] Otto Rank's 1909 study, "The Myth of the Birth of the Hero," found this pattern in the stories of heroes outside the Indo-European tradition including the biographies of Moses and Jesus. Joseph Campbell and Jan de Vries' are contemporary scholars who study the pattern. As has been seen in citations from Campbell, the motif informs both his Masks of God series and The Hero with a Thousand Faces. In regard to Irish studies O Cathasaigh finds de Vries formulation helpful but where de Vries says that heroic legend is a myth "not of a god, but of a man who raised himself to the level of the gods,"[124] O Cathasaigh prefers to say that

> by means of heroic biography the human person (real or imaginary) is transmuted into something quite other, that is into a sacred personage. Thus we may speak of the heroic biography as it operates in each cultural tradition as a "trans-historical" model for the prestige legends of the group.[125]

The ten point sequence given by de Vries as presented by O Cathasaigh is:

I Begetting of the hero.
II Birth of the hero.
III The youth of the hero is threatened.
IV The way in which the hero is brought up.
V The hero often acquires invulnerability.
VI The fight with the dragon or other monster.
VII The hero wins a maiden usually after overcoming great dangers.
VIII The hero makes an expedition to the underworld.
IX When the hero is banished in his youth he returns later and is victorious over his enemies. In some cases he has to leave the realm again which he had won with such difficulty.
X The death of the hero.[126]

Variant motifs are added such as in "The begetting of the hero" where

A. The mother is a virgin, who is in some cases overpowered by a god or has extramarital relations with the father.
B. The father is a god.
C. The father is an animal.
D. The child is conceived in incest.[127]

Now this idea of the father as absent can be looked at in two ways. To say the father "overpowers" the mother suggests male strength subduing the female and after fulfilling that function he need do nothing more. But if instead of concentrating on the absent father the significance of the present mother is emphasized, a different picture emerges. As Elizabeth Davis points out:

> One can hardly think of a great man in all history who was not either fatherless entirely or was so cut off from his

> father for one reason or another as to have had no contact with him in his formative years. Even in the cases where there was a father present, it was the son who was the mother's favorite and who was most strongly influenced by her who became great. 'Almost without exception . . . the presidents of the United States have been Mama's boys,' and so have the great statesmen, from Pericles and the Gracchi to Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt.[128]

Perhaps the lack of importance given to the father in the hero's birth recalls the ancient belief that the mother confers not only life but authority, and that to be reared among women is not shameful but rather confers a benefit as it did to Achilles, Apollo, and Jesus. Even in modern historical instances there are some interesting examples. The theologian Hans Kung, whose writings have been cited here, has stimulated much thought in the Catholic Church and is one of very few Catholic priests who advocate ordination for women. He has five sisters whom he credits with helping him realize the need for and importance of justice for women.

So focusing on the mother makes the hero's unusual birth a sign of his greatness in part <u>because</u> he is so close to his mother. In fact, it could be argued that the hero is an agent of first the mother, and then the "maiden," who acts as a catalyst for his heroic acts and even, in the Irish material, join him in performing the deeds. Perhaps the process by which the hero becomes "sacred" is more closely tied to woman than most male interpreters realize.

O Cathasaigh, like other Irish scholars recognizes this when he writes:

> The interdependence of myth and the other elements of a particular culture has been revealed in the exploration of one aspect of Irish tradition, the theme of king and goddess. It has been shown that the notion of a hieros gamos is rooted in myth and ritual. . . . it persisted as an expression of the political ideology and aspirations of Gaelic Ireland down to the eighteenth century. The story of a king and goddess is arguably a separate myth, different in origin from the heroic life pattern; but in the lives of such king-heroes as Corman MacAirt and Niall Noigiallach, versions of the king goddess theme are represented.[129]

But having stated the difference he goes on to say, "Whatever their origins these episodes can be taken as realization of the element Hero wins a maiden."[130] But how can the theme of king being taken by the goddess in a ritual marriage which allows him to share <u>her</u> sovereignty be reduced to "the hero winning a maiden"? In the Irish tradition the acceptance or nonacceptance of the king by the goddess is crucial to the well being of the entire tribe, and in her woman as mother, lover, and warrior are closely connected. In the myths and throughout Irish history the heroes do not "win" passive maidens but form alliances with women powerful their own right--as would be expected in a society for whom sovereignty was the prerogative of the goddess.

Nes, the initial woman of the <u>Tain</u> exemplifies this important role of woman. She is not "overpowered" by a man

nor visited by a god but because she sees "no other male near" she takes Cathbad "inside with her." The child is in her womb three years and three months. The number three has mystical association not only as the Trinity but in its reference to the triangle, the vulva of the goddess. But more concretely, this symbolic pregnancy would insure close ties between mother and child. And, indeed, it was Nes who makes her son, Conchobar, king of Ulster when he is only seven years old.

"This is how it happened." "His mother Nes was living by herself." That is, she is not dependent on any man. Nes is approached not through a male intermediary but directly by Fergus Mac Roich, king in Ulster. When he "sought" her for his wife, Fergus met not passivity but a woman who knew what she wanted. "'Only if I get something in return,' she said. 'Give my son the kingship for a year, so they can call his son the son of a king.'"[131] Nes sees a dynasty coming through her and "sets about advising her son and his foster-parents and everyone in his household."[132] The story does not allude again to Conchobar's age--seven--but if we are to see him as a child then in essence Nes rules. She takes from one half of the people to give it to the other and gives to the Ulster warriors "her own gold and silver--all this was in hopes of what her son would get."[133] Her plan works and when Fergus tries to reassume the kingship the men of Ulster say, "We'll have to talk about this."[134]

Angry at Fergus for deserting them and grateful to Conchobar, they decide "What Fergus sold let it stay sold, what Conchobar bought let it stay bought."[135] The language has a lawyerly ring appropriate in a society administered by one branch of poets--the Brehons--with a very high position. So through Nes' maneuvers with the Druid her son remains king of Ulster. Now if the Druid stands for the old priesthood who served the great goddess, then he is the perfect consort for Nes and father of Conchobar. In the Annals and other tales Conchobar is always called macNessa--son of Nes--again stressing his connection with his mother.

Nes shares with other women of the Tain a singlemindedness that made earlier scholars with Victorian notions of women uncomfortable. But Proinsias MacCana, in his 1975 Celtic Mythology points out that "where the kingdom was conceived anthropomorphically as a goddess, the latter symbolised not merely the soil and substance of its territory but also the spiritual and legal dominion which the king exercised over it, in other words, his sovereignty."[136] Mac Cana seems to emphasize the exercise of sovereignty by the king at the expense of the goddess with whom the kingdom as a spiritual and legal entity is identified. But later in the same paragraph he points out the divine image of sovereignty present in many cultures was nowhere "so clearly personalized" as among the Celts, and more especially in Ireland, where it remained a remarkably evocative and

compelling concept for as long as native tradition lasted."[137]

I would go further and say that to deny this concept is to stand outside the native tradition and it is when writers like Joyce, Heaney, and Kinsella can recognize sovereignty in individual woman they are able to discover in themselves an affinity with the nourisher of the native Irish tradition. Yeats' attempt to remake Erin without allowing her her attributes placed him at odds with the tradition as he himself learned. He admits in his 1927 poem, "In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz," that he loved these women only when they were young.

> The light evening, Lisadell,
> Great windows open to the south,
> Two girls in silk kimonos, both
> Beautiful, one a gazelle.[138]

When Constance Markiewicz chose to take an active part in the Irish revolution and to participate in Free State politics, Yeats withdrew his admiraautumn" that "shears blossoms from the summer's wreath."[139] Her actions cause her to be "condemned to death" and then "pardoned, she drags out lonely years/Conspiring among the ignorants."[140] Yeats wanted women to remain in their silk kimonos, be man's muse, but not his equal. John Montague calls "the succession of woman poets" he discovered in early Irish literature, evidence of a distinction not shared by any other

literature in Europe or perhaps in the world." He says:

> Psychologically, a female poet had always seemed an absurdity, because of the necessarily intense relationship between the poet and the Muse. Why, then, did poetry always seem a natural mode for gifted Irish women? I think this was because there was no discrimination against them; the first woman poet of whom we hear, Liadan of Corcaguiney, was a fully qualified member of the poets guild, which could mean as much as twelve years of study.[141]

If a culture defines a woman only in terms of her relationship to a man, then even in the arts the division would hold--man is the maker, woman the interpreter or inspiration. So women can be accepted as actresses, dancers, and models but not as creators. However, as Montague points out, where equality of opportunity exists, women distinguished themselves as artists in many modes and in areas male observers consider anti-feminine--which only means the actions do not conform to their projected construct of _the_ feminine. MacCana points out that the factor which in a sense integrates all the epiphanies of the Celtic goddess into a single unity is sovereignty.

> We have seen that the Irish, and indeed the Celtic goddess is primarily concerned with the prosperity of the land, its fertility, its animal life, and (when it is conceived as a political unit) its security against external forces _all the seemingly contradictory characters of the deity--maternal, seasonal, warlike, young or aged, beautiful or monstrous--may be referred to the fundamental nexus,_

> and it is significant that, in general, each individual goddess reveals several or all of this characters, and even though one may predominate the others are rarely absent.[142] (emphasis added)

Nes acts as mother, lover, and politician to insure that she, through her son, can insure the prosperity and security of the kingdom. Conchobar continues his association with women by belonging to all the wives of Ulster. "Any Ulsterman who gave him a bed for the night gave him his wife to sleep with as well."[143] Ulster suffers its worst disaster when the sovereignty of two women--Macha and Derdriu--is violated and Conchobar leaves the wisdom of his mother for the code of the male warrior group.

Macha has been connected with Epona, the horse goddess of Gaul, and with "some original cult legend which associated a mother goddess, having obvious equine associations, with a pre-historic burial mound."[144] She arrives at the home of Crunniuc. Crunniuc lives in "a lonely place in the mountains with all his sons."[145] This setting is significant since as we have seen the places outside human habitation--"the lonely places" belong particularly to the goddess as do the mountains--as is seen in place names like "The Paps of Anu" and "The Paps of Morrighan." Crunniuc and his sons live here without women and Macha rectifies that.

> She settled down and began working at once, as though she were well used to the

> house. When night came, she put everything in order without being asked. Then she slept with Crunniuc.[146]

With a certain healthy briskness Macha transforms a disordered and perhaps unhappy house. She chooses to stay and under her care "there was never a lack of food or clothes or anything else."[147] But Crunniuc cannot resist doing the very thing Macha warns him against. Though she tells him "not to grow boastful or careless in anything you say" and he agrees, a little put out that she would suggest such a lapse, "That isn't likely," at the fair he brags that his wife could beat the king's horses in a race.

Macha, heavy with child, tells the king's messenger who comes for her that the burden of going to free her husband is too great. "Burden?" the messenger said. "He will die unless you come." Macha's burden is two-fold--child and husband. At the fair "her pangs gripped her." She cries out to the crowd to remember their own debt to woman. "A mother bore each of you! Help me! Wait till my child is born."[148] When that does not move them, the warrior aspect of sovereignty appears and she threatens "A long lasting evil will come out of this on the whole of Ulster."[149]

At this the king asks her name. "My name, and the name of my offspring, she said, will be given to this place. I am Macha, daughter of Sainrith mac Imbaith."[150] Her name and that of the twins she delivered while running the race are combined to name the capital of Ulster, "Emain Macha,"

twins of Macha, and appears again in the nearby Ard Macha, ie., Armagh which became the center of Christianity. MacCana sees this Macha as

> one of three namesakes known to Irish tradition, all evidently manifestations of the deity. . . . She is one of a number of mythical women--Carman and Tailtu are others--in whose honour assemblies or festivals were held after their death.[151]

Anne Ross also connects Macha with the goddess of the seasonal feasts of Lugansad, sacred to the god Lugh and celebrated on August first. It was "reputedly founded by the god in honour of the goddess Tailtu, his foster-mother."[152] Maire MacNeill in her 1962 study concentrated on this feast which was associated with the three Machas. Carman was another goddess who had a seasonal feast in her honor and Ross sees her story--Carman was taken hostage by the invading Tuatha De Danann who, after she died of grief, held her fair at her burial place--as an example of "a local goddess, retained and overcome by an incoming race and finally honoured by means of a seasonal feast at her own grave"[153] and finds this motif repeated in Tea, patron of the feast of Tara, and Tlachtga.

Each of the three Machas shows the extent to which she will go to maintain her sovereignty. The first Macha joined her husband Nemredh in the third invasion of Ireland, the second Macha, explains MacCana,

> ruled over Ireland alone for a time and repelled by force those who contested her sovereignty. She then took one of her two rivals Cimbaith in marriage, dominating him as Medhbh dominated Ailill. And when the five sons of another claimant continued to oppose her, she sought them out in their hunting ground, enticed them one by one into the forest to be with her and there bound each in turn. After reducing them to servitude, she forced them to build the royal fort of Emhain Macha.[154]

The third Macha punished the Ulstermen by afflicting them with "ces noindem." "As she gave birth she screamed out that all who heard that scream would suffer from the same pangs for five days and four nights in their times of greatest difficulty."[155] Kinsella follows the general scholarly opinion by connecting the "ces noindem" with the birth pains and points out "the connection here with the practice of couvade, but it has also been suggested that there is a vegetation ritual involved, representing winter death and spring rebirth."[156]

In primitive societies, as Margaret Mead has observed, initiatory rites often involve men taking on the role of women, "as if men can become men only . . . by taking over the functions that women perform naturally."[157] Couvade, the custom in which the father enacts the mother's labor pains, fits within this system of ceremonials built "upon an envy of woman's role and a desire to imitate it."[158] Perhaps the affliction of the Ulstermen represents the pain of a warrior class who tried to usurp the woman's role. Frank

O'Connor pursues the point of "ces noindem" at great length and sees no connection with couvade. However, this follows his seeming reluctance to accept the portraits of the Tain women positively. For MacCana, however, Macha's curse of the Ulstermen is an exercise of her prerogative of military authority--because of it all the Ulster warriors are prostrate when Medb invades and only Cuchulainn, trained in arms by women, can defend the kingdom.

Though Derdriu does not assert her authority in a directly military way when Conchobar violates her sovereignty, she retaliates in a way that divides his army and leads him into war. Derdriu's birth has supernatural aspects. Her father, Conchobar's storyteller, is entertaining the king when Derdriu screams from her mother's womb. Cathbad, the Druid, foretells that a beautiful woman "with twisted yellow tresses,/green-irised eyes of great beauty/ and cheeks flushed like the foxglove/howled lies in the hallow of your womb."[159]

Cathbad predicts that Derdriu, the girl within the womb, "will bring evil."[160] But he never says Derdriu herself is evil, rather her beauty and perfection excite jealousy in others and thus disaster comes. An early Irish poem attests to the power of jealousy which can overcome love in its destructiveness:

> Love like heat and cold
> Pierces and then is gone
> Jealousy when it strikes
> Sticks in the marrowbone[161]

Conchobar decides to raise Derdriu for himself as does the ogre of fairy tales who imprisons the princess in a tower. Elizabeth Davis sees this motif as evidence of matriliny:

> The many myths and fairy tales of fair maidens who, like the Sleeping Beauty are locked up in towers or dungeons or guarded by fierce dragons have their bases in the universal institution of matriliny. The fair maiden is always the hereditary princess with whose hand in marriage will go the kingdom, to the deprivation of her male relatives, who therefore seek to keep her single.[162]

Derdriu, though imprisoned, i.e., raised apart, does not directly represent the hereditary princess. She comes out of a more ancient tradition in which the fairy tale princess is what is left of the goddess of sovereignty when strained through the patriarchal sieve. In this case what is at issue is not as much the right to sovereignty in a political sense as in a sexual one. Derdriu, though raised apart, knows what she wants in a lover.

> One day in winter, the girl's foster-father was skinning a milk-fed calf on the snow outside, to cook it for her. She saw a raven drinking the blood on the snow. She said to Leborcham
> "I could desire a man who had those three colours there: hair like the raven, cheeks like blood and his body like snow."[163]

It is significant that Leborcham is a satirist--a poet whose standing in the ancient system allows him access to Derdriu. But in his Thomas Davis lecture, E.G. Quin cites the tradition that Leborcham was a female satirist which would strengthen this point. But the satirist, whether male or female, tells her such a man exists--Noisiu, Uisliu's son--and wishes Derdriu "Good luck and success." Encouraging her is proper to one who understands the rights of women within the context of a society that recognizes the goddess with whom both the "milk-fed calf" and "the raven" are associated.

The sons of Uisliu represent the kind of brotherhood possible where the virtues of the old matriarchal system held sway. They are poets. "The chanting of the sons of Uisliu was very sweet. Every cow or beast that heard it gave two thirds more milk."[164] Here again the cows, central to the well being of a pastoral people and under the protection of goddesses like Boann, "She of the White Cattle,"[165] benefit from the chanting of these men who live in harmony with nature and fill all who hear them with "peace and music."[166] No jealousy for single honor divides them, rather their mutuality protects them:

> if the whole province of Ulster came at them at once, they would put up their three backs together and not be beaten, their parrying and defence were so fine.[167]

In their unity they can survive through "parrying and defence" and need not perform violent deeds. Derdriu sees Noisiu and "slipped out quickly to him." She takes the initiative but allows him to respond by making "as though to pass him and not recognize him." He does respond. "That is a fine heifer going by." Derdriu answers "'As well it might,' she said, 'The heifers grow big where there are no bulls.'"[168]

Anne Ross mentions that in Roman times the ancestors of the people of Ulster, Celts from Britan of Marnian ancestry portrayed their tribal god as phallic and horn bearing. Indeed, soon in the <u>Tain</u> the object of the raid, the great bull, Donn of Cuailnge will be introduced, but here Derdriu refers to Conchobar. The bull, prominent in ancient goddess worshipping societies like that of Crete and Catal Huyuk, "was a gynarchic symbol and the bull's horns were phallic symbols sacred to the goddess."[169] O. Bahadir Alkim concludes in his study of ancient Anatolia that:

> The cult of the goddess and the worship of the bull are features common to Catal Huyuk and Hocilor in Anatolia on the one hand and to the Minoan religion on the other . . . .[170]

Cases have been made that the torques worn by the Celts are related to the horns of the bull and both Anne Ross and Proinsias MacCana discuss the "horned gods" of the Celts which he connects with material prosperity and fertility.

The bull would be an obvious fertility symbol when seen in connection with the goddess.

This is the basis for Noisiu's reply to Derdriu, "You have the bull of the province to yourself, the king of Ulster."[171] But Derdriu does not wish to mate with an old man who isolates her for himself, refusing her free choice and the exercise of her right to her own body. For her, fertility and plenty come from "a young bull like you."

Noisiu, however, knows the prophecy of Cathbad and refuses her. But Derdriu

> rushed at him and caught the two ears of his head.
> "Two ears of shame and mockery if you don't take me with you."[172]

The usual explanation of Noisiu's reluctance is his loyalty to Conchobar of the new warrior society. Or the hesitation could reflect the Christian scribes' preference for order under a king rather than the freer society embodied in the sons of Uisliu. Again this exchange could set up the love between Derdriu and Noisiu as mythological rather than personal. MacCana's point about the function of love in early Irish literature would support this. "The mythological role of love and sexuality is bound up primarily with the character of the Irish goddess as divine mother and personification of the land."[173] Though Derdriu herself is not seen by MacCana as necessarily divine,

> Whether or not the literary character has a mythological past, the thematic content

> of her story and her dominant personality indicate clearly enough that she was conceived in the image of the divine "femme fatale" of Irish tradition.[174]

The epithet "femme fatale" with its present connotations would not seem to apply in view of MacCana's earlier assertion that the qualities of the Irish goddesses considered negative and contradictory by later interpreters make sense when seen in terms of the raison d'etre of the goddess--sovereignty. Derdriu was "conceived in that divine image" which, like all representations of woman, both influences and reflects the actual historical position of women in the society that creates them. She must choose the love most satisfying and in harmony with her nature and thus with nature itself.

Noisiu obeys the demand to serve her because it goes deeper than loyalty to the transient power of the king. Disaster comes not because of Derdriu's beauty but through Conchobar's inability to accept her right to choose. After she leaves with Noisui and his brothers, the king pursues them, attacking without honor. "Conchobar tried to destroy them often with ambushes and treachery."[175] The land shelters them, as it will other lovers--Grannia and Diarmuid and Tristan and Iseult. In all three stories the women choose young men as partners and reject the older king. In the Irish tradition these tales were known as "aitheda"--elopements--where "a youthful and vigorous lover is opposed to a

mature and possessive husband."[176] The life of the lovers is idyllic, lived in the open, and in Derdriu's case shared without dissension with the other two sons of Uisliu. Derdriu's description of their time together, which contrasts the natural joy of her "forest journey" with the artificial diversions of Conchobar, touches on a central theme of Irish literature--a love for nature that connects in some way with Ireland's pagan roots and is opposed to any system, especially Christianity, which would impose institutional values and dualistic doctrines. Women do not fare well under such systems and it is not surprising to find the goddess in all her epiphanies extolling the freedom of life outside such structures.

Conchobar, however, does not bind himself to honor and violates the kingly quality of "fir flaithemham" [truth of the ruler] and though he offers Derdriu and the sons of Uisliu "guaranties of safety" and sends Fergus as a pledge in order to have them return, when they do he has them killed. Fergus' son who stood in for his father dies in defense of Noisiu. Fergus, absent at the time of the slaughter because of an oath requiring him to attend certain ale feasts, returns and in rage kills Conchobar's son. A great battle ensues and Fergus leaves Ulster with three thousand followers and joins Medb and Ailill in Connacht. "For sixteen years they made sure that weeping and trembling

never died away in Ulster. There was weeping and trembling at their hands every single night."[177]

Derdriu, too, avenges herself on Conchobar. "She never gave one smile, nor took food or sleep, nor lifted up her head from her knees."[178] She speaks as a poet when she rejects the glories of Emain

> Sweet in your sight the fiery stride
> of raiding men returned to Emain,
> More nobly strode the three proud
> sons of Uisliu toward their home.
>
> Noisiu bearing the best mead
> --I would wash him by the fire--
> Ardan, with a stag or boar,
> Anle, shouldering his load.[179]

Noisiu had prepared food for her over an open cooking pit. "Sweeter then than any meat/the son of Uisliu, honey-sweet."[180] Not only does Derdriu celebrate this unstereotypic warrior's behavior but she unashamedly speaks of the physical attributes that attracted her, "His cropped gold fleece," "fine form--a tall tree," "his fitting firm desire," "those blue eyes that melted women," "red-cheeked, sweet as the river brink," "red lipped." How long it would take for women in literature to speak so directly of men and to extol the joys of sexual love. So many modern male writers present women as greedy dependents binding men to narrow lives so that they may have material comforts. When women writers like Margaret Atwood, Maureen Howard, Doris Lessing, Edna O'Brien, Diane Johnson, Simone de Beauvoir reply "not so," they echo Derdriu.

> What use have I now
> With all these nobles crowding Emain
> Comfortless, no peace nor joy,
> nor mansion nor pleasant ornament.[181]

Derdriu remains faithful to the loved one, the true consort of her nature.

> The thing most dear to me in the world
> the very thing I loved
> Your harsh crime took from me
> I won't see him until I die.[182]

When Conchobar realizes he cannot break Derdriu, he brings her to the one actually killed Noisiu--Eogan. The setting is the fair of Macha, and here where another woman cursed the Ulstermen, Derdriu finally eludes Conchobar.

> "This is good, Derdriu," Conchobar said.
> "Between me and Eogan you are a sheep
> eyeing two rams."[183]

Elizabeth Davis, after examining the evidence of archaeology, concluded that the ram became the symbol of patriarchy in the ancient world and entitles her chapter on the overthrow of matriarchal societies by invading patriarchal tribes "Ram Versus Bull." But in this case Derdriu denies the ram victory.

> A big block of stone was in front of her.
> She let her head be driven against the
> stone, and made a mass of fragments of
> it, and she was dead.[184]

But like Macha, Derdriu left a legacy to Conchobar--dissension and weakness. Only Cuchulainn, a hero closely connected with women, will escape the curse and ultimately another woman, Medb, will attack Conchobar. Medb will not

kill herself for revenge but exercise her sovereignty in a direct way until Conchobar, in the stories that follow the great cattle raid, loses Cuchulainn and is defeated himself.

David Greene points out

> It's a common enough device to choose, as the subject of a national epic, a people or kingdom which has no longer any real political existence--it prevents any charges of undue favoritism against the literary men.[185]

The Ulstermen fit that description and are ultimately vanquished by an alliance of their enemies called throughout the Tain "the men of Ireland." Only Cuchulainn escapes the pangs of the Ulstermen. Though he is related to them through his mother, somehow the connection does not make him one of that race. It might be that he represents the landless prince whose true identity comes through his marriage to the princess. It is true that his wooing and life with Emer receives considerable attention in the Ulster stories as does his training in arms by the woman Scathach and his battle with Aife, by whom he has a child. These women live in Alba--connected to Scotland and the kingdom of the Picts, a tribe that even the most reluctant scholar must admit were organized along matrilineal lines. Bede explains it too fully to be ignored.

> According to Bede the Picts came from Scythia and landed in the north of Ireland. The Irish (Scotti) refused to allow them to remain in Ireland but advised them to settle in Britain. The Picts having no wives, the Irish gave

> them wives on condition that, whenever there was any doubt about the royal succession, they would choose their kings 'magis de feminea regum prospai quam de masculina.'[186]

O'Rahilly goes on to say that "The reference to Irish wives is, of course, intended to explain in a way flattering to the Irish, why among the Picts eligibility for kingship depended on the candidate's mother being of the royal line."[187] Then in a comment that recognizes the length male scholars will go to displace notions of matrilineal succession, O'Rahilly notes that "Skene, however, sees in it only an oblique way of saying that the early Picts spoke Irish as their 'mother tongue'!"[188]

Kinsella chooses to begin the Tain proper with "The Pillow Talk" although the story comes from the twelfth century book of Leinster, not the older Lebor na hUidre/Yellow Book of Lecan version which he prefers for the majority of the epic. When David Greene presented the tale in his radio lecture he included "The Pillow Talk" also. Why? In the phrase so often used by the Irish scribes, "It is not hard to tell." Whether this story is a later interpolation or a literary set up, it must have been a favorite for ancient audiences though modern scholars found the picture given of Medb a stumbling block. We begin "when the royal bed was laid out for Ailill and Medb in Cruachan fort in Connacht." Cruachan is in Roscommon, at Rath Cruachan, where a cave

called "the cave of Cruachu" considered the gateway to the otherworld still has supernatural connotations for the people. There, "they had this talk on the pillows."

Ailill opens with a remark that sounds casual, the kind of lazy statement people do make to each other at night in the intimate moments before sleep.

> "It is true what they say, love," Ailill said, "it is well for the wife of a wealthy man."[189]

Medb agrees with this as a general statement, "True enough," but then, aware that nothing said between couples is really casual, she asks, "What put that in your mind?" She is right. Ailill's remark does have personal implications. "'It struck me,' Ailill said, 'how much better off you are today than the day I married you.'"[190] Those words could start an argument in any marriage, but to say that to a warrior queen? Still Medb responds with surprising calmness. "'I was well enough off without you,' Medb said."[191] Now Ailill could agree to this, go to sleep, and the argument would be over, but he pushes.

> "Then your wealth was something I didn't know or hear about," Ailill said, "Except for your woman's things and the neighboring enemies making off with loot and plunder."[192]

Here Ailill seems to deliberately provoke Medb--a good device to get the story going. It is easy to imagine Medb sitting up in bed, all attention now--no more lazy pillow conversation.

Medb reminds Ailill that her father is Eochaid Feidlech, the steadfast, high King of Ireland. She has five noble sisters of whom Medb herself is "the highest and haughtiest."

> I outdid them in grace and giving and battle and warlike combat. I had fifteen hundred soldiers in my royal pay, all exiles' sons, and the same number of freeborn native men . . . .[193]

She goes on to name her soldiers until it is a huge number, concluding, "And that was only our ordinary household!"

Her father gave her a whole province of Ireland, she says, which she rules from Cruachan, "which is why I am called 'Medb of Cruachan.'" Throughout the Tain "Ireland" refers to the provinces that unite against the Ulaid and here Medb asserts her identity with Ireland as well as her command of a province. She then reminds Ailill of the list of suitors who sought her hand.

O Maille, in his groundbreaking article presenting Medb as "the sovereignty of Ireland," sees these suitor/husbands (suitors in this version but husbands in Cath Boinde) as contenders for the kingship. Citing the texts Cath Boinde and Ferchuitred Medba edited by Joseph O'Neill, O Maille points out that here Conchobar is Medb's first husband whom she forsook "through pride of mind." The text adds "and the first cause of the stirring up of the Cattle-Raid Cuailgne was the desertion of Conchobar by Medb against his will."[194] This reinforces the Tain picture of Medb as powerful in her

own right. Of note here, too, is O Maille's summary of this passage which he says contains two statements of significance: "(1) that Conchobar was Medb's first husband; (2) that his desertion was the cause of the first provocation of the Cattle-Raid of Cuailnge."[195] O Maille by "his desertion" means, of course, the desertion of Conchobar by Medb, but did he intend to phrase it so that the focus is on the king?

The statement could be read as if Conchobar deserted Medb. This ambiguity, I think, reflects the difficulty male scholars have with allowing Medb her central role. This happens again in his discussion of Medb's next husband, Tinde Mac Connrach. The text says that when Fidach mac Feicc went to Tara "to establish his claim to (lit. to collect) the kingship . . . he asked Medb of Eochaid Feidlech." However, Tinde mac Connrach heard of this and fought Fidach "at the streams of the Shannon"--a place sacred to the goddess. But Medb does not mate with Tinde immediately; instead her father drives him "to the wilds of Connacht" and puts "Medb in the royal seat in Cruachan." The text concludes with the explanation:

> So that Medb and Tinde met so that they were mated a long time after that, so that it was in Cruachan the public celebrations (lit. gatherings) of Ireland were wont to be held. And the sons of the kings of Ireland used to be with Medb in Cruachan at that time if they were able (to engage) in war with the province of Conchobar.[196]

This episode appears to say that no king could rule in Connacht unless Medb mated with him and that she chose when that time would be since she occupied the royal seat in Cruachan which had an important place for all in Ireland and was used as a rallying point for those who opposed Conchobar. O Maille, however, shifts the focus to Tinde mac Connrach and summarizes the episode this way: "(1) that Tinde mac Connrach of the Fir Domnann held, for a time the sovereignty of Connacht, (2) that Medb then became his wife."[197] Where the passage clearly shows Medb as active, O Maille makes her passive--the "wife" of Tinde Mac Connrach --and it is he who "held the sovereignty." O Maille, perhaps without realizing it, weakens the concept of Medb as "sovereignty of Ireland" by reducing it to a prize to be won rather than as a right exercise of power. The goddess chooses the king who can best serve the interests of the people and mates with him to insure prosperity. As has been said before, this ancient view of the sacral nature of kingship allows for an extension of this fruitful union into the lives of the men and women of the kingdom. So all-pervasive is this metaphoric representation that even St. Paul, not a champion of women ("It is a good principle for a man to have no physical contact with women." I Corinthians 7:1), personified the Church as a bride with Christ as her husband and uses that metaphor as a model for Christian marriage. "The marriage relationship is doubtless a great

mystery, but I am speaking of something deeper still--the marriage of Christ and his Church" (Ephesians 5: 27).

However, when the union takes place against the wishes of the woman, disaster follows. In the Ferchuitred when Eochaid brings Medb to Tara, "Conchobar stayed after the others in the fair watching Medb as she went to the Boyne to bathe, so that he (Conchobar) met her there, overcame her and violated her."[198] For Conchobar to violate Medb in the Boyne, sacred to the goddess Boann who inhabits it, compounds his offense against her. But Medb triumphs. Rescued by her father, Medb goes with the Connachtmen and "through dint of fighting" they regain control "so that they were not dared from the Boyne to the Shannon."[199] Again the rivers, who are the goddesses Boann and Sena, the old one, are invoked. When Eochaid was appointed king, it was "with the consent of Medb if he became her husband."[200] This time, however, Medb sets the three conditions that contain both the standards by which she measured a man's worthiness and the ground rules for a successful union with her. This is her "bride price"--"that he should have neither jealousy, fear, nor niggardliness." This corresponds with the formulation used in the Book of Leinster version, which Kinsella translates, "For I asked a harder wedding gift than any woman ever asked before from a man in Ireland--the absence of meanness and jealousy and fear."[201]

In the Book of Leinster _Tain_ Medb says she chose Ailill because he embodied that "bride price" and was not "greedy or jealous or sluggish." But while in the _Tain_ Ailill is the son of Rus Ruad of Leinster, in another version he is the grandson of Medb's sister, Ele, and comes to Cruachan as a child. There he grows into "a proud spirited warrior" and Medb "loved him for his virtues." Medb and Ailill unite, but her husband Eochaid seeks to drive both of them out because of jealousy. But Medb wins and Ailill "became king of Connacht with the consent of Medb" so that in all the traditions he is her consort at the time of the Cattle Raid.

There is nothing in the _Tain_ or in the other stories of Medb where she is condemned for the multiplicity of her relationships. In each case it is the husband who fails to measure up in some important way and is therefore replaced. As will be seen, Medb is criticized in the _Tain_ only when she is losing a battle or has suggested a course of action with which her advisers disagree. Her right to choose her sexual partners is not questioned. Ailill passes his test and remains her husband because he controls his jealousy of Fergus with whom Medb has sexual relations. Ailill explains, "She is justified. She does it to keep his help on the Tain." Perhaps part of his generous understanding comes because Fergus lost his sword in the encounter with Medb. This seems to mean that Fergus cannot match Medb sexually. Ailill feels he more than equals Fergus, for he

tells the great warrior that though Fergus may be "ruling the game" and controlling "eager armies," he, Ailill, will not be usurped ". . . not even if you win/Can you take my place/I know all/about queens and women." And what does he know? "I lay first fault/straight at women's/own sweet swellings/and loving lust."[202] Though "fault" does sound negative, still Ailill recognizes that his appreciation for "sweet swellings" and "loving lust" empowers him and makes his position with Medb secure.

Perhaps this understanding of women comes from his connection with them. In the one tradition he comes to Cruachan because of Medb's sister and in the Tain he "came and took the kingship here, in succession to my mother Mata Muiresc, Magech's daughter." Like Conchobar Mac Nessa--"son of Nes," his mother--Ailill is called mac Mata--son of Mata. This may recall a system similar to that of the Picts where kingship came through the mother. These names of kings perhaps reflect the time when women did rule and gives Medb, Cartimandua, Boudicca, and the rich tomb of a 30 year old Celtic woman found in Vix as evidence of the position women occupy in a tradition where the sovereignty of Ireland is personified as a woman.

Medb's "bride price" demands that a king possess these qualities not only to fulfill his function in the tribe but also in order that he can equal her. Medb wants a man who

is her match. Her reasoning, mentioned before, bears repeating.

> If I married a mean man our union would be wrong because I'm so full of grace and giving. It would be an insult if I were more generous than my husband but not if the two of us were equal in this. If my husband was a timid man our union would be just as wrong because I thrive myself on all kinds of trouble. It is an insult for a wife to be more spirited than her husband but not if the two are equally spirited. If I married a jealous man that would be wrong, too. I never had one man without another waiting in his shadow.[202]

The "pillow talk" changes when Ailill insists his wealth and property are greater than Medb's. At this point the argument loses its domestic intimacy and becomes a pitched battle between a royal pair who can indulge their tempers. The audience must have enjoyed the demonstration as Medb and Ailill demand that all their wealth be assembled. Retainers hurry off to bring in the herds of pigs and horses, sheep and cattle, as well as "buckets, tubs, and iron pots," jewels and gold treasures, cloth "of purple, blue, black, green, and yellow, plain grey and many coloured, yellow-brown, checked and striped." Everything is "measured and matched and noted." All is equal except for one animal. The calf of one of Medb's cows grew to be great bull, Finnbenach, the White-horned, and he "refusing to be led by a woman had gone over to the king's herd." So Medb, who couldn't "find in her herd the equal of this bull," reacts

in a way that plummets her from majesty into the world of human feeling: "her spirits dropped as though she hadn't a penny." Here is an instance of the way women characters in Irish literature incorporate in themselves both commonplace and exalted qualities. As Nora Chadwick comments in her summing up of Irish mythology:

> I would call attention to the naturalness with which men, women and the gods meet and pass in and out of the natural and supernatural spheres. In many instances there does not seem to have been any barrier.[203]

Because of that view of reality, figures like Medb and Cuchulainn can in their own characters blend the natural and the supernatural. At one moment they are fearsome and preternaturally brave; at another they appear weak, in thrall to their emotions and human needs. I think the joy Irish audiences took in this alternating inflation and deflation of character continued throughout the literary history of Ireland. James Joyce practiced this art, choosing to name his final masterpiece after a piece of popular music.

Here the great royal Medb suddenly becomes a country girl who, like the protagonist of the Irish folk song "An Draighnean Donn" [The Blackthorn Tree] wishes that her love "heed not gold . . . nor sheep in the fold" but take her as she is.[204] However, Medb, unlike the girl singing her story, knows no diminution of her powers. After a momentary drop in spirits, she takes action. Medb summons her

messenger Mac Roth who knows where to "find such a bull and better . . . in the province of Ulster in the territory of Cuailnge, in Daire mac Fiachna's house. Donn Cuailnge is the bull's name, the Brown Bull of Cuailnge."[205] Thus Mac Roth introduces the figure that for some interpreters of the _Tain_ represents the original motivation for all the stories. Proinsias MacCana writes of the Donn and his ultimate conflict with Finnbenach, Medb's "White-horned," fickle bull:

> In this encounter of the two bulls we seem to have the original nucleus of myth around which the extant narrative of _Tain Bo Cuailnge_ has been assembled. These animals are not of this world: they reached their present state we are told only after a prolonged series of metamorphoses during which they assumed the form of ravens, stags, champions, water beasts, demons and water worms and in the beginning they were swineherds of two of the lords of the otherworld. . . . For these are divine herdsmen, avatars of the herdsmen gods who crop up so very frequently in Celtic literature.[206]

As discussed earlier, the connection of the bull with the great goddess of the Near East is a feature of these mythologies. For Joseph Campbell the bull is preeminently the symbol of the primal moment when male and female, life and death, spirit and flesh, dark and light, were not divided but one--all aspects of a single reality in which we ultimately live and move and have our being. I would like to quote him at length because his insights endow this battle of bulls to which the _Tain_ leads us so implacably with the same significance I find in every element of the

Irish tradition--a sense of the indivisibility of reality, the circle unbroken in a recirculation of being where contraries dissolve, a correspondence replaces differentiation and the place of the dead is known as "the land of the ever young." Campbell, commenting on ancient representations of the bull, says:

> The symbol here seems to represent the plane of juncture of earth and heaven, the goddess and the god, who appear to be two but are in being one. For, as we know from an ancient Sumerian myth, heaven (An) and the earth (Ki) were in the beginning a single undivided mountain (Anki) of which the lower part, the earth, was female and the upper, heaven, male. But the two were separated (as Adam into Adam and Eve) by their son Enlil (in the Bible by their "Creator" "Yahweh") whereupon the world of temporality appeared (as it did when Eve ate the apple). The ritual marriage and connubium was to be understood as a reconstruction of the primal undifferentiated state, both in meditation (psychological aspect) for the refreshment of the soul, and in act (magical aspect) for the fertilization and renovation of nature whereby it was also to be recognized that there is a plane or mode of being where that primal state is ever present though to the mind and eye of day all seem otherwise. The state of the ultimate bull, that is to say, is invisible, black pitch black.[207]

Campbell, after a lifetime studying the myths of the world, concluded that the result of the patriarchal displacement of the goddess has been an alienation from this inner unity.

> . . . Where the female principle is devaluated as always happens when a power

> of nature and the psyche is excluded from its place, it has turned into a negative, as a demoness, dangerous and fierce. Throughout the following history of the orthodox patriarchal systems of the West, . . . the power this goddess mother of the world . . . defamed, abused, insulted, and overthrown by her sons, is to remain as an ever present threat to their castle of reason, which is founded upon a soil that they consider to be dead but is actually alive, breathing and threatening to shift.[208]

In addition to the terror caused by the "sons'" sense of this threatened shift and the violence men visit on women and each other in consequence of this fear, "with this turn from the plane of the mother to that of the sons the sense of the identity of life and death disappears, together with that of the power of life to bring forth its own good forms." What results is "strife and effort, defamation of what is alien, pretentiousness, grandiloquence, and a lurking sense of guilt." These consequences followed the displacement of the goddess and her consort, the bull.

Campbell suggests that in Crete as in Egypt the bull replaced the young king in the ancient ritual slaying by which the goddess was honored and fertility returned to the earth. So we could see the battle of Donn Cuailnge as a ritual death ceremony where instead of being slain as bulls were in Crete and Egypt and still are in Spain, Portugal, and Spanish America, the animals dispatch themselves. Indeed, they leave parts of their bodies throughout Ireland and Kinsella comments on the attention lavished on the

naming of each of these places. The bulls seem to sacrifice themselves to the land--sowing it with the seed of their dismembered bodies. Therefore, the Donn sends Finnbenach's horn flying and names Slabn Adarca, The Mountain of the Horn; where the shoulder blade drops becomes "Finnlethe," The White One's Shoulderblades; the loins, Ath Lucain, the Ford of the Loins; and so on until having sown Finnbenach's body the Donn falls dead "between Ulster and Ui Echach at Druim Tarib. So Druim Tarib, The Ridge of the Bull, is the name of that place," finishing the ritual. After his death "Ailill and Medb made peace with Ulster and Cuchlainn. For seven years afterward none of their people was killed in Ireland." It is as if the ritual bull sacrifice having taken place and sovereignty restored to her rightful place, peace comes forth, or, to use Campbell's formulation, "a reconstruction of the primal undifferentiated state" has been achieved.

Campbell's ideas of the ultimate bull as the mode of being when the primal unity is available through trance finds convincing confirmation in an ancient Irish divination ritual for the selection of kings, the tarbhfhess 'bull feast or bull sleep.' As MacCana explains:

> . . . a bull was killed and a man ate his fill of its flesh, drank his broth and then lay down to sleep, and after an incantation had been chanted over him by four druids he saw in his sleep whoever was destined to be king.[209]

This method was associated with the kingship of Tara and may represent "rituals once performed at the central seat of kingship." So we circle back to again and again, the inauguration ceremony for the king after the marriage with the goddess of Sovereignty, "The wedding ritual of the bannais righi evidently comprised two main elements, a libation offered by her bride to her partner and the coition."

Did the meditative journey of the bullsleep lead into a state of being in which centuries disappear? The choice of Tara as a site for this ritual underscores its transcendent nature. Alwyn and Brinley Rees in Celtic Heritage make the point that though modern Ireland is divided into four great provinces Connacht, Ulster, Munster, Leinster, the Irish word for provinces is coiced, "a fifth," "and the expression five fifths of Ireland is familiar to all who speak the Gaelic tongue." This seems to imply, they say, a center--the mystical fifth which united the other four--Tara. Seven years seems to have been the interval between the feasts of Tara where the kings of Ireland "used to settle the affairs of Ireland for seven years, so that debts, suits and adjustments used not to be submitted for judgment until the next feast seven years later" (p. 171). This is the same amount of time peace reigns in Ireland after the Cattle Raid ends with the death of the bulls. However, here death equals transcendence and regeneration through the rebirth of the land.

But why the slaughter of the soldiers of Medb by Cuchulainn that precedes the bull's battles? Perhaps here, too, the idea of the destructive energy caused by the devaluation of the goddess applies. Medb herself does not seek a war. She sends a generous offer to the Donn's owner, Daire mac Fiachna.

> Ask Daire to lend me Donn Cuailnge for a year. At the end of the year he can have fifty yearling heifers in payment for the loan and the Brown Bull of Cuailnge back.

In fact she has even thought of the possible political implications for Daire and so if the "people of the country think badly of losing their fine jewel," then the messenger should also offer "a portion of fine plain of Ai equal to his own lands, and a chariot worth thrice seven bondmaids and my own friendly thighs on top of that."[210]

It seems a friendly offer, one calculated to produce unity on every level rather than war. As the bull stood in for the young god kings, so now his actual regenerating activities can suffice for regeneration through death. "Daire was delighted, and jumped for joy till the seams of his cushion burst under him." He accepts though it means a certain disassociation with Conchobar and the Ulster warriors. Daire prefers Medb's friendly thighs.

But the agreement falls apart, destroyed by the very male pretentious grandiloquence that Campbell mentions as a consequence of the displacement of the female. Like Macha's

husband, the lower messengers from Connacht begin to brag that if Daire had not given them the Donn they would have taken it. When his servants tell Daire this, he is furious. He would kill all the messengers if hospitality did not restrain him. The deal is off. Mac Roth, Medb's voice, argues that Daire cannot blame the queen, for "what messengers say into your food and drink hardly deserves your notice." But to no avail. Medb then shows that she, like the other strong women in Irish tradition, embodies the contradictory characteristics necessary to preserve sovereignty. As Warrior Queen she assembles the hosts for war. On that day the men of Ireland arrayed in their finery, carrying spears "like a palace pillar," with splendid war chariots, gathered. They finally set forth from Cruachan after waiting two weeks for a favorable sign from the Druids. Medb confides to her charioteer: "Everyone leaving a lover or a friend today will curse me." To which he replies, "Wait a minute until I turn the chariot around to the right, with the sun, to draw down the power of the sign for our safe return" (p. 60).

Medb's concern and the charioteer's evocation of a higher power suggest the maternal, life affirming aspects of her character which coexist with the warlike ones. As MacCana pointed out in the passage quoted earlier, these contradictions must be referred to the fundamental nexus of the responsibility of the goddess for the security of the kingdom she embodied. In some fashion the loss of the bull,

with all its symbolic significance, diminishes Medb's stature which she must regain. At this point Fedilm, the woman poet of Connacht appears with the dire prediction for Medb's host which her gift, the imbas forasnai, the Light of Foresight, reveals to her, "I see it crimson, I see it red," but Medb sets out.

Now the swift narrative of the text slows down to name sixty places the army of Medb passes through. As has been said, this attention to place marks much of Irish literature and one branch of the native tradition is "dinnshenchas" or the lore of prominent places which connects historical and mythical events to the land itself. Again it is well to remember that landscape of Ireland belongs in a special way to the female deities.

> For it is these as avatars, or manifestations of the earth goddess, who are primarily associated with the land in all its various aspects: its fertility, its sovereignty, its embodiment of the powers of death as well as life and so on.[211]

Medb leads her army across Ireland both gathering from the land and bestowing on it the contradictory powers she holds.

The army first encounters Cuchulainn at Cuil Silinne, at Caucin Lake which the text tells us "was named after Silenn, daughter of Madchar," an instance of the Irish penchant for seeing rivers, lakes, and streams as manifestations of the female deity. Here an incident happens that is often used to Medb's disadvantage. After she observes the obvious

superiority of the Galeoin over all the other soldiers she decides they cannnot come on the Tain. They will steal all the glory. But to leave them behind means risking the unprotected lands of the other tribes.

> "Kill them," Medb said.
>
> "That is a woman's thinking and no mistake!" Ailill said. "A wicked thing to say."
>
> "These men are our friends," Fergus said for the Ulster exiles. "You will take this evil advice over our dead bodies." (p. 66)

The demurs of Ailill and Fergus are hard to reconcile with the ruthlessness both will show on occasion, but here the remarks "this is a woman's thinking" seems to support Frank O'Connor's point that the Tain is an anti-feminist tract. However, Medb's concern that the Galeoin not usurp the places of the other soldiers more immediately connected to her makes more sense in view of MacCana's point that the exercise of sovereignty often demanded stern measures. A parallel instance in which the other Medb--Medb Lethderg "the half red" of Leinster--separates the Father from the Laighis so "they might not be united nor near each other . . . so that their strength against her descendants might be less, for she was a shrewd, wise woman and she was fierce and merciless" seems an analog.[212] Medb Cruachan agrees to a similar division and the Galeoin are scattered amongst the army. It seems Medb's motives--the good of her people--made

such actions popularly accepted. Consider this selection from the "dinnshenchas":

> The six women that are the best that were
> in the world,
> after Mary, the mother of God,
> are Medb, Sadb, Sarait (noble portion)
> Erc and Emer and Achall.[213]

Fergus, however, shows real treachery first by sending a warning to Cuchulainn and then by leading the Army on a roundabout way. Medb notices and expresses her concern in verse.

> Fergus, there is something wrong.
> What kind of road is this we're taking--
> straying to the south or north,
> crossing every kind of land.[214]

Where directions and geography have such significance Medb's alarm is doubly justified. She offers Fergus an honorable alternative:

> If old friendship is the cause
> give up your first place on the march.
> Perhaps another can be found
> to take us on our proper way.[215]

But Fergus refuses this chance to be honorable. "There's no treachery in this." Throughout the Cattle Raid Fergus' mixed feelings toward the Ulstermen and Cuchulainn are of primary importance in the development of the story. A Chicago alderman recently remarked about political alliances, "If you want loyalty get a German shepherd." To which a former mayor replied, "And even they sometimes bite." Fergus' relationship to Medb, who took him and the troop of exiles, is essentially political in that it was

made to serve the purposes of both as long as it violates the sovereignty of neither. So Medb does not condemn Fergus' trick but she does want to know what he is up to. Though his name connotes virility from the incident in the woods mentioned before, he does not seem to be up to her sexually. Does this failing combined with the treachery his old ties to Ulster cause mark him as someone ineligible to be Medb's consort? Do the stories emphasize his essential alienness from the men of Ireland as an explanation for why the Ulaid do ultimately lose Emain Macha though they succeeded on the Tain because of Cuchulainn? At the end of the _Tain_, Cuchulainn and Medb's daughter Finnabair are together though earlier Finnabair has dropped dead of shame. Cuchulainn's love for his wife Emer is stressed in the tales about him and this love is unaffected by his affairs with other women.

Once, for example, Cuchulainn does attempt to bring the fairy woman Fand in as a second wife, promising Emer that "There is little she would/not do for her lover's wife/if it were agreed between them." He thinks he is on solid ground since the Brehon laws allow for second wives. However, at the same time the first wife is permitted three days to injure the incoming one without penalty. Emer chooses this option, coming at Fand with a knife. She relents, however, while explaining to Cuchulainn that this new woman is no better than she:

> But everything glittering is beautiful,
> Everything new is bright, everything far
> is fair,
> Everything lacking is lovely, everything
> customary is sour,
> everything familiar is neglected
> until all knowledge be known.[216]

After this speech Fand leaves and Cuchulainn and Emer resume their life together.

MacCana describes Cuchulainn as "the invincible hero to whom fate ordains a short life with lasting glory" (p. 101). In the first chapter I tried to show the danger when this heroic ideal is translated into modern terms. But in the Irish tradition these heroes are not cut off from women as in other traditions and do not quite qualify as the woman suppressors that other culture heroes do. Cuchulainn cures his wounds by bathing them in the rivers of the goddesses--twenty river names are listed. Medb is in the thick of the battle when Cethren, who is so fearsome he kills not only enemies but the healers who try to attend him, arrives at Cuchulainn's camp; his worst wound is credited to Medb.

> "A tall, fair, long faced woman with soft features came at me. She had a head of yellow hair, and two gold birds on her shoulders. She wore a purple cloak folded about her. She carried a light stinging lance in her hand, and she held an iron sword with a woman's grip over her head--a massive figure. It was she who came against me first."
> "Then I'm sorry for you," Cuchulainn said, "That was Medb of Cruachan."[217]

Again when Conall Cernach taunts Fergus, "You rage very hard at your kith and kin for the sake of a whore's

backside," Medb takes direct action and "took up her weapons and hurried into battle. Three times she drove all before her until she was turned back by a wall of javelins." Even as he betrays Connacht--sparing Conchobar, cutting up hill tops instead of Ulstermen, giving way to Cuchulainn and withdrawing his troop, Fergus blames Medb for the defeat. "We followed the rump of a misguided woman," Fergus said. "It is the usual thing for a herd lead by a mare to be strayed and destroyed." Still Fergus stands guard for her when, in the throes of the battle, Medb "got her gush of blood."

> So Fergus took over the shields at the rear of the men of Ireland and Medb relieved herself. It dug three great channels, each big enough to take a household. The place is called Fual Medba, Medb's Foul Place.[218]

Medb menstruates as all women do but she does it gigantically and for Cuchulainn this aspect of Medb supersedes their enmity.

> Cuchulainn found her like this, but he held his hand. He wouldn't strike her from behind.
>
> "Spare me," Medb said.
>
> "If I killed you dead, Cuchulainn said, "it would only be right." But he spared her, not being a killer of women.[219]

The woman and the hero come to an accommodation. Her power cannot be denied. Her sacred bulls battle and peace comes.

Having said all this, I still have not begun to plumb

the mysteries of the Tain. It is a lifetime study. But in this translation Thomas Kinsella makes participation in the mystery possible. The women of the Tain make the goddess of sovereignty present with great consequence for understanding Irish literature and history. MacCana puts it well when he says that though the notion of the sacral kingship and the sacred marriage of king and goddess "are not peculiarly Celtic . . . what is remarkable is the persistence and vigor of these concepts in the tradition of the only Celtic society which remained relatively untouched by Roman tradition."

He goes on: "They profoundly influenced the telling and writing of Irish history and doubtless they contributed much to its making." And then he makes a most telling speculation: "One may reasonably wonder, for instance, whether Boudica of the British Iceni or Cartimandua of the Brigantes would have figured so prominently in history but for the fact that the Celts venerated a sovereign and dominant goddess variously known as Medb, or Macha or Brigante."[220]

As we enter the historical period that question almost answers itself as each generation produces women who affect the destiny of the nation until the twin patriarchs of State and Church finally subdue them. Then in our own times they return and myth again acts on history with literature as its tool. Macha, Derdriu, and Medb survived the fate of other Bronze Age heroines because respect for the goddess never

completely disappeared from Ireland. Somehow Anna Livia and Molly Bloom exist because of this tradition and carry it on, created by an artist who both sought and feared the journey beyond apposites without which transcendence is not possible. As the Donn Cuailnge dies a new ritual appears on the horizon, that of Christianity. How will Medb survive Patrick?

It is well to remember that the famous scribal note written in Latin at the end of the _Tain_ which registers scepticism, "I . . . do not credit the details of the story . . . , Some things are devilish lies, and some poetical figments . . . ," is not the last word. There is also the final note in Irish, "A blessing on everyone who will memorize the Tain faithfully in the form and not put any other form on it."[221]

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214 *Tain*, p. 69.

215 *Tain*, p. 69.

216 Montague, p. 75.

217 *Tain*, p. 208.

218 *Tain*, p. 250.

219 *Tain*, p. 250.

220 *CM*, p. 121.

221 *Tain*, p. 283.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFTER PATRICK

> It was ages behind that . . . before she ever dreamt she'd lave Kilbride and go foaming under Horsepass bridge . . . .
>
> Finnegans Wake

The move from the literature of pagan Ireland, where women figures like Macha and Medb express all sides of their nature freely and fearlessly, into the early Christian Ireland is done with a certain trepidation. The old assumption that Christianity raised the status of women and without God the Father and Christ his Son we would be mistreated slaves doomed to live in harems, so forth, has been challenged by the coming to light of the women's movement. Rather than encouraging liberation, Christianity is seen by some as a rationale for women's oppression. Feminist scholars point out the antifeminist tradition of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Mary Daly in Beyond God the Father assumes all of this is by now common knowledge:

> The infamous passages of the Old and New Testament are well known. I need not allude to the misogynism of the Church Fathers, for example, Tertullian, who informed women in general: "You are the devil's gateway" or Augustine, who opined that women are not made in the image of God. I can omit reference to Thomas

> Aquinas and his numerous commentators and disciples who defined women as misbegotten males. I can overlook Martin Luther's remark that God created Adam lord over all living creatures but Eve spoiled it all. I can pass over the fact that John Knox composed a "First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women." All of this, after all, is past history.[1]

She then goes on to discuss the effects of the present anti-woman basis of the Churches and suggest, finally, that the healing process must lead us beyond God the Father, as the mirror image of the male, to a concept of the Deity as "the Good Who is self-communicating Be-ing, Who is the Verb from whom, in whom, and with whom all true movements move."[2]

Hans Kung, too, in his <u>On Being a Christian</u>, raises the question of ". . . how problematic is the use of the name 'Father' as applied to God, particularly in the age of women's emancipation. . . . Are we not making God in the image of man, to be more exact of a male human being?" He then considers the issue of pre-patriarchal religions. "But there is food for thought in the fact that the 'Great Mother' in matriarchal cultures from whose womb all things in their variety emerged and to whom they return, takes the place of the Father-God."[3] Kung points out that though "the question is still debated among historians . . . if matriarchy turns out to be older than patriarchy, the cult of the Mother-Goddess--which in Asia Minor had some influence on

the later cult of Mary--would have preceded chronologically that of the Father-God."[4] He then concludes:

> To address God as Father can no longer be used as the religious justification of a social paternalism at the expense of suppression of the feminine element in the Church (or Ministry).[5]

Feminist scholars would agree and would argue that the social paternalism exercised in the name of God as Father kept women not only from true participation in the world but real communion with her authentic self. Nor does the religion have to be of the sacral variety. Certain schools of philosophy and psychology reinforced patriarchal modes of being for woman at the expense of her true being. As women discovered to our horror when we began to look at ourselves without the blinders imposed by a sexist culture, there is "an internalized patriarchal presence," an outpost of the repressive enemy within us--telling us that we could only do certain things, be certain ways, voice certain opinions, feel certain emotions. To do otherwise was to be condemned by both society and yourself. However, as women began acting more from their authentic selves, these fears became controllable. In fact, Carol Brecker preparing her new book _Women and Anxiety_, says that for women to _feel_ anxiety is actually a step forward. Before women were too depressed to be afraid.

The fearless women of pagan Ireland--be they goddesses, queens, poets, or warriors--did not conform to patriarchal

modes. The revulsion their deeds caused in male scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century underscores how far these women deviated from the masculine view of what a woman is. Contemporary male scholars have gone beyond such obviously sexist behavior. But when even someone as sensitive to women's issues as William Thompson describes women scholars as falling on evidence of the ancient worship of a Great Mother goddess and matriarchal cultures "with shouts of Amazonian joy," his flippant tone undercuts the seriousness of other scholars' work and shows how deeply men still misunderstand the need of women to shatter "the great silence" that encases so much of woman's history. In many cultures the Church was an agent of that "great silence" but in Ireland the accommodation between Christianity and paganism took a particular path that allowed the sovereign woman to survive longer than in other cultures.

Why? To answer, let us consider three women figures from Early Christian literature--Caillech or Nun of Beare, Brigid, and Liadan. The first is an epiphany of the Sovereignty of Erin and speaker in what has been called "the greatest of Irish poems." The second is a saint of the Church, and the third a woman poet.

Proinsias MacCana, makes two pertinent points in discussing the Caillech Bherri, "as famous in modern Irish folklore as she evidently was in the early traditions," and the poem in which she speaks of her life. First, he points out

that the real subject of this poem, it has been claimed, "is the deep incompatability between Christianity and the world of pagan belief and the inevitable outcome of their conflict in the conquest and impoverishment of the latter." For Mac Cana this is "one of the great crucial themes of the Irish past and it is handled here with an artistic restrain and a depth of understanding and compassion that match its importance.

But his second point is the significance of the monastic poet's choice "to present this great ideological theme through the legend of the Caillech Bherri, mother-goddess, shaper and guardian of the land . . . and consort of kings." For MacCana this confirms the emphasis influence of the concept of the goddess of sovereignty. The monk writing the poems plays on the word "caillech" and has the woman who "dropped cairns on to hills in Meath out of her aprons, was responsible for moving islands in west Kerry, built mountains from rocks carried in her creel in Scotland, and was queen of the Limerick fairies," take the nun's veil, "caille." But the veil, the imposition, does not change the woman. She laments her age, not the activities of her youth. It must be noted, too, that according to tradition she moved through cycles of youth and age. "She entered on seven periods of youth so that every husband used to pass from her to death through old age, and so that her

grandchildren and great-grandchildren were peoples and races" (MacCana, CM, pp. 94-95).

Though it is ebb tide for her in the poem, still by making the joys of her youth so vivid--the pagan past--it becomes present for the audience and she recreates her lost world through poetry. If we grant to Irish mythology its rootedness in a true spiritual reality--a communication with the transcendent state of primal unity--then even if its trappings are taken away something of it will survive. I think the reason why women continue to figure prominently in literature is because they were seen as the vessels of that past. The monks were not stupid. They *did* destroy much of the Druidic lore which they felt conflicted with Christian teachings. Much of what they saw as antagonistic probably concerned items such as cosmogeny, eschatology, and rituals.[6] Efforts to decipher the ogham stones or the cult of the Sacred Trees have not been notably successful. Here the censorship of the monks is aided by the secrecy of the original pagan priests. However, the goddesses remain, criticized sometimes, but there nonetheless. They appear in the tales, the poems, the place lore representing life and plenty, warlike in defense of their people but maternal and beautiful, offering love, honor and transcendence.

Elizabeth Gould Davis suggests Saint Patrick converted Ireland because he connected Mary with the Magna Mater--the Great Goddess "of many names yet only one personality."

Davis says:

> The story is told that when, in his new Romish robes of authority [Patrick] landed on the Irish coast he found the Irish gathered together worshipping an image of Brigante, the mother of the gods. Patrick of the nimble wit and nimbler tongue soon convinced them that the mother of the gods was really Mary, the Mother of God. . . . Ireland to this day is a Mary-centered rather than a Jesus centered land.[7]

Granted Davis makes a complicated idea very simple, still she raises an interesting point. When we come to St. Brigit we encounter much learned opinion that connects her with the Celtic goddess Brigit. In "The Lebar Brecc Homily on St. Patrick" when the Saint undertakes the important conversion of the sons of Niall, Brigit is "along with him." She is the one who names Columcille as the one "without blemish." Patrick then, using a familiar phrase, foretells that "the sovereignty of Erin" will belong to the descendants of Niall, Columcille's ancestor. Patrick leaves "a blessing on his folk and on his rivermouths."[8] It is perhaps significant that the monastic writer used "rivermouths" to stand in for the land, recalling as it does the pagan belief that the female divinities of a place manifested themselves in rivers. Then when Patrick visits another branch of the Ui Neill he says:

> The race of Eogan, son of Niall, soon, <u>O fair Brigit</u>!
> Provided they do good, a prince [will be] of them forever.

Brigit said:

> The blessing of us both upon Eogan, son
> of Niall,
> Upon everyone who shall be born of him,
> provided he be wholly at our will.
> (emphasis added) (Lebar Brecc, p. 481)

Whether Patrick actually brought Brigit with him to confer this blessing that in a sense parallels the acceptance of the king by the "Sovereignty of Erin" does not matter--that such a story became part of the Patrican tradition is what is significant. Patrick enlists the help of women. In the Martyrology of Tallaght, a calendar of saints' feasts which was the source for other martyrologies written c. 800, probably reflected very early traditions and lists 119 women saints or groups of women. And this, as Kathleen Hughes points out, with two months of the calendar missing![9] Of these women only four--Brigit of Kildare, Samthann of Clon broney, Ite of Killudy, and Monenna of Killevy--are the subjects of Saint's Lives. Hughes thinks this discrepancy comes because fewer women's houses have lasted past the lifetimes of their founders. Irish law allowed women a life interest in land rather than outright inheritance. Though there is much in the law about the lands "of hand or thigh" which belonged absolutely to a woman and which she could leave to her heirs; ownership of land involved pledges of military service to the Clan which held an overriding title to all property in the Irish system, this responsibility complicated inheritances for women. But a famous

judgment in the law tracts is that of the Judge Brigit or Brig, daughter of Sencha. "Brig gave for women's contracts the inheritance of property."[10]

So women could control the land during their lifetime and thus established religious houses. Later in this chapter I will discuss the tenacity with which Gaelic Ireland held on to the ancient Brehon Laws which afforded women's rights a consideration unknown in many modern industrialized countries, including Ireland, today. The strength of this adherence comes, I think, from the reluctance, or rather the inability, of a culture in which woman embodied so many positive and powerful qualities to follow the "Christian" principles that led in other countries to a systematic abuse of women that culminated in the which trials and burnings of the seventeenth century. No witches were burned in Ireland.

A country that belongs so totally to the earth goddess does not desert her easily. And though through the Caillech Beare she speaks "when senility had aged her," she warns Ireland against the evils of abandoning the old thinking:

> Ebb tide has come for me:
> My life drifts downwards
> Like a retreating sea
> With no tidal turn.[11]

Thus the poem begins in John Montague's version, which agrees with Gerard Murphy's first stanza. Murphy used as text "a revised version of the normalized text of the main

edition from five manuscripts published in the Proceedings of the R.I.A. (1953)." He also refers to his indebtedness to Kuno Meyer's text and translations of the poem in the early twentieth century.[12] Frank O'Connor also used Meyer's text when he first translated "The Nun of Beare." Later he made changes suggested by Murphy's work. However, in 1963 O'Connor brought out a new version of the poem which he says "involves a complete reconstruction, based on my own guesses and the help of some scholar friends, yet even in this I know that certain verses must be misplaced and wrongly translated." He then states he has a new view. "As I see it now the poem is really a series of lyrics from a lost eighth century romance dealing with the Goddess of Munster and St. Cummine."[13] O'Connor's idea would place the Christianity versus paganism theme in a different context but would not contradict it.

O'Connor begins his version with a verse Murphy and Montague put third:

> Wealth is all you ask today,
>   Women do not touch your heart
> But when I was young and gay
> Men and Women played their part.

Murphy has much the same sense

> It is riches you love, and not people; as for us, when we lived it was people we loved.

In a complete turn from the others Montague writes

> Girls nowadays
> Dream only of money

> When we were young
> We cared more for our men.

For O'Connor and Murphy the "you" addressed by the old woman is a representative of the new order, either St. Cummine or the general "you" of those who would impose a system that opposes the old ways. Montague makes that you "Girls." This would seem to trivialize this poem but that could not be Montague's intent since for him, too, what lies behind this work is "the struggle between paganism and Christianity, between bodily pleasure and the doctrines of salvation" (p. 23). Given the suffering that would come to Ireland when the measurement of riches does replace the main criteria for marriage, the "you" resonates much more when it stands for a system.

The old woman lauds the very characteristics Campbell and others identify as characteristic of a goddess worshipping society:

> Beloved were the people whose plains we
> ride over: well did we fare among them,
> and they boasted little thereafter.

In the Tain boasting caused more than one warrior trouble and goddesses do not consider it seemly. In pre-Christian Irish law a man could be penalized for violating his wife's privacy by discussing their sexual intimacy. His fine increased with the number of people he told about it. Imagine the resistance a law like that would meet in the United States where the Equal Rights Amendment cannot even get on

the books. However, for the Caillech the new order is "good at claiming" but "not lavish in granting the claim." "Though it is little you bestow, greatly do you boast."

Christianity asked nothing less than a surrender of sovereignty without giving much in return. However, there is something untouchable--her memories and by extension the tradition of her people. She remembers "swift chariots and steeds that carry off the prize;" times when her arms "used to be about glorious kings" and she wore on her head "coverings of every hue" when she had her "day with kings, drinking mead and wine." Though now, she says, "I drink whey-and-water among shrivelled old hags" and has lost her right eye "for a land that will be forever mine," still she is philosophical, "what the flood wave brings you the ebb-wave carries out of your hand." Having known the flood she expects the ebb, but is there a hint of a warning here? The present order should take care. Ebb tide may come to it, too. As for her, she would gladly welcome the "Son of Mary" into her house since she has never said "No" to anyone. The use of "Son of Mary" for Jesus is significant and prophetic. Christianity cannot erase the power of the goddess and her wisdom because the Christ himself is "Mac Maire," the son of the Great Mother. Could that be the meaning of this obscure verse?

> My flood has guarded well that which was deposited with me. Jesus, Son of Mary,

> has saved it till ebb so that I am not sad.

Does "that which was deposited with me" refer to the primal unity possible with the kind of easy interpenetration of natural and supernatural so central to the old mythology? Can Jesus as son of Mary save it though the old world is at its ebb? Is he the new young god born of the Great Mother, the king chosen to be the instrument of the Sovereignty of Erin? Will he be worthy and will fruitfulness come to the land? She says that

> It is well for an island of the great sea: flood comes to it after its ebb; as for me, I expect no flood after the ebb to come to me.

Any mention of islands naturally conjures up the important place the enchanted isles of women play in Celtic mythology. Visited on the many voyages these islands represent the otherworld:

> It is a land of primeval innocence where the pleasures of love are untainted by guilt. Its women are numerous and beautiful and they alone people some of its regions, so that then it becomes literally "The Land of Women" Tir na mBann. (MacCana, p. 123)

The strange woman who appears to Bran invites him to this land, that "distant isle" that is "A delight to the eye," "shining through aeons of beauty, lovely land the ages of the world."

> Unknown is wailing or treachery in the happy familiar land; no sound there rough

> or harsh only sweet music striking on the
> ear.

I think the Nun of Beare refers to this island to remind her audience that "flood comes to it after ebb." Even if for her the pleasant days have ebbed away and she expects no flood, there are elements in the old view, her view, so appealing that they will never die. MacCana says of this otherworld, which is really the summation of all the elements of Celtic mythology,

> This world transcends the limitations of human time . . . It also transcends all spatial definition. It may be situated under the ground or under the sea; it may be in distant islands or coextensive with the world of reality. It may be a house that appears and disappears with equal suddenness, or it may be a little grass-covered hill that encompasses a whole vast and variegated world with its peoples. (p. 124)

And how does one reach this magic place? ". . . through a cave, through the waters of a lake, through a magic mist--or simply through the granting of a sudden <u>insight</u>." Now this kind of a place cannot be destroyed. If the land itself provides access to the otherworld--caves, lakes, rivers--and the journey can be made in the flash of an insight, how can it ever be lost--walled off, perhaps, distorted, but not lost. Would not it have seemed completely incredible to the monk recording this poem 1200 years ago that this otherworld, this "land of women," would retain its hold on the imagination of not just the Irish but through the

dissemination of Celtic myths through the Arthurian romances on all the inhabitants of the West? Would any rational thinkers believe a story that told of a young man of Irish ancestry who on a far distant land centuries hence would inaugurate a new era of hope and that this brief moment of history would be called "Camelot"?

The sense of the cyclical nature of time, a reality that both transcends and is "coextensive with the world of reality" is embedded in Irish literature. The Nun of Beare will speak again in the last monologue of Anna Livia Plurabelle who also passes out, slipping in the ebb and flood of the sea. But Anna Livia is to come. The old woman of Beare concludes with a lament, "Today there is scarcely a dwelling place I could recognize." But remember she is also Bui, wife of Lugh, and closely associated with the megalith of Knowth. She may retire into the earth or disappear in the ebb tide but the goddess with many names and the values she represents always return. As early as the seventh century early Christian Church she was already being honored as St. Brigit, Mary of the Gael.

Cormac's Glossary (Sanas Cormaic), a combination encyclopedia, a glossary usually dated from the ninth century has this entry:

> Brigit, i.e., learned woman, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigit, i.e., a goddess whom filid worshipped. For her protecting care was very great and very wonderful. So they call her goddess of

> poets. Her sisters were Brigit woman of healing and Brigit woman of smith-work, daughters of the Dagda; from whose names among the Irish a goddess used to be called Brigit.[14]

The triple goddess appears throughout Celtic mythology in Ireland, England, and among the Continental Celts. Brigit is the daughter of the Dagda. Her triple nature expresses itself in the three sisters. Her name derives from the same root as "Brigantia," "High One," "Queen," the divine ancestress of the Brigantes, a Celtic tribe occupying North Britain in pre-Roman times. Anne Ross points out that for such a powerful group of tribes to evoke a goddess focuses attention on "the status of women, divine or mortal, in Celtic custom." Ross pictures a group of tribes divided into petty kingdoms, much as their Irish neighbors were, "deriving its name and seemingly achieving its ultimate unity under the protection of a powerful goddess." She goes on to point out that this picture, supported by the monuments and invocations of Roman time, gibes with evidence from Irish literature and Welsh mythology that suggests "the concept of a higher level duty, the universal mother who transcends and stands over the lesser gods was not unfamiliar to the Celts."[15] For a people who "already thought in terms of divine maternity and authority" the cult of the Magna Mater would "not be entirely alien." Ross gives Medb as a literary example of how early Celtic society "occasionally seems to reflect in its organization something of these

cult ideas." As we have seen, Medb is represented as a tribal queen who embodies the qualities of the mother goddess who is also the Sovereignty of Erin. Ross connects her here with the concept of a Magna Mater who extended a spiritual unity for the diverse kingdoms and tribes of the Celts. She points out that history records Celtic women who performed this function. "Boudicca," "Victory," queen of the Iceni, and priestess among her own people, not only wielded great power herself but evoked her goddess Andraste, "Invincible," in time of great tribal distress and propitiated her with extravagant sacrifice and religious festivity when victory was secured. "Cartimandua," another powerful queen who united her powerful tribe under her leadership, invoked Brigantia, "High One." Ross concludes that in these Celtic ruler queens "mother, mate, and politician, strategist and combatant in war" we have "some earthly reflection" of the cult concept of the "mother of gods" (p. 360).

We also have evidence of the Celtic need for some overriding female deity to serve as source for the unity difficult to achieve in a society of separated clans and petty kingdoms. Much has been written of the lack of historical support for an Ard Ri, a political high king, who actually ruled Ireland. However, the importance of all the goddess is a kind of evidence that a sacral kingship existed under which some spiritual unity could be achieved which would make cooperation necessary for the peaceful conduct of daily

life. The elevation of a man to this position depended on his acceptance by the Sovereignty of Erin, the ultimate ground of being from whom flowed unity, prosperity, and eventual transcendence. Perhaps the times when woman exercised this function directly without a male consort were at moments of great crisis when the people needed concrete evidence of the goddess' concern. Boudicca and Cartimandua may represent such an occasion. Maybe Queens ruled the tribe alone depending on personality and circumstance as is the case in modern history. However, the historical interplay between the goddess worshipped and the woman who rules does not affect the unity possible under a Magna Mater present in the tutelary goddesses who inhabited the streams, rivers, and lakes of particular places but also through the possession of the divine nature in which each of the local goddesses derived their being.

MacCana points out that such was the prestige of the Irish Brigit "that her name could be used simultaneously for 'goddess.'" As Cormac said, "among all the Irish a goddess used to be called Brigit." The name, which means "exalted one," was originally an epithet and so could refer to the qualities of divinity in every tutelary goddess. In a sense, then, the Caillech Beare is Brigit and Medb is Brigit as is Macha and Emer, Derdriu, and Anu. In them the "exalted one" is encountered.

> . . . it is in the person of her Christian namesake St. Brighid that the pagan goddess survives best. For if the historical element in the legend of St. Brighid is slight, the mythological element is correspondingly extensive and it is clear beyond question that the saint has usurped the role of the goddess and much of the mythological tradition. (p. 34)

So St. Brigit served Christian Ireland, as her namesake had pagan Ireland, as a figure of the female reality, the Magna Mater whose sovereignty can include all. The territorial connections of both saint and goddess complement rather than contradict her wider role. The obvious comparison is to the Mother of Jesus who as Our Lady of Guadelupe, of Fatima, of Lourdes, of Knock, takes various forms and receives vastly different worship and yet the reality she represents endures through all the various attempts of a patriarchal Church to distort her image and misrepresent her power. So though the center of the cult of St. Brigit may be at her foundation of Kildare, devotion to her quickly spread throughout Ireland and beyond.

> It may be that in the goddesses Brigid and Brigantia we have a divine concept stemming from a common source and continuing in the person of St. Brigit of Kildare who though she was not an evangelising saint, can be traced in dedications and well names throughout the British Isles and was until comparatively recently invoked as a patron of childbirth by the women in Hebrides, and revered as the midwife of the Virgin Mary. (Ross, p. 361)

It is generally agreed that the earliest life of Brigit we have is the seventh century life by Cogitosus who was commissioned to write it by the nuns of Kildare a century after St. Brigit's death, listed in the Annals from the Book of Leinster as 523, "The Falling Asleep of Saint Brigit." The Annals of Ulster record her death three separate times and at two different dates, 523 and 525. Both entries give seventy as the age when she died. Donncha O hAodha in 1978 edited and translated the earliest Irish life of Brigit, dated at the ninth century, Bethu Brigite, which was based on an earlier Latin version.[16] Sections of Bethu Brigite were previously translated by Stokes and they were treated in comprehensive way by M. A. O'Brien in a September 1938 article. I will follow O hAodha's edition since he incorporates pertinent notes from the earlier treatments and adds much useful information. A major difference between this text and the life by Cogitosus is the prominence Bethu Brigite gives to Patrick and his protege, St. Mel. In this text, too, Brigit travels through Ireland and is not as confined to Kildare as she is in the Cogitosus life. This suggests to O hAodha the spread of her cult and strengthen to me the idea that quick spread of the cult of Brigit speaks to the need of the Irish for a female presence in their worship who incorporates the qualities of their own women and goddesses. In the earliest extant reference to Brigit which O'Brien notes and O hAodha quotes Brigit is

identified as Mary of the Gaels. The passage is from a genealogical poem of Brigit's sept and is assigned on linguistic grounds to the sixth century.

> A fair birth, fair dignity which will come to thee thereafter from thy children's descendants who shall be called from her great virtues truly pious Brigeoit [Brigit]; she will be another Mary, mother of the great Lord. (BB, p. 42)

The prophecy of Brigit's birth recalls the similar foretellings in the story of Dierdru and of other mythological figures. Tradition ascribes this prophecy to the Druid Moccu Mugraine and holds that Brigit spent her early years under the care of a druid. This connection with priests of the pagan religion and the ease with which an Irish woman with the name of the goddess becomes for the people "another Mary" reinforces the idea that the Irish Church did not wish to fight the concept of the High One, the Great Goddess, but accommodated itself to it. All students of early Christian Ireland, even James Joyce, remark on the fact that there were no martyrs in Ireland during her evangelization. Irish monks created the "white martyrdom" exile from home as an equivalent. Could one reason for the easy acceptance of Christianity be the rise of a figure like Brigit around whom the old beliefs could gather? In addition to its quick spread, her cult enjoys great longevity as her feast is still celebrated today in Ireland with all the concomitant rituals so reminiscent of the pre-Christian past. This

practice is centered around livestock and agriculture, as would be expected since her feast is February 1--the old Irish "Imbolg" festival which marks the beginning of Spring. Born at sunrise neither within nor without the house and fed with the milk of a red-eared cow, St. Brigit cares not only for the flocks and fields but also protects the home from fire. What in the old Irish life are the bases for these beliefs? Not hard to say. As a child she performs her first miracle to save a house from fire. "The people rush to its [the house's] aid thinking that they would not find one house-post against another. The face is found intact and the girl asleep. . . . And Brigit is revered there as long as it exists" (BB, p. 20).

Now in Ireland and throughout the countries of Irish emigration Brigit's cross is hung in homes as protection from fire and lightning. Both popular types are made from straw with anywhere from one to thirty lozenges woven into its center and along the crossbars and the other of rushes folded over to form a four-sided cross. Kevin Danaher gives this 1735 reference to the cross:

> St. Bridget's cross hung over door
> which did the house from fire secure
> as Gillo thought, O powerful charm
> to keep a house from taking harm
> and tho the dogs and servants slept,
> by Bridget's care the house was kept.

He also in his 1972 study of folk customs The Year in Ireland repeats a story told him by a County Dublin man

who remembers how, when a severe thunderstorm came up, a laborer on his father's farm "got a handful of straw and made a Saint Brighid's Cross to save the house from being struck by lightning" (p. 17).

Looking at these crosses with their lozenges and zigzag patterns brings to mind the similar shapes carved into the rocks of the megalithic passage grave of Newgrange, one of the "homes" of the Celtic goddesses. Is the Saint Brigit's cross a graphic representation of the melding of goddess and saints as the symbols of the first are grafted on the sign of the second? In keeping with the patronage both the pre-Christian and Christian Brigit granted to the fili, poets and historians of Ireland, Radio Telefis Erin, the Irish Broadcasting service, takes her cross as its symbol.

St. Brigit in the old Irish life brings plenty with her wherever she goes. As the cook at her fostermother's house "whatever the number of guests might be the supply of bread did not fail them." Here, at her fostermother's a miracle Brigit performs sounds a theme that sounds throughout the traditions surrounding her life. Brigit's fostermother is ill. Brigit, with another girl, goes to a certain house to ask for a drink of ale. She gets nothing.

> They came to a certain well. She brought three vessels full therefrom. The liquid was tasty and intoxicating and her fostermother was healed immediately. God did that for her. (BB, p. 21)

Brigit's connection with ale continues throughout her life. Bethu Brigite gives a very detailed description of how she brewed eighteen vatfuls of ale from one sack in order to celebrate Easter. "Would that I might keep Easter for them in the matter of ale on account of the Lord whose feast it is, that they may have drink although they should not have food" (p. 25). She does the same thing for Low Sunday--changing water into ale. "Thanks be to God," said Brigit. "God has given us beer for our bishop . . . and better ale was never set to brew on the whole world." The one churn was sufficient for them [the nuns] with their guests and the bishop (p. 26).

Brigit's ale, for which Kildare remained famous, is mentioned in a devotional poem ascribed to her in which she says, "I would like to have a great lake of ale for the king of kings." Ale figures importantly, too, in her consecration as abbess by St. Mel. The story goes that after a day of the hospitality of Kildare, Mel was so transported by the drink and the company that he turned to the wrong page in the book of rituals and consecrated Brigit a bishop rather than an abbess. From then on the abbesses of Kildare held the status of bishop and when it became a flourishing monastic city with monks as well as nuns, with lay families and an active scriptorium, the abbess remained in charge. In addition to the delightful human picture these stories give of Brigit and the joys of Irish monastic life, they

also suggest another connection with pre-Christian goddesses. The Queen offer the king a cup of foaming ale in the inauguration ceremony. H. Wagner and others draw attention to connections with similar Near East and Indian rituals one of which has the Sumerian beer goddess offering the cup. Medb's name, "the intoxicated," started scholars searching for her relationship to the Sovereignty of Ireland.

It would seem that in Brigit, who changes water to ale and intoxicates the bishop at her inauguration ceremony, we have a carryover from this earlier function of women. The Irish Church has in Brigit its own Sovereignty of Erin who along with fortifying their spirits and intellects does not neglect the physical and natural since all these fall into her dominion.

Later prudery may make it difficult to believe that the Mary of the Gael was connected with symbols of pagan ceremonies in which the sexual element is so pronounced. But that is a reaction that comes from the kind of alienation from self and nature discussed before. The warm relations Brigit and her nuns had with male saints and their participation in the life of their society is a continuing feature of the stories. When a man came to Brigit complaining that his wife hated him, "Brigit blessed some water. He took it with him and, his wife having been sprinkled [therewith] she straightaway loved him passionately" (BB, p. 32). Earlier

her brothers wished to marry Brigit to a young man. Brigit eludes the marriage by sending the young man to a certain wood where he will meet and fall in love with a beautiful maiden. Brigit blesses his "face and speech" so that whatever he says will please the girl and her father. This positive attitude toward human love underlies the tribute paid Brigit in the hymn of St. Brocan, "She blessed the pregnant nun," and is a central element in the story told of another Irish woman saint, Ite. When a pregnant nun had left the monastery and was sold into slavery, Ite had St. Brendan procure her freedom and then accepted the woman and her baby son back into the community where "she was received with rejoicing."[17] Ite is the sixth century saint the Irish call the "FosterMother of Jesus" and is the reputed author of the poem beginning "It is little Jesus who is nursed by me in my little hermitage. Though a cleric have great wealth, it is all deceitful save Jesukin." Murphy uses "Jesukin" as "a translation for the strange use in this poem of diminutive forms which give it a character of intimate affection which cannot be reproduced in translation."[18]

The "intimate affection" and easy generosity of Brigit, Ite, and other early Irish women follows the tradition of Ireland where women proudly described themselves as "great

in grace and giving." Brocan says of Brigit, "She was open in her proceedings/She was One-Mother of the Great kings sons."[19]

Animals figure in Brigit's stories--she trains a wild fox for a poor man to give the king as restitution for the royal pet he had killed, she restores the boars stolen from his foster father's herd, in order to feed the dog some bacon she miraculously extends it, and so on. But cows are the real favorite of Brigit. Fed as an infant by the milk of the red-eared cows, she is continually involved with them--uniting calves with their mothers; giving cows away to a leper; receiving them as gifts; blessing them, milking them, and herding them. This is usual for a saint of a pastoral people, but also these stories echo the tales of the goddess Boand, "cow white goddess" who personifies the Boyne and other women associated with cows in Irish tradition like Ilidais and the war goddess, the Morrigan. Medb's bull, too, started out as a calf. So again the blending of the pre-Christian and Christian.

For me the significance of St. Brigit is not just that she represents an instance where the supposedly antagonistic Christian and pre-Christian traditions met. The message of her power and popularity is that Irish people were not willing to relinquish their belief in strong, sensual, intelligent and independent women, reflections of the Great Goddess who held the land and sovereignty of Ireland against the

invaders. Brigit's foundation at Kildare with its scriptorium and school, its huge Church and its community of "saints and scholars" stood for spiritual sovereignty. At times in the troubled future of Ireland that kind of inner transcendence along with actual physical contact with the land whose fruits often were taken by strangers, became the signs of the Sovereignty of Erin. In the first centuries of the battle for the soul of Ireland the Roman Church could not win. It could force the Celtic Church after two hundred years of disagreement to conform in its celebration of Easter; to accept Bishops from England and reforming monks from France; to change from federation of monasteries to dioceses; but distance and temperament protected the Irish Church. Anyone reading the poems composed by Irish nuns and monks full of love of nature, study, and good times knows these are people animated by a faith wedded to their lands and its traditions. "I would like to have a great ale-feast for the King of Kings; I should like the heavenly host to be drinking it for all eternity." In one manuscript next to the report of an incident in Brigit's life when Rocend (Condlad) the bishop of Kildare went to Rome against her order and was eaten by wolves on the way, a scribe wrote:

> Who to Rome goes
> Much labor, little profit knows;
> For God, on earth though long you've
> sought him,
> You'll miss at Rome unless you've bought
> him.[20]

This probably sums up the attitude of the Celtic Church toward domination by Rome. Indeed, it took the political power of England and the fanatic hatred of Cromwell to finally bring down the Irish Catholicism of the Gaelic world. But the victory was neither fatal nor lasting. The Martyrology of Aengus (c. 800) contains a passage contrasting the vanished pagan sites with the flourishing Christians:

> The fortress of Cruachan has vanished
> with Ailill victory's child
> A fair dignity greater than kingdoms is
> in the city of Clonmacnoise
> The proud settlement of Cullenn has died
> with its boasting host
> Great is victorious Brigit and lovely her
> thronged sanctuary.[21]

In the twelfth century Geraldus Cambrenis found the monastery flourishing with the nuns tending an eternal flame. Observations like this led R. A. S. MacAllister to suggest that Kildare began as a college for pagan priestesses.[22] No proof can be offered for that suggestion and I think it in some way minimizes Brigit's significance as a meeting place for the two traditions. O'Connor thinks that another old poem which juxtaposes Brigit's Kildare with pagan Alenn contains more enthusiasm for the past than the present. However, let it speak for itself.

> Sit safely, Brigit, in triumph on
> Liffey's Cheek to the strand of the
> sea; you are the princess with ranked
> hosts above the Children of Cathain Mor
> Beyond telling at any one time is God's
> counsel for virgin Ireland

> Though the shining Liffey be yours
> today, it was once another's land . . .
> Famous A'lenn . . . the shout of its
> victory after each victory . . . the
> muses of its bent hard anvils . . .
> Its lovely melodies at every hour,
> its wineship on the blue wave . . .
> Liffey of Lorc has made ashes of every
> generation.
> Brigit in the land which I behold,
> where each in turn has live,
> your fame has proved greater
> than that of kings, you are
> superior to them.
> You have an everlasting principality
> with the King [of Heaven] apart
> from the land where your sanctuary is.
> Granddaughter of Bresal
> son of Dion, sit safely,
> Brigit in triumph.[23]

O'Connor points out the Liffey here is "the plain that marks their [the Lugin] new northern frontier, and not 'Anna Liffey.'" However, when I see the Irish version and see "Life," "Luirc," I cannot help feeling that when Joyce made the Liffey his symbol of the recirculated life and named her Anna Livia, the goddess and woman, he brought Brigit forward, too, and the Old Woman of Beare, and all the other woman figures who manifested in various ways the Sovereignty of Ireland.

As Kathleen Hughes says, "Irish women's houses are of considerable interest, and their place within the monastic constitution has never been adequately studied."[24] This applies to Irish women's activities generally in all periods but it is hard to leave this time without talking of Liadan, the woman poet of Munster, or Monnena or the abbess

Samthann, who counseled monks to balance prayer with study. Much joy comes from learning about these women and reading the poetry that grew up in the monasteries of Ireland. A proportional sadness follows from contemplating the sufferings the Celtic Church and her people would yet endure.

One area should be discussed, however briefly, before rushing forward to Grace O'Malley, a woman who stands at the end of the Gaelic order, and that is the Ancient Laws of Ireland, called in popular terminology the Brehon Laws. They influence Gaelic life until its destruction. The Vatican constantly tried to get the Irish Church to put Canon law in their place and England could not truly gather Ireland under its yoke until it finally abolished them. The Brehon Laws showed a consideration for woman that will gratify and amaze any feminist. Whatever the actual effect on the daily life of women, the laws are very much worth considering.

The language and meaning of the Law tracts are extremely difficult even after much excellent scholarship by D. A. Binchy and others. Donncha O Corrain gives a very good summary of the Laws that relate to women's status in his essay, "Women in Early Irish Society," which I would like to consider briefly. There he says that in a marriage where the couple comes from the same social class, "the wife is known as 'a woman of joint dominion, a woman of equal lordship.' No contract of business dealing of one of them is valid or legally binding, without the consent

of the other."[25] To any woman whose husband has lost the family savings on questionable business dealings or incurred debts about which she knows nothing, such a provision would seem amazingly forward looking. In addition, the law provided for many types of marriage including the "Lanamnas for bantenchur" where the wife controls the property and "the man goes in the path of the woman."[26] The practical consequence of these laws was a greater latitude in male-female relationships which included generous grounds for women to divorce their husbands, and mandated shared responsibility of children. In fact, the husbands of female satirists had sole child care responsibility. Fines were levied on a man who slandered his wife or breached her privacy by relating details of their sexual life. The sum increased with the number of people he has told.[27]

These marital customs continued among the Irish until the early seventeenth century when the English through the Plantation finally succeeded in destroying the old order. But the Vatican and the reformers within the Church fought these laws unsuccessfully for centuries. Still, with these laws in effect, women enjoyed extensive rights undreamt of by their European sisters. Because an Irish husband never had total control of her property even if his wife died, the abuse of young heiresses commonplace in Europe did not happen. Also, since, unlike England and the Continent, where

only a legitimate heir could inherit property and title, in Ireland, given the way the law covered most relationships, no child was illegitimate. Also the title or chieftainship was decided by election among all males within certain degrees of kinship (usually a common great-grandfather) so the terrible male paranoia of "Is that _my_ son?" that resulted in so many abuses against women including iron chastity belts was not such an overriding factor in Ireland. In fact, in Gaelic Ireland until the eclipse of the old order there was a well-known custom called "naming of children." Irish law allowed all children to inherit, including those born of temporary marriages, of concubines, or even of casual relationships if they were afterwards affiliated through their mother's declaration.[28] Kenneth Nicolls cites as the most famous example of "naming" the medieval period as that of Matthew or Feardoragh O Neill, baron of Dungannon and the father of Hugh, earl of Tyrone. His mother was the wife of a smith in Dundalk and "according to the account, admittedly prejudiced, of Shane O Neill until he reached

> the age of fifteen or sixteen years was taken and named none other than Matthew Kelly, and no man knew him to be otherwise than the smith of Dundalk's son, born in wedlock, till a little after that age his mother, for vainglory and for a name for herself, declared him to be O Neill's son, alleging and boasting how O Neill lay once with her. And O Neill [Conn Bacach, first earl of Tyrone] being a man that never refused no child that any woman named to be his, as he had

> divers besides the said Matthew, accepted
> and took him to be his son.[29]

James Meah at the age of 40 was "named" son to Kedagh O'More, who was long dead, and James was eventually elected Chief of the O'Mores.[30]

Among the Anglo-Irish settlers it was different story. There legitimacy mattered and a husband gained complete control of his wife's property. Marriage was a business proposition and bargaining began early. Katherine Simms quotes a 1456 agreement from Drogheda which says that the father

> will give with her 40s sterling, and a
> brazen pat and William will give his son
> Nicholas 40s sterling, which sumes with
> the pat will be in custody of William
> until Nicholas and Matilda reach lawful
> age.[31]

Simms goes on to document not only forced marriages of children and young women but reports rumors of more than one man beating his wife to death. Since under English law a husband is his wife's sole guardian, he was not interfered with. Among the Irish, however, if a woman was in any way mistreated, the husband had to contend with his wife's kin who considered her still a member of their clan. So Aodh Bruidhe O Neill was made to promise to make amends to his wife and

> to keep and maintain my wife Eleanor, the
> Earl's cousin, well and honourably in
> future, faithfully providing for her
> needs and without deception I wil have
> restored to her all her rights both in
> lands and other goods which are held to

> belong to her according to the use and custom of my land.[32]

In view of such support from her family and because the wife of an Irish Chieftain controlled her dowry, the marriage portion given her by her husband plus a certain income from her husband's subjects, she had a great deal of independence. Katherine Simms points out the wife of the Chieftain often involved herself in councils, negotiations, and at times took over. She gives Inion Dubh, mother of Red Hugh O'Donnell, as a sixteenth century example, quoting Lughaidh O Cleirigh:

> It was an advantage that she came to the gathering, for she was calm and very deliberate and much praised for her womanly qualities, she had the heart of a hero and the mind of a soldier. . . . She had many troops from Scotland and some of the Irish at his disposal and under her control, and in her own pay constantly, and especially during the time that her son (the Ruadh) was in prison and confined by the English.[33]

Inion Dubh essentially held the Chieftainship while Red Hugh was imprisoned by Elizabeth I. One of the ironies of history is that Elizabeth, whose generals defeated the chiefs of old Irish and forced the earls of Ulster out of Ireland, was herself descended through her mother from the Butlers, one of the great Norman families of Ireland who became thoroughly Gaelicised. Anne Boleyn's grandmother was Margaret Butler, daughter of Thomas, seventh earl of Ormond. The Butlers "intermarried with the Gaelic Irish" and were

"patrons of Irish scribes and poets. The well known Irish manuscript known as the Book of MacRichard now in the Bodleian Library was written for Edmond MacRichard Butler at this castle of Pattlerath in County Kilkenny."[34]

But Elizabeth was determined to bring the native Irish under her control. One of her opponents was a woman who became one of the manifestations of the Sovereignty of Erin celebrated down through Irish history in song, story, and Finnegans Wake--Grace O'Malley, Grainne Mhaol, the pirate queen of Connaught who, Sir Henry Sidney said when he met her, "thinketh herself no small lady." The July 1593 entry in the Calendar of State Papers of Ireland lists eighteen questions sent by Elizabeth herself "to be answered by Granny Ne Mally." Born in 1503--three years before Elizabeth I--and described by Sir Richard Bingham, the Queen's governor, as "a notable traitress and nurse of all rebellions in her province for forty years," Grainne Ui Mhaille, Grace O'Malley, is remembered in the folk tradition of Ireland as the Pirate Queen of Connaught.[35] Songs covering a three hundred year span celebrate her.

> She had strong holds on her headlands
> And brave galleys on the sea
> And no warlike Chief or Viking
> E'er had bolder heart than she.

Did the English think they would have it their own way forever?

This lesson taught the Saxon churl
To dread a free man's blow
When the dauntless Grace O'Malley
Ruled as Queen in fair Mayo.

Her ships would return again, the songs said

Graine Mhaol is coming over the sea
With a guard of young soldiers
They are Irish, not English or Spanish
And they will rout the English.
(Oro, Se Do Bheatha 'Bhailie)

Then the old free ways of the Irish Chieftains will return

Says Granu, I always still
lov'd to be free
No foe shall invade me
in my liberty.
While I've Limerick, Deary and
the fort of Kinsale
I'll love and not marry says
Granuweal.

She is the Sovereignty of Ireland who will mate again with the rightful king.

When our foemen are banished,
how then wilt thou feel
That the King of the right shall espouse
Grana Weal

O'er the high hills of Erin what bonfires
shall blaze
What libations be pour'd forth--What
festival days!
What minstrels and monks with
one heart pulse of zeal
Sing and pray for the King and
his own Grana Weal![36]

It seems as if we are back at the beginning where the Sovereignty of Erin weds the kings and prosperity comes to the land. The monks and minstrels are united and the festival fires blaze again. Yet the woman who stands as Ireland in these songs is not separated from us by prehistory or the

convention of hagiography. Her life is documented in the Calendar of State Papers of Ireland, in the contemporary letters of Phillip and Henry Sidney, Richard and Henry Bingham, and of Elizabeth herself. Anne Chambers, in her 1979 book Granuaile: The Life and Times of Grace O'Malley, points out, however, that Irish annalists and historians did not share the English interest in Grannia's life or the people's interest in her legend.[37] Still, as John O'Donovan wrote in the 1838 Ordnance Survey of Mayo

> She is now most vividly remembered by tradition, and people were living in the last generation who conversed with people who knew her personally. Charles Cormick of Erris, now 74 years and six weeks old, saw and conversed with Elizabeth O Donnell of Newtown within the Mullet, who died about 65 years ago who had seen and intimately known a Mr. Walsh who remembered Grainne. Walsh died at the age of 107 and his father was the same age as Graínne.[38]

And did that father perhaps sail with her?

Two years ago on Inishboffin, an island off Connemara, a ten year old boy pointed out Grainualle's Castle to me, off by itself on a promontory overlooking the harbor. But he told me to avoid it. It was a sad place because Cromwell had imprisoned and then murdered scores of priests and religious there. But that was what happened after Grace O'Malley died. Adults on the island said, Oh, yes, she had been a pirate. No question. But she shared her spoils with

her people and was generous, very generous. Another one great in grace giving.

Hers was a life made to order for romantic novels and, indeed, a spate of nineteenth and early twentieth century books of that genre made her less than respectable for serious scholarly study. And yet it is hard to deny the appeal of word like these from The Rebel Lady, just such a book.

> I would have you look closely at the girl of twenty who kneels beside the bed, into whose hands has passed a doubtful and stormy heritage of power. She is worth your notice. She is forgotten today except in peasant hearts but, perhaps, is one of the extraordinary women of the world.[39]

John Barnett, the author, sees her as

> A woman whom Fate restricted to a petty stage but who might have ruled a kingdom. A woman who mastered men, who men followed because she was stronger, bolder and more daring than themselves.[40]

James Joyce could not resist her. Casting her as the Prankquean of Finnegans Wake, he wove her name under various forms throughout this work. Seamus Heaney, too, evokes Grace O'Malley.

> No milk limbed Venus ever rose
> Miraculous on this western shore.
> A pirate queen in battle clothes
> Is our sterner myth.[41]

It is easy to understand the English fascination with "Granny ne Mally." In many ways she personified what in Ireland both fascinated and repelled them. She was not just

born of the wild Irish but of one of the few seafaring clans whose ships and isolation allowed them to hold on to the old ways. Her father, Owen Dubhdarra O'Malley, commanded a fleet of galleys and sailed not only the coasts of Ireland but to Spain and Portugal. Tradition says Grainne as a young girl cropped her hair to accompany, thus her nickname Mhoal, "bald." Her first husband was tanist, "crown prince," of the O'Flaherties, the subjects of an inscription carved by English settlers into the walls of Galway City, "From the fury of the O'Flaherties, dear Lord deliver us." After her husband died she commanded her own fleet of galleys on trading missions as well as pirate forays until she became, in Sir Henry Sidney's words, "a most famous feminine sea captain." At 36 she married Richard Burke, with whom she had a son at 37. Burke, the MacWilliam descended from the Norman lords who accompanied Strongbow in England's earlier attempt to conquer Ireland. However, when Sir Henry Sidney came to knight him, Latin was the language used because Richard Burke spoke no English. The Normans might have been able to conquer England, but Ireland conquered the Normans. Sidney, who represented the present wave of English invaders, must have known and feared that they, like those before them, would become more Irish than the Irish.

In "Granny Imally" the greatest danger of Ireland was personified. Through the woman Erie joined the invaders to

her, bore them children, and raised them speaking Irish and living in the traditional ways until their loyalty was all to her. Sidney says:

> she brought with her her husband for she was as well by sea as by land well more than Mrs. mate with him. . . . This was a notorious woman in all the coasts of Ireland. This woman did Sir Phillip Sydney see and speak withal he can more at large inform you of her.[42]

Sir Phillip Sydney must have formed quite an impression of Grace if years later he still can "more at large inform you of her." Perhaps she reminded him of another masterful woman, his sister Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, who edited Sidney's work and saved it from oblivion.

However, though Grannie was able during most of her long life to outmaneuver the English, in 1577 she was captured by the Earl of Desmond, who imprisoned her in Limerick and turned her over to the Crown as a sign of his own loyalty. She was 47 and Lord Justice Drury wrote this about her to the Lord Deputy and Council:

> Grany O'Mayle a woman that hath imprudently passed the part of womanhood and been a great spoiler and Chief commander and director of thieves and murderers at sea to spoile this province, having been apprehended by the Earle of Desmond this year, his Lordship hath now sent her to Lymrick where she remains in safe keeping.[43]

But even Drury, after he met her, was impressed.

> . . . to that place was brought unto me Granie ny Maille, a woman of the province of Connaught, governing a country of the

> O'Flaherty's famous for her stoutness of courage and person, and for sundry exploits done by her by sea.[44]

Perhaps his impression contributed to Grannia's release from Dublin Castle later that year. She had to pledge to relinquish her career. However, in 1582 she was suspected of plotting with the Earl of Thomond.

In 1586 after her son Owen was murdered and she herself was captured by John Bingham and "a new pair of gallows made for her last funeral," Richard Burke, "the Devil's," freed her and Grannia fled to Ulster, staying with O'Neill and O'Donnell. After she returned to Connacht, Grannia petitioned Queen Elizabeth for a pardon. Bingham was doubtful. He, himself, he says, "having many tymes tryed to reclame them by lenity and faire meanes" hoping they will "conforme themselves and begin to live quietly as becometh Subjects I never restrayne them of lawful and convenient favoure being most desirous of peace and some quiet days."[45] His words lose credence when compared to the list of men he killed in an encounter with Maguire recorded on the same page of the Calendar of State Papers as Grannia's answers to Elizabeth's questions. Among those slain are a bishop and an abbot.

However, Bingham did forward Grace's anwer to the Queen and in them the voice of this woman looking over a lifetime lived on a world that was dying can clearly be heard. There is evidence Grace wrote her own answers in English and Bingham's "she" can be easily read "I."

She claims as O'Malley country the islands of "Inish Boffyny, Clerie, Inish Twerke, Inisharke, Caher, Inish-dalluf, Devellan," other small islands and of the fifty towns shared with the Bourkes and Earl of Ormond, the O'Malleys have twenty. Elizabeth's next ten questions concern Grannia's marriages, sons, and the provisions made for her under Irish law. It would be hard not to imagine that Grace framed her answers to support her suit, but sometimes, as when she speaks of her son's murder or her own almost execution, her anger shows through. It is important to note how exact she is in her accounting of the lands, towns, and rents. Here is a woman who all her life administered people and property, who gauges the political implications of each word and phrase.

> Her first son was Donal Ichaggy O'Flaherty, and during his lifetime Chieftain of the Barony of Bally nehennessy, containing twenty-four towns at four quarters of land to every town.[46]

Her two sons by her first marriage, "Owen O'Flaherty married Katherine Bourke, daughter of Edmund Burke of Castle Parry. Grannia says that "Owen all his lifetime remained a true subject to Her Majesty under the government of Sir Nicholas Malby while he lived and under Sir Richard Bingham until July 1586." When the Bourkes began to rebel, Owen withdrew to an island with his followers. But Captain John Bingham came to the island with 500 soldiers to get provisions. At

Owen's invitation they "were entertaine with the best cheer they had." However,

> That night the said Owen was apprehended and tied with a rope with 18 of his chief followers, in the morning the soldiers drew out of the island four thousand cows, five hundred stud mares and horses and a thousand sheep, leaving the remainder of the poor men all naked within the island.

But worse was to come.

> [They] came with the cattle and prisoners to Bally-ne-huissy aforesaid, where John Bingham aforesaid stayed for their coming; that evening he caused the said 18 persons, without trial or good cause, to be hanged, among whom was hanged a gentleman of land and living, called Thebault O'Tool, being of the age of four score and ten years. The next night following a false alarm was raised in the camp in the dead of night, the said Owen being fast bound in the cabin of Captain Grine O'Molloy and at that instant the said Owen was cruelly murdered, having 12 deadly wounds, and in that miserable sort he ended his years and unfortunate days. (p. 134)

Grannia names the man now at Court who was part of that company. She shows courage in accusing the man through whom her petition must go of unjust and miserable murder. But accuse she does and Bingham must have known Elizabeth wanted Grannia's answer "as is" because he let the accusation stand. Owen had one son, Donal.

Her second son, Morrough O'Flaherty, married Honoura Bourke, daughter of Richard Bourke of Derviveclaghny. Grannia answers Elizabeth as "where they live," "what

countries they have to maintain them withal," and "to whom they married" about the sons of both her marriages. Her son by her second marriage, Theobald Burke, or Tibbat of the long ships, was in jail at the time of these answers and one of the main points of Grannia's petition was that he be released along with her brother. Donnel Tibbat went right back to fighting the English. But Grannia passes over any hints of that.

Elizabeth asks three questions about provisions made for widows and Grannia explains that widows do not inherit one-third of the Chieftain's land; instead they receive their dowries back, for sureties are put up at the time of the marriage to protect the wife's property "for fear of the worse" i.e., divorce, when it is returned to her, or the death of an impoverished Chieftain. "In regard that husbands through their great expenses, especially Chieftains at the time of their death, have no goods to leave behind them, but are commonly indebted" (p. 135).

Queen Elizabeth's eleventh question elicits another burst of feeling. Grannia explains that "after the death of her husband she gathered together all her own followers and with 1000 head of cows and mares departed and became a dweller in Carrickbawlly" (p. 135). Even in retirement Grannia had a very large retinue and the picture of her leading her followers and 1000 cattle and mares recalls Queen Medb. The comparison becomes even more apt when after

Sir Richard Bingham orders her to move, she sets out with followers and animals supposedly under safe conduct only to be attacked by Sir John Bingham and five bands of soldiers. Then follows her brush with the gallows. Now, at sixty-three she tells Elizabeth she dwells in Connach, living "a farmer's life, very poor, bearing cess, and paying her Majesty's composition rent, utterly did she give over her former trade of maintenance by sea and land" (p. 135).

No wonder Grannuile became such a potent symbol of Ireland. Her life reflects its history--rebellion and compromise, promises broken and treaties denied, and behind all that other life, living according to the old Gaelic ways, not perfect, of course, but one where honor could be maintained and "a trade of maintenance by land and sea" plied.

Grace won this last battle. Elizabeth granted her requests and against Bingham's recommendation released her son and brother and restored the land of his sons. Why? Tradition says because of the impression Grace made on Elizabeth when she presented her petitions at the English Court. This was the trip that concluded with Grace's abduction of the heir from Hawth Castle which Joyce uses in _Finnegans Wake_. Chambers believes the incident did take place, but earlier, around 1576. Supporting her view are the myriad traditions about the incident and the records of the St. Lawrence family, heirs to Howth. However, while the abduction cannot be decisively documented, we do have

Elizabeth's letter to Bingham dated September 6, 1593, in which she tells him to release the prisoners "wherewith we are content, so as the old woman may understand we yield thereto in regard of her humble suit." Her next phrase seems to refer to a personal visit from Grannia:

> So she is herself informed and departeth with great thankfulness and with many more earnest promises that she will, as long as she lives continue a dutiful subject, yea, and will employ all her power to offend and prosecute any offender against us. (Calendar, p. 130)

Indeed, the State Papers record Grannia's offer in a petition from her to Burghley, "Grany ne Mally desires Her Majesty's letter under her hand for license during her life to invade with sword and fire all Her Majesty's enemies" (p. 136). At 63 Grannia wants her ships and crews back, but Bingham's skepticism about the use to which Grannia would put "sword and fire" blocks that. It is clear from Elizabeth's letter that Grannia impressed her. Only three years separated them though Elizabeth refers to Grannia as "this aged woman" and allows her maintenance "for the rest of her old years." For Elizabeth to help Grannia is one thing, but to free her brother, her sons, and their cousins--rebels all--with not much in the way of sureties . . . . Grainne must have been very persuasive. Bingham's November 24 note hints at her powers. "I have enlarged Grany O'Mally, her son Tibbat and brother Donell na Pipee, upon such slender surtyes as they gave us, the woman urging it some

importunely swering the she would elles repair presently to England" (p. 151). This last threat was decisive. Grannia, like Elizabeth, died in 1603, the year of the battle of Kinsdale, when the English finally did subdue Ireland. But worse was to come.

Spencer wrote in his View of the Present State of Ireland of his despair at the Irish resistance to the best efforts of the English to "civilize" them. In desperation he decides that this stubbornness must be intrinsic--"it proceeded from the very genius of the soil or influence of the stars . . . it is hard to know but much to be feared." Many of the actions of England become more comprehensible given that fear of Ireland and the Irish. For many of the English the Cromwellian and Williamite wars against Catholic Ireland were holy wars, fought, to quote the title of Cromwell's declaration, "For the Undeceiving of the Deluded and Seduced People."[47]

The early seventeenth century was full of efforts by the English to reform the Irish. Margaret MacCurtin says:

> Running like a minor motif . . . was a preoccupation with social legislation which paralleled the effort to achieve relgious conformity.
>
> Efforts to outlaw polygamous practices among the Irish were put forward by Carew in 1611 and again in the 1634 Parliament. They were aimed at invalidating the Irish laws of marriage which countenanced plurality of wives and conferred a certain legality on various types of extramarital unions as well as allowing

> extensive pleadings for divorce. English law coincided with the enforcements of Tridentine ecclesiastical regulations and both were strong factors in bringing about a fundamental change in Gaelic society.[48]

This preoccupation with the personal life of the Irish continued until under the penal laws the Irish were required to anglicize their very names. But by that time legislation acted only as an adjunct to more direct methods of destroying the Irish and their way of life. MacCurtin calls Cromwell's campaign in Ireland "swift, terrible and decisive." She does not detail the massacres at Wexford or Drogheda, but gives this summary of the effects of the war in a passage made more affecting by its restraint.

> By 1653 even Inishbofin off the coast of Connemara had been taken by the Cromwellians and famine and pestilence stalked the land. Starvation was general, the wolves coming right down into the towns, carrying off people from outlying houses.[49]

She relates a story told in his memoirs by the Cromwellian Commander Ludlow. On a march from Nenagh to Portumna his advance guard captured two rebels. They killed the first immediately and brought the second to Ludlow, who asked, "Have you a mind to be hanged?"; "whereupon the poor wretch stammered 'if you please,' raising a general laugh at his own expense. . . . Like Scotland in the Cromwellian decade," MacCurtin concludes, "the embodying of Ireland with England

MacCurtin concludes, "the embodying of Ireland with England was as when the poor bird is embodied into the hawk that hath eaten it up."[50]

Two and a half million Irish acres were promised the soldiers and officers of Cromwell's army. They came from the confiscated lands of the old Irish and Anglo-Irish families. Those who actually fought Cromwell were--under the Act of Settling Ireland, passed in 1652--either killed if they belonged to the "unpardonable group," i.e., the leadership, who advised or promoted rebellion, or if they could be pardoned, i.e., the soldiers, were banished from Ireland, losing two-thirds of their estates. Landowners favorable to the rebellion but not actually participants lost two-thirds of their lands and all Roman Catholics forfeited one-fifth of their lands. The Irish who could not prove "constant good affection to the interests of the Commonwealth were transported to Connacht, thus the famous phrase "To hell or Connacht."

> The successful removal of Catholic landowners and well-to-do merchants and tenants either by transportation or emigration placed the sources of wealth and power in the hands of Protestant colonists.[51]

It is interesting to note that Jeremy Taylor opened the Irish Parliament of May 1661 with a sermon, "Rebellion--the Son of Witchcraft." The crushing of Ireland's "deluded and seduced people" paralleled a similarly brutal supression of

women. James under the influence of John Knox, whose Monstrous Regiment of Women left little doubt of his ideas on a woman's place, disassociated himself from his mother. James devoted much time to a study of witchcraft, setting up the rationale under which women would be persecuted for over a century. Elizabeth Gould Davis quotes two summaries of English attitudes about women at the end of the seventeenth century. In the 1670s "The Ladies Calling" advised "Since God has determined subjection to be women's lot, there needs no other argument of its fitness, or for their acquiescence." And echoing this J. Richards, in a manuscript dated 1699, wrote "These miserable creatures, who have no other knowledge than that they were made for the use of man." The reaction against the relative freedom of women in Tudor times in England when women like Margaret Roper, Thomas More's daughter, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and Elizabeth herself could match their learning against any many, was devastating. It would be two hundred years before women would raise their voices again.[52]

It is easy to see the same mentality that caused Englishmen to debase their own wives and daughters in order to chastize them and keep them on the straight and narrow, at work in Ireland. Here, too, the masters of English Puritanism were out to purge the Irish of their evil ways. How significant that James II's daughter Mary, raised in the doctrines of Protestantism, would refuse the throne unless her husband, William of

Orange, could share it with her. How far had English women sunk since Queen Elizabeth. And now Irish women yoked with them under English common law suffered the same deprivation of rights. How ironic that the defeat that burned itself into the mind of Ireland came at the Boyne, manifestation of Ireland's mother goddess, Boand, and the winner was there only because his wife had learned the submission England was determined to teach Ireland.

However, the songs, the stories, the poems remained--and the religion.

> Priests land secretly in every part and creek . . . most men's minds are infected with their doctrines and seditious persuasions. They have so gained the women that they are in a manner all of them absolute recusants.[53]

These priests were being educated abroad and there in Louvain, Belgium, a weapon developed that would ultimately overthrow the English hegemony--the printing press. Under the direction of the Irish Franciscan Friars were printed _Teagas g Criosdaidhe_ (1611), _Sgathan an Chrabhaidh na hAithridhe_ (1618), and _Parrthas an Anama_ (1645). These books, says MacCurtin, "passed into the spiritual heritage of Gaelic-speaking Ireland for the next two centuries and bound together Catholicism and nationalism."[54] Even more importantly, Louvain printed first in Latin, then in Irish the _Acta Sanctorum Hibernia_ or _Annals of the Four Masters_

(1645), "a massive compendium of information on Irish genealogical, military, social and literary history, a contemporary monument to past nature influence."[55] Geoffrey Keating's history Foras Feasa ar Eirinn was this poet, priest, and scholar's labor to capture in clear, colloquial Irish "the folk history of the country before it perished."

MacCurtin concludes:

> In the proliferation of Irish prose and poetry in seventeenth century Ireland there is evidence of much more than the decline of a civilisation uttering its swan song. Wherever this painted vernacular had appeared in Europe it had been accomplished by a growing consciousness of nationalism. Ireland was no exception.[56]

Through the next centuries the consciousness will remain wedded to the maid as the Sovereignty of Erin waits for the true hero. But it is not an idle waiting. The bards mourn and one of the finest poems is a funeral song, Eilleen O'Connell's "Lament" for her husband, Art O'Leary--one of the Wild Geese--an officer in the Austrian army who was killed when he refused to surrender his house for five pounds--the most any house owned by a Catholic Church could legally be worth. But like the river I heard roaring through Allwise Cave, the tradition could be dammed up but it could not be destroyed. The people sang of Granuille, prayed to Brigid, told stories of the old woman of Beare while the priests sneaked back from the Continent with books. Cromwell's soldiers might clean their boots with

illuminated manuscripts, but they could not stamp out the light of minds.

It is 1982 and the world celebrates James Joyce's one hundredth birthday. Like those writers in Louvain, he made books that were weapons against darkness. At their heart was the Sovereignty of Erin "And lilting on all the time."

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CHAPTER FIVE

JOYCE'S SOVEREIGN WOMEN

> The time had come for him to set
> out on his journey Westward"
> ("The Dead," p. 223)

Gretta

Irish women nourished James Joyce. Thanks to them some of the greatest prose literature of the twentieth century contains women who carry on the traditions of Medb and Macha, Brigit and Grace O'Malley as rounded multidimensional characters. Joyce's women develop as he learns to see and appreciate women as they are. Richard Ellmann in discussing Molly Bloom would not cast her as earth goddess at the expense of her individuality. "Her motherhood was only an aspect of that femininity which Joyce was trying to report".[1] I like the notion of Joyce the great noticer and rememberer as a reporter of femininity. It implies a study of women rather than an imposition onto them of preconceived ideas. If we are fortunate in the women characters that result from Joyce's observation it is because of the women he had to observe. The central ones were Irish--his mother, Nora Barnacle, his life's companion, his six sisters, two of whom lived with him in Trieste, the Sheehy girls and his aunt

Josephine Murray. They have been identified in Richard Ellmann's biography.

In his introduction, Ellmann says that an unpublished recollection by Yeats of his meeting with Joyce shown to him by Mrs. Yeats was the first impetus of the book. So Mrs. Yeats joins the list of other women like Harriet Shaw Weaver and Sylvia Beach who helped bring Joyce to the world. Women seemed to have an instinct about helping Joyce. His sister Eileen snatched A Portrait from the fire where Joyce had thrown the manuscript in disgust. Ellmann too was aided by women as his acknowledgement shows. Perhaps that is why in both the works of the writer and his biographer we are rewarded as women.

The chapters in James Joyce on the relationship between Nora Barnacle and James Joyce show the formative influence she had on his work. Joyce gave Nora an aquamarine ring to represent the River Liffey "her counterpart in the landscape" of Finnegans Wake. She wore it to celebrate the first galleys of Finnegans Wake on Joyce's birthday--a coincidence achieved with much effort by all Joyce's Paris circle. Ellmann includes this detail with reports of Nora's pungent expressions, her intelligence as well as her forbearance and steadfastness. Such information does not find its way into many literary biographies (Ellmann, p. 728). Tillie Olsen in Silences points out that the wives who nurture their husband's work are more often than not forgotten.

Nor was Nora merely the domestic glue of the household. In fact neither she nor Joyce bothered much about the domestic details as Stanislaus records in My Brother's Keeper.[2] Nora as herself holds Joyce's interest. Ellmann after discussing the various prototypes for Molly Bloom in Joyce's life makes this statement.

> If bits and pieces of Mrs. Chance, Signora Santos, Signorian Posser, and Matt Dillon's daughter helped Joyce to design the outer Molly Bloom he has a model at home for Molly's mind. Nora Joyce had a similar gift for concentrated pungent expression, and Joyce delighted in it as much as Bloom did. Like Molly she was not intellectual and like Molly she was attached to her husband without being awestruck. The rarity of capital letters and the run-on sentences in Molly's monolog are of course related to Joyce's theory of her mind (and the female mind in general) as a flow, in contrast to the series of short jumps made by Bloom and of somewhat longer ones by Stephen. But he had in mind as well as Nora's carelessness in such matters. (p. 387)

If Joyce studied Nora he tested her as well. In 1909, five years after his departure, he returned with his son Giorgio, named for the brother who had died as a child, to Dublin. The trip started out well. Joyce made peace with his father who, Ellmann relates, sang the aria from La Traviata in which Gaumanont asks forgiveness from his son Alfredo. Joyce understood this meant his father accepted his alliance with Nora. Actually, he was the last to be won over since the women in the Joyce family had accepted Nora from the beginning when his sisters shopped with her for

things for their elopement and Joyce's aunt Josephine Murray saw them off at the dock. It was his male friends in Dublin who begrudged him the exile that was working too well entirely. One was Vincent Cosgrave, "Lynch" in A Portrait and in Ulysses who told Joyce that five years before Nora had lied to him, giving work as an excuse why she could not walk out with him and then walking out with Cosgrave. Ellmann describes the effect on Joyce:

> The inherent improbability of the tale, his knowledge of Nora's innocence and fidelity, weighed nothing for him beside the horrible possibility that she had betrayed him. Cosgrave had struck deeper than he knew into Joyce's pride. The Dublin visit had sharpened Joyce's feelings of ancient treachery, and predisposed him to find it allpervasive. He was to have his hero Richard say to the man who is supposedly his best friend, "In the very core of my ignoble heart I longed to be betrayed by you and by her...."
> (p.288)

In his own mind he joined Hamlet and Parnell and Jesus as a victim. Richard in Exiles handles the supposed infidelity of his wife with calm control, questioning her on the details and stage managing her meeting with Robert, her would-be admirer. But suspecting Nora shattered Joyce. He wrote her immediately. "My eyes are full of tears, tears of sorrow and mortification. My heart is full of bitterness and despair" (Letters p. 158).

Ellmann describes Joyce walking through Dublin the next day "in horror." The day after he went to 7 Eccles Street.

the home of John Francis Byrne, "Cranly" in the novels. There, at the house that would be home to Molly and Leopold Bloom, Joyce told Byrne of Cosgrave's story.

> Joyce wept and groaned and gesticulated in futile impotence . . . Byrne wrote later that he had never "'seen a human being more shattered." When Joyce had finished, Byrne, a great discoverer too of conspiracies rendered an unhesitating verdict. Cosgrave's brag was "a blasted lie." It was probably the second stage in a joint plot of Cosgrave and Gogarty to wreck Joyce's life, he said. (p. 290)

Ellmann goes on to point out why Joyce believed Byrne's explanation.

> Byrne's explanation could not have been more fortunate: as long as there was treachery somewhere, and especially if Gogarty was somehow involved in it Joyce could be persuaded of Nora's innocence. He began to feel ashamed of himself and grateful to Byrne, whose trust in Nora and distrust of Cosgrave were so much more appropriate than his own hysterical self-pity. (p. 290)

Here are the very qualities that bring diaster in the old literature--bragging, distrust, jealousy and a man's need to possess a woman to insure his own selfworth. Ellmann makes a sensitive observation when he draws attention to the "hysterical self-pity" that marked Joyce's reaction to this story. Nora did not answer at once but when she did the letter was "pathetic and strangely dignified." If he wishes to separate from her he should. His brother Stanislaus wrote to tell Joyce that he knew Cosgrave _had_ tried to go out with Nora but she had rejected him. Joyce's

next letters to Nora are full of apologies and redeclarations of his love and her importance to him. She is not to read his earlier letters because he "was out of his mind with rage, instead she should "take me again to your arms. Make me worthy of you. It has been a bitter experience and our love will now be sweeter" (Letters, p. 160).

Joyce's letters during this period portray Nora as the soul of his writing, its inspiration. She was the best things of his country: the wild flowers in the hedges, the girls on their way to mass, the women watching on the beaches. He walked with her sister in Galway, tracing Nora's path, "learning lessons from the sea, which would appear in all his writings. If men live in a straight line of ambition and competition, women were round, with them life was a circle. He could listen to her mother in Galway sing "The Lass of Aughrim" and somehow Nora was there. During this period Joyce showed more concern for his sisters bringing first Eva, then Eileen, to live with him in Trieste. If his mother had been his first audience then Nora became his second. These months of 1909 spent in Dublin provided the experiences from which Joyce would draw the themes for "The Dead," "Exiles" and Ulysses. The Russian film pioneer Eisenstein said when he met Joyce, "The fellow really does what all of you wanted to do, because you feel it but he knows it" (Ellmann, p. 666). The director who learned the power of a closeup of broken glasses on a student, a baby

carriage bumping down the steps of Odessa, and saw how he could put three stone lions together to make one roar, understood that Joyce's great power came not just from internal sense of what the world was but from real observation. He knew.

His first study was his parents, and their relationship provided an example of what he most wanted to avoid in his laison with Nora. Perhaps the most destructive picture of his parents' marriage is given by Joyce's brother. Stanislaus remembers his father coming home screwed (his Aunt Josephine's term for drunk) while his mother was on her death bed. "I'm finished. I can't do anymore. If you can't get well die and be damned you." Stanislaus says he forgot everything, shouted "You swine", and went for his father. But then he saw his mother struggling to get out of bed to stop him.

> I hurried to her at once, while Jim led my father out of the room.
> --You musn't do that, my mother panted. You must promise me never to do that. You know that when he is that way he doesn't know what he is saying.[2]

Somehow she regained enough strength so that this distressing scene and the, to Stanislaus, servile words of his mother are not his last recollection of her. "A few days later, however, she said something to me that I am happy to remember." He does not say what it is but her last gift followed a lifetime of giving. "My mother died on August 13, 1903 at the early

age of 44. She had thrown her wasted body between her husband and her family, and succumbed only in death to her struggle to preserve it from the ravages of his drunkenness." This younger brother feels that his mother should have done something against the "far from inevitable" circumstances of her life which though it had begun happily, had been made unhappy as it well could be."

> She ought to have rebelled. That was my insistent thought. And I saw clearly against whom, near and far and against what she ought to have rebelled. But in the hateful country and hateful times in which she lived it would have required very considerable strength of character which she did not possess. (S. Joyce, pp. 233-4)

Here is an instance of blaming the victim for the crime. Stanislaus Joyce is moved, of course, by his love for his mother and the antipathy for his father he says he felt almost from birth. But by blaming his mother for the lack of strength of character necessary to rebel, he underestimates the perniciousness of the system that held her and neglects the enormous "strength of character" necessary to continue her struggle "to preserve the family." The good memories of the Joyce family, the love they shared among themselves came from somewhere. In "that hateful country and hateful times" women had to celebrate family life in whatever way they could.

In this portrayal Stanislaus also clarifies the deathbed scene of their mother which will become an important element

in Ulysses, perhaps the central element. It was not May Joyce who asked the boys to kneel and pray but her oldest brother John Murray "a reformed atheist and drunkard . . . whose reformation, though liable to occasional relapses had won him the favor of his uncle, Canon Murray, and a position on the Freeman's Journal, the principal Catholic newspaper in Ireland." He is the one who began praying in a loud voice and made "an angry, peremptory gesture to us to kneel down. Neither of us paid any attention to him; yet even so the scene seems to have burnt itself into my brother's soul" (S. Joyce, p. 234).

At that moment, John Murray must have represented for James Joyce the whole hypocritical system that forced women like his mother to spend themselves in an uneven fight against patriarchal domination. In a sense the drunkenness of her husband, though it caused untold misery to herself and her family, provided her with an excuse for his insensitivity. It seems she understood that he too was caught in a system that kept men children and their wives mothers. Her brother even tries to manage her death and creates a scene with her sons solely, it seems, to assert his own importance. This was how established religion was used to shore up self-delusion and smother the soul in Ireland. Yet among the men who gathered around her death bed is the son in whose book she will live again. She packed up new

second hand clothes and sent him on his journey with the prayer that he would learn what the heart felt.

For some women in Ireland victory had to come not through rebellion but by maintaining the continuity of life under the worst circumstances. The story of Mary Jane Murray Joyce might have been different if Ireland still held to the Brehon laws and she kept control of her own property on marriage, if her husband was not able to spend the family income without her consent and if his behavior could be grounds for her divorcing him in an action that was provided for in the matrix of society. But May Joyce did not have those options and so she managed. However, it seems James Joyce found in Nora a woman he could not dominate as his father had his mother. Nora did not answer his accusations with explanations. She offered to leave him. The lack of a legal bond was Joyce's choice. For him it made their relationship bohemian and free. But it also left Nora without the legal restriction applied to a married woman at that time. Nora could retain her sovereignty in a way unavailable to May Joyce whose triumph as a woman came in the influence she had over her son. Joyce wrote to his mother from Paris "No one that has raised up a family has failed utterly in my opinion. You understand this I think" (Letters, p. 20).

Stanislaus repeats a revealing incident. Mabel, the nine-year-old baby of the family, was inconsolable after her mother's death and worried her family.

> It was Jim who succeeded in calming her. He caught her as she was creeping upstairs in tears and made her listen to him. I remember him sitting on the top step of the first flight of stairs with his arm round her, talking to her in a very matter of fact voice.
> --You must not cry like that, he said, because there is no reason to cry. Mother is in heaven. She is far happier now than she has ever been on earth, but if she sees you crying it will spoil her happiness. You must remember that when you feel like crying. You can pray for her, if you wish. Mother would like that but you musn't cry any more. (S. Joyce, p. 237)

In the end, Stanislaus says "he succeeded in imposing a calmer grief on the child's mind." Mabel listened to Jim since "he always had an ascendancy over the girls of the family because of his cleverness, his talents, his good looks, and that even temper which was in striking contrast to mine though we were always together" (p. 237). Stanislaus calls it "ascendancy" but perhaps love is a better word. Joyce seems able to go beyond the barriers put up by people like John Murray and find springs of real spirituality. In the midst of his rejection of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland he could speak to his sister with a simplicity that calmed her grief and appeal to Mabel by invoking their mother's happiness in heaven. Elizabeth Davis pointed out in her discussion of the influence of

puritanism on the position of woman that at least under Catholicism women could feel that the sufferings of the Present life would be followed by joy in the next while the doctrine of election denied that to many women.[3] Joyce recalls for Mabel the happy otherworld of Celtic myth that remained part of the Catholicism of Ireland. Fathers might go to hell but no one could observe a life of a mother like May Joyce and doubt her destination. Mabel believes this and Joyce is able to touch this belief. Was this an empty gesture for a child? Children do not respond usually to insincerity and Mabel's reaction indicates Joyce's real compassion.

According to Stanislaus, Joyce spent the next year in Dublin in drink and dissipation with Gogarty and his group. Joyce seemed well on his way to becoming merely another Dublin character and then he met Nora Barnacle, like Medb and Grace O'Malley, a woman of the West. Five months later they left Ireland together and Joyce began his work. However, what if Joyce had stayed in Dublin, had insulated himself from the passion within which Nora helped him express, had never broken through the barriers between men and women? What would he be like? I think he would have been Gabriel Conroy, the main character in the last <u>Dubliner</u> story "The Dead." His wife is consciously modelled on Nora but Gabriel is not James Joyce. I think he is what Joyce was afraid he might have become. In the story we have the voice of the

real Joyce and the possible one. The difference might simply be Nora.

"The Dead" begins with Lily, the caretakers daughter who "was literally run off her feet."[4] In describing her activities Joyce uses a tone that could be Lily's own. She brings "one gentleman into the little pantry" and then "the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again." Though Joyce writes in the third person it is Lily's voice telling us that "Miss Kate and Miss Julia" had thought to make the upstairs bathroom a ladies dressing room and they are up there "gossiping and laughing and fussing" (p. 175). In the next paragraph the women are Kate and Julia and the tone is reportorial. We find out about the family and details such as that though Julia is "quite grey" she is still "the leading soprano at Adam and Eve's" (p. 176), In _Finnegans Wake_ he will reverse the order and Anna Livia's riverrun will go past "Eve and Adams." But in "The Dead" Joyce is in the first stages of his observance of woman and she takes second place.

After the paragraph which sets up the evening the tone changes again. Now the voice is that of one of the Misses Morkan:

> Of course they had good reason to be fussy on such a night and then it was long after ten o'clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel and his wife. Besides they were dreadfully afraid that Freddy Malins might turn up screwed. (p. 176)

Stanislaus Joyce recalls in My Brother's Keeper how when the family lived in the seaside suburb of Bray their parents would often go into Dublin for dances and stay over night in a hotel as Gabriel and his wife do. Also Stanislaus notes that his aunt who nursed his mother in her final illness and kept her home open to all the Joyce family, used the term "screwed" for drunk (S. Joyce, p. 233).

Gabriel Conroy enters the house with "a light fringe of snow" that "lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat"(p. 177). This image recalls the cape the priest wears at Benediction when he lifts up the Eucharist not to be shared but to be bowed down to. Snow has settled "like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes" (p. 177). If water is a manifestation of the goddess and a sign of life then what is this frozen water that doubly encases Gabriel's feet? Gabriel the archangel was a messenger. In the prayer that commemorates his most famous mission we are told, "The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary/And she was conceived of the Holy Ghost." A passage from the prophet Isaiah says how beautiful upon the mountain tops are the feet of those who bring the good news. Since in Christianity the incarnation is the ultimate "good news" the feet of Gabriel should be beautiful. Here we are celebrating Christmas yet this Gabriel's feet are clad in goloshes and capped in snow. He has already hung back, scraping his goloshes while his wife follows Lily into the house and goes upstairs with Kate and

Julia. Later we find out that Gretta Conroy would happily walk through the snow all the way back to Monkstown. It is her husband who insists on precautions like goloshes and overnight stays in hotels to avoid the weather.

The Angelus prayer implies that Mary conceived at the moment of Gabriel's announcement and indeed the feast of the Annunciation is celebrated on March 25th exactly nine months before Christmas. But Gabriel Conroy arrives after the fact. Christmas has come and rather than heralding the good news he will merely give the dinner table toast. Gabriel does smile but not in joy, at the three syllables Lily uses to pronounce his name. This mark of her lower class origins draws his attention to her. "She was a slim growing girl, pale in complexion and with hay-coloured hair. The gas in the pantry made her paler still" (p. 177). The emphasis on her paleness, the hay-coloured hair that blends into her paleness almost making her disappear in the gaslight gives Lily a ghostly quality. She has little reality for Gabriel. Later he will learn of a young boy who worked in the gas-works and loved Gretta years before and he will have to reconsider a class of people that he has categorized and now wishes to ignore. But for now Lily is just a girl who when a child "used to sit on the lowest step nursing a rag doll" (p. 177). This is the image of her Gabriel carries in his mind. Her place is on the bottom stair with a ragdoll.

Lily asks about the snow and he replies that he thinks "we're in for a night of it." A freeze encases the city like the "snow stiffened frieze" of the overcoat he hands to Lily. Above them both there are "beautiful feet" making the pantry ceiling shake. Gabriel as if feeling their mutual exclusion from this joy, tries to make conversation with Lily "who was folding his overcoat carefully at the end of the shelf." But while Joyce can report Lily accurately, Gabriel cannot communicate with her.

> --Tell me, Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school?
> --O no, sir, she answered, I'm done schooling this year and more.
> --O, then, said Gabriel gaily, I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?
> The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:
> --The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you. (p. 178)

This expression of real feeling unnerves Gabriel. He colors "as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively at his patent-leather shoes" (p. 178). Lily will not let Gabriel put her into the false category "happy servant girl." As we know from the beginning she gets on well enough with her mistresses but will not pretend this life is enough for her. Her remark about men recalls the old woman of Beare who regretted that in her time money was replacing love as a measure of a man too. Palaver and what they can get "out of you" defines men for whom women are interchangeable.

Gabriel, when confronted with this truth, stops his own palaver and fastens his attention on his feet. Clad in patent leather they reflect rather than absorb the light and Gabriel uses another insulator, his muffler, to increase their shine. He does this with purpose, he "flicked actively." If Irish art will soon be defined by Stephen as the "cracked looking glass of a servant," in this case the servant seems more in touch with life than the man who so assiduously polishes the cracked surface of his shoes.

The description of Gabriel contrasts greatly with that of Lily. She is slim. He is "a stout tallish young man." Where she is pale "The rising colour of his cheeks pushed forward even to his forehead where it scattered itself in a few formless patches of pale red" (p. 178) His "delicate restless eyes" are "screened" by the polished lenses and the bright gilt frames of glasses," which "scintillated restlessly." Again have we a polished surface that refracts the light, bouncing it around uselessly. And twice Joyce points out the restlessness in Conroy. Where Lily's hair is "hay coloured," Gabriel's is "glossy black," "parted in the middle and brushed in a long curve behind his ear where it curled lightly beneath the groove left by his hat." Gabriel, highly coloured, stout and glossy seems to have drained the life and colour from Lily in order to feed himself. There is a sense that Gabriel knows that because after he had "flicked lustre into his shoes" and "pulled his

waistcoat down more tightly on his plump body" he offers her money. He cannot do it with "grace and giving" though. He is awkward and rapid. The sentence is broken and he appears to need her to remind him that it is Christmas. "Just . . . here's a little. . . ." Then he walks rapidly away.

> --O no sir, cried the girl following him. Really sir I wouldn't take it. (p. 178)

Joyce does not have her say I "couldn't take it" but I wouldn't take it, ie., I will not, I do not choose to. Joyce found money as a measure of affection abhorrent although that never kept him from borrowing it wherever and whenever he could - an added incentive for keeping money and feelings separate. But for Gabriel this is the easiest exchange. He invokes the season as reason for his generosity although the sense is there that he somehow wants to ease her bitterness. But he is as much a victim of the distance between them as she is.

> --Christmas time . Christmas-time. said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in deprecation. (p. 178)

Gabriel throttles his own gesture and heads for the safety of the stairs which will take him away from her. He deprecates both of them with his waving hand. And, indeed, when he reaches the stairs Lily has no choice but to respond in the expected way. "The girl seeing he had gained the stairs, called out after him, --Well, thank you, Sir."

Gabriel "has gained the stairs," has moved ahead in society but he has paid for it. He can no longer communicate with his country-woman. Lily is the first hint of the other Ireland that seems to haunt "The Dead" and Joyce in his exile. Gretta, like Nora, is from Galway, has a dead young admirer called Michael, and associates both with the song "The Lass of Aughrim." She is part of the primitivism of Ireland that both frightens and attracts Gabriel. Will the West expose the emptiness of his soul? He has wrapped himself up against the dangerous pull of the West with its legacy of sorrow and passion, has made himself a civilized man, a Dubliner. He clings to the security of paralysis, to the carefully worded review in the _Daily Express_, the cycling trips to the continent. But as successful as he is in the new order, the pull of the old cannot be denied. He has married Gretta, a woman of the West. She comes from another social class but he knows her intuitions and feelings are more authentic than his. "Nora Barnacle," says Ellmann." in spite of her defects of education, was independent, unself-conscious, instinctively right. Gabriel acknowledges the same coherence in his own wife and he recognizes in the west of Ireland, in Michael Furey, a passion he himself has always lacked" (p. 258). In the letter that Joyce wrote Nora after Cosgrave's accusation and their short estrangement rekindled his love, he asks "Do you

remember the three adjectives I have used in "The Dead" when speaking of your body. They are these musical and strange and perfumed" (Letters, p. 163). Four days later on August 26, 1909 he is in Galway sitting in the kitchen listening to her mother sing "The Lass of Aughrim", the song that so affects Gretta. Joyce so consciously identifies Nora and himself with Gretta and Grabriel that he goes to the Outher gard cemetery on a bicycle to see the grave of Michael Bodkin. He writes Stanislaus in August 1912 that he has "visited the graveyard of The Dead. It is exactly as I imagined it and one of the headstones was to J. Joyce" (Letters p. 201). It was on this trip that Joyce wrote his travel pieces about Galway and the Aran Islands. After acknowledging their beauty he voices the hope that Galway may fulfill its motto and "grow like a sprouting lily, stretching out its branches like the terebinth tree." (Critical Writings, p. 237)

But that is Joyce speaking not Gabriel Conroy. Gabriel, after his exchange with Lily, feels discomposed and tries to dispel his gloom by rearranging his clothes, again an outward gesture aimed at protection, not revelation. He removes the paper on which he has the headings for his speech from his waistcoat pocket. He fears his speech with its Browning quotations may be over the heads of the other guests. The sound of those other feet "The indelicate clacking of the mens heels and the shuffling

of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his." Is he disdaining their souls? Yet Gabriel is loved by these people. His aunts kiss him "frankly." He is their favorite. For them and for his wife Gretta his fussiness and caution is a joke, an endaring eccentricity.

> Mrs. Conroy laughed.
> --Don't mind him, Aunt Kate, she said. He's really an awful bother, what with green shades for Tom's eyes at night and making him do dumbbells and forcing Eva to eat stirabout. The poor child! And she simply hates the sight of it!...O, but you'll never guess what he makes me wear now!

The women laugh together "for Gabriel's solicitude was a standing joke with them."

> --Goloshes! said Mrs. Conroy. That's the latest. Whenever its wet underfoot I must put on my goloshes. Tonight even he wanted me to them on, but I wouldn't...The next thing he'll buy me will be a diving suit. Gabriel laughed nervously and patted his tie reassuringly while Aunt Kate nearly doubled herself, so heartily did she enjoy the joke. (p. 180)

Gabriel would like to wrap Gretta up in the "guttapercha things" that are worn on the Continent. She indulges him and his possessive protectiveness but she does not take it seriously. She will not wear the goloshes tonight. Nor does she worry about her effect on his relatives. She is herself. Let them accept her or not, and she is accepted. Her only opposition, Gabriel's mother, modelled on Joyce's grandmother perhaps, is gone (Ellmann, p.257). She is dead.

The party continues with good will and much food and music. In his speech Gabriel will call the Misses Morkan "the three Graces" and the hospitality and warmth of the party justifies that description. These three women support themselves, they depend on no man. This house, a house of women, contains the kind of cheerful enjoyment the Irish associated with the "Land of Women," the otherworld. It is worth noting that the feast of the Epihpany was of such significance for Joyce, was celebrated in Ireland as Nollaig na mBan, Christmas of the women, a day of parties for women only. Though the models for the Aunts of this party, Joyce's own great-aunts, were widows they were known as "the Misses Flynn" and in "The Dead" Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia and Mary Jane have evaded the system entirely and never married. Joyce does not make this seem a deprivation. Their house with its carefully described square table, linen cloths with dishes, "glasses and bundles of knives and forks and spoons" neatly arrayed, provides an inviting alternative to the disorder of the Joyce household not only to James Joyce but to the mother who against all odds had to maintain it.

Nor do these women suffer from not having children. The mother and son model is Freddy Malins and Mrs. Malins. She no longer lives in Dublin in her own house as do these women but stays with a daughter in Glasgow. Freddy is no prize. In addition to being often "screwed" he is not

attractive. "His face was fleshy and pallid, touched with colour at the thick lobes of his ears and at the wide wings of his nose. He had coarse features, a blunt nose, convex and receding brow, tumid and prtruded lips" (p. 184). If Lily is pale and slim to the point of disappearance, and Gabriel is stocky and flooded with colour, then Freddy is the worse combination of the two -- flesh without solidity and paleness artificially touched up by drink. At 40 he is still "Freddy", still the bad boy whose "poor mother made him take the pledge on New Years Eve" (p. 185). And here, in contrast to the women without husbands, is how a man fares who does not have a wife and children. Freddy's stories and hardy laughter cover an incomplete man.

Joyce writes:

> Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing room. He liked music but the piece she was playing has no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners though they had begged Mary Jane to play something. (p. 186)

Why does Gabriel find it so hard to listen to Mary Jane? Are we to believe that no one else enjoyed the music when he says the room is "hushed" and the guests, many of them her students and therefore familiar with her work, "begged her to play"? I think Joyce is pointing out that Gabriel and the four young men who sneak out of the room in couples" cannot appreciate the music because it somehow

makes them uncomfortable. There is a hint here of the accomplished women of an older Ireland who held their own in the arts and the professions. Indeed Joyce was related through his father's mother to the O'Connell family. They claimed Daniel O'Connel's branch and if that is so then Joyce was also related to Eileen O'Connell author of "The Lament for Art O'Leary." Another aunt of his fathers' founded a convent and school and his own mother was an accomplished musician. Joyce tried to help two of his sisters obtain voice lessons hoping that they could have a concert career. So Joyce himself was familiar with women with talent and indeed considered that his wife's noble soul was in itself a work of art. This is where Joyce diverges from Gabriel Conroy. Nora makes it possible for him to experience and create art. She is his medium in a much more immediate way than any of those on whom Yeats relied.

> It is perhaps in art, Nora dearest, that you and I will find a solace for our own love. I would wish you to be surrounded by everything that is fine and beautiful and noble in art. You are not as you say a poor uneducated girl. You are my bride, darling and all I can give you of pleasure and joy in this life I wish to give you.... Good night, my dearest girl, my little Galway bride, my tender love from Ireland. (Letters p. 165-166)

I think Joyce feels that without Nora and the passion he felt for her he might have deserted his inner self and become Gabriel Conroy. Kevin Sullivan in his introduction to Joyce Among the Jesuits concludes that if John Joyce had

not lost his money and if James had been able to continue his rise into the easy professional life of Dublin begun at Clongowes he might never have left home. He may indeed have become Gabriel Conroy.[5] He says almost this to Nora. He needs her to assure him that he has not destroyed "the warm impulsive life-giving love of your rich nature." The thought that he had somehow killed his mother haunted Joyce. He was certain that she had been cut down by the cruelty to women endemic in the social system of Dublin. His own father was a manifestation of this and similar attitudes rested within Joyce himself. He must be vigilant. He begs Nora to look into her own heart "and tell me that living beside me you have not seen your heart aging and hardening...Tell me, my little Nora, that my companionship was good for you and I will freely tell you all that your companionship has meant to me" (Letters, p. 161). He then attributes the changes his own soul has gone through to her. The qualities that will make him a great writer were quickened by contact with her. The jealousy, the testing, the passion come because the protecting layers that insulated him before are gone. He has passed through the crucible:

> Do you know what a pearl is and what an opal is? My soul, when you came sauntering to me first through those sweet summer evenings was beautiful but with the pale passionless beauty of a pearl. Your love passed through me and now I feel my mind something like an opal, that is full of strange, uncertain hues and colours, of warm lights and quick shadows and of broken music. (Letters, p.161)

Gabriel's soul may be like that pearl but all his colours are external. He cannot hear the "broken music" though Joyce has Mary Jane acting as a priestess of music calling forth passion from her listeners: "her hands racing along the keyboard or lifted from it at the pauses like those of a priestess in momentary imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page" (p. 186) Not only cannot Gabriel hear, he cannot even look at the floor which "glittered with beeswax." As Joyce shows in his earlier description of Gabriel his glasses refract the light his eyes cannot look at directly. But when he tries to rest his eyes by looking up at the wall he sees another reminder of passion and these women's art. "A picture of the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet hung there and beside it was a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower which Aunt Julia had worked in red, blue and brown wools when she was a girl" (p. 186). Joyce would like the juxtaposition of romance and treachery and if by embroidering the picture of the two princes, Aunt Julia somehow domesticates tragedy, Joyce by turning Nora's story of Michael Bodkin into Gretta's story of Furey does the same thing. Art will act not only as the solace of the love between Joyce and Nora, it will provide an outlet for otherwise destructive passions.

The picture of Gabriel as Joyce's alter ego, his "what if", is confirmed by the photograph of the elder Mrs. Conroy

and her other son Constantine. "She held an open book on her knees and was pointing out something in it to Constantine who, dressed in a man-o-war suit lies at her feet." She "had chosen the names for her sons for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life" (p. 186). An almost identical photograph is plate one in James Joyce. Joyce, 6½, sits on the floor next to his mother, who holds a book and is pointing something out to him. He too wears a sailor suit. However they are not alone. Standing next to his mother is her tall bearded father, John Murray, seriously looking down at the page. Seated on the other side is John Joyce - not at all serious but totally at his ease. One leg crossed, one hand in his pocket he leans back, reading the book with his wife and son but ready it seems to make a quick remark or jump up and sing. For a moment the face of the young man whom May Murray wed shines forth. The drinking, the irresponsibility, the violence are yet to come. Now young James is off to Clongowes. John is a gentleman, the family has a good income and the path to a comfortable bourgeois life lies open. However if May Murray had wanted only that kind of life certainly there were other young men who could more surely give it to her than this spoiled only son of an only son. Perhaps she chose him in the way Joyce chose Nora because with him she felt alive and full of passion and feeling. The bearing and raising of ten children certainly muted that side of their relationship but

she did save until death the love letters John Joyce wrote her. Joyce's poem "Ecce Puer" on the birth of his grandson, Stephen ends, "A child is sleeping/An old man is gone/O, Father forsaken,/Forgive your son!" Joyce wrote to Harriet Weaver:

> He was the silliest man I even knew and yet cruelly shrewd. He thought and talked of me up to his last breath. I was very fond of him always, being a sinner myself, and even liked his faults. Hundreds of pages and scores of characters in my books came from him. His dry (or rather wet) wit and expression of face convulsed me often with laughter. He kept it in old age. When he got the copy I sent him of Tale Told etc. (so they write me) he looked a long time at Brancusi's Portrait of J.J.(an abstract set of two straight lines with a partial spiral) and finally remarked: Jim has changed more than I thought. (Letters pp. 360-361)

He went on to list what he received from his father: "his portraits, a waistcoat, a good tenor voice, and an extravagant licentious dispostion (out of which, however the greater part of the talent I may have springs) but apart from these things something else I cannot define." From Paris 25 years earlier he had written to his mother that no one who raises up a family can be considered a total failure and indeed the lesson of all his works, culminating in Finnegans Wake may well be that no one's life should be judged on a straight line of personal achievement but seen rather as part of a circle. Within this circle of relation John Joyce is a great man- father mother and son all at once--a success in the inspiration he gave his son if not

in his own life. On his tomb stone John Joyce asked that his name and his wife's be carved together. Joyce was able to give his father what he was unable to achieve for himself a resting place with his wife. Ellmann points out that Nora Barnacle Joyce is not buried next to her husband because that spot was already taken. He remarks that the casualness of their lodging in life is repeated in death (Ellmann, p. 756). But if Joyce had been there to write the words he would have joined her to him as he did his father to his mother. Words could make it be.

Gabriel Conroy is the son he might have been if Joyce's mother had not chosen his father, if the spark of difference in each had not been passed on to James and ignited in his relationship with Nora. In Ulysses Joyce traces the movement from father to son. In one passage the young Leopold comes home to his father who is "reading through round horned spectacles some paper from Europe a month before" (p. 406). But the father cannot be relied on to remain a symbol of age against which the son can measure his youth. "But, hey, presto the mirror is breathed on and the young knight errant recedes, within the mist. Now he is himself paternal and these about him might be his sons. Who can can say? The wise father knows his own child" (p. 406). By reversing the proverb Joyce draws attention to the true wisdom that knows that life continues not in the limited space of one person's life but in the doubling and redoubling that comes through changing father into son and mother into daughter and father into daughter and mother

into son. Leopold makes Stephen his son because nature does not provide him one. "Name and memory solace thee not... That youthful illusion of thy strength was taken from thee and in vain. No son of thy loins is by thee. There is none now to be for Leopold what Leopold was for Rudolph" (p. 407). No son of his can forever keep his own youth alive. Both his dead father and dead son are "Rudolph" so Bloom is cut off from the recirculation on both sides until art provides what nature took away in Stephen. Joyce once wrote to Nora "Kiss the image of me in Georgie's face" the son he named for his dead brother. In the letter to Harriet Weaver he mentions how his father kept his grandson's picture on the mantle. "I am lucky in my son" Completing the round, Stephen Joyce is born. Out of the darkness light came again. To make it even more appropriate Stephen's mother is Jewish and thus fiction crosses over into life. But these regenerations can only take place because of the women, because of the mothers.

In the paragraph following the lament for the sonless and fatherless Bloom we read.

> The voices blend and fuse in clouded silence; silence that is the infinite of space: and swiftly, silently the soul is wafted over regions of cycles of cycles of generations that have lived..A region where grey twilight ever descends, never falls on wide sagegreen pasture-fields, shedding her dusk, scattering a perennial dew of stars. She follows her mother with

> ungainly steps, a mare leading her filly
> foal. (p. 407)

The cycles of generations become the movement of the stars The mare and her fillyfoal inhabit an eternal region. Macha returns. Through the wonder of metapsychosis "it is she the everlasting bride harbinger of the daystar, the bride, ever Virgin. It is she, Martha thou lost one, Millicent the young, the dear, the radiant" (p. 407). Martha is the lost one but Millicent, Milly, Bloom's own daughter is young and dear and radiant. Souls move in cycles and the region of the soul transcends time and space and the distinctions of sex and age. Like Tir naOg the country of the soul is ever young. Twilight descends but never falls here and the stars are perennially the morning dew. This is the place the artist seeks and passage here requires a spiritual regeneration parallel to the round of father, son, mother, daughter in the natural world. Nora is the mother of his soul without ceasing to be the lover of his body. "He will never forget the name, ever remember the night, the first night, the bridenight" (p.406). With Nora, "my beautiful wild flower of the hedges" he can unleash the feelings that let his own soul live. In her body the children who complete not only his own life but that of his father and mother are conceived. Without the outlet of his art all of this passion might have wasted itself away in the

kind of jealous rages and family feuds that Stanislaus Joyce records in the life of their father.

Ellmann in The Consciousness of James Joyce speaks of the oversense and the undersense" which together form the "countersense" through which wisdom and unity are attained.[6] The undersense is the "current of sensation, often quite tangential which keeps forcing its way to the surface of what is being thought." The oversense comes into play when "concepts rather than sensations provide the atmosphere in which quite diverse material becomes enveloped" (Ellmann, Consciousness, p. 94). The oversense imposes the categories of space and time on human behavior. To space belongs the external world and to time the internal. Ellmann says "Space subsumes sculpture as time subsumes music" (p. 94). This union comes in not the denying contrary pressures, but allowing each to act on the other until a balance is achieved. Gabriel's mother could represent the oversense, and Gretta the undersense.

The older Mrs. Conroy offered "sullen opposition" to his marriage. "Some slighting phrases she had used still rankled in his memory. She had once spoke of Gretta as 'country cute' and that was not true of Gretta at all" (p. 187). But it is not Mrs. Conroy's opinion that is damaging but Gabriel's reaction to it. In Ireland "cute" means shrewd with a connotation of slyness. "Those West of Ireland people are very cute," a friend said to me in Dublin

after hearing the price a farmer got from an American for his untillable field. In a way Mrs. Conroy sees this "cuteness" as one of the things that makes Gretta formidable. But Gabriel wishes to deny this and cut her off from her origins. When Miss Ivors, the Gaelic leaguer, suggests a trip to the West saying "it would be splendid for Gretta too, if she'd come. She's from Connacht, isn't she?" Gabriel replies "shortly" "her people are" (p. 189). But Gretta won't be cut off from her origins. They are part of her, the essence. In sickness even is mother the serious, brainy one of the family experiences the undersense breaking through. "It was Gretta who had nursed her during all her last long illness in their house at Monkstown" (p. 187)

In a way the entire story of "The Dead" turns on questions of the body and spirit. The feast being celebrated is Christmas when the Word was made flesh in the body of a woman. Gabriel the archangel announced the event that symbolized not only birth but rebirth for all. To use Ellmann's terms the incarnation expresses the coming together of the undersense and the oversense -- to ignore one is to miss the other. The memory of how Gretta and his mother connect releases something in Gabriel and he can finally hear the music. Mary Jane plays again the opening melody "with runs of scales after every bar and while he waited for the end the resentment died in his heart." (p. 187) Gabriel has a chance here to start over, to learn before the end comes to

appreciate the difficult runs that finish every bar. When resentment dies life can begin. But Gabriel has many of the bars in his society within himself. Greta whose body is full of broken music like the piece that Mary Jane plays can call to him from across the barriers but he must answer her. The question is whether he can respond from his inmost self or if Gabriel is doomed to remain like the young men now who swell the general applause that greets Mary Jane's performance, clapping "most vigorously" even though they did not hear the pieces having left the refreshment room only when "the piano stopped."

The men in the story seem determined to avoid their own inner life. Gabriel's momentary breakthrough loses force in his encounter with Miss Ivors, "a frank-mannered talkative young lady, with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes." Not colourless like Lily, she is in Hopkins phrase "couple-coloured", her face shows an interplay of light and dark. Though Miss Ivors is presented as an intellectual and a committed Gaelic leaguer Joyce allows her to be human and her expressions might be Nora's. "I have a crow to pick with you;" and "innocent, Amy!" When she asks Gabriel how he can write for "a rag" like <u>The Daily Express</u> and act like a West Briton he hesitates to patronize her not just because he fears her intellect but because "they were friends of many years standing and their careers has been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: He

could not risk a grandiose phrase with her" (p. 188). Here is a key to the more authentic part of Gabriel. He knows that the answer springing to his lips "Literature is above politics," is grandiose and unreal. It is high level palaver. It is easy to imagine Nora puncturing some of Joyce's higher sounding phrases with a well chosen expression. In one of the letters he refers to a picture in an Italian newspaper of a politician making a grandiloquent gesture which Nora cut out and labeled "Jim making a new suggestion." As much as he complained all his life that Nora refused to see how utterly unique he was, he seemed to need her to ground him, to puncture hypocrisy, to counter deceit, otherwise if he could become like Gabriel Conroy or the young men who vigorously applaud music they never heard. Perhaps only those brought up in a system like pre-Vatican II Catholicism with all behaviour proscribed and sin and indulgences measured to fit every occasion, can appreciate how truly liberating it is to be with someone who says and does exactly what she feel, not in rebellion to the established order but out of indifference to it. Gretta, Molly, Nora and Anna Livia all have this quality.

But Gabriel needs a "correct" responce to Miss Ivors and is "perplexed and inattentive", when he cannot find it. She, however, reaches out to him trying to get through the layers in which he encases himself. "Miss Ivors promptly took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone -- Of

course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now" (p. 188). Sometimes a gesture like that changes a life. Think of Cheknov's "The Kiss" where a misdirected, almost phantom kiss so alters the officer's idea of himself he can move out of a life of isolation and finally begin to connect. But Gabriel hides the part of himself Miss Ivors grasps at behind a defense more impenetrable than the Russian officer's shyness -- the Irishman's wit and conversation. Gabriel retreats before her impulsive invitation to go with them to the Aran islands and from the "warm hand" that she lays "eagerly on his arm." Gabriel cannot go West to Greta's home because he has "arranged" his usual program of going cycling with "some fellows." This male only group will ride on the Continent, source of the goloshes with which he protects his feet. He goes there, he says, to stay in touch with the languages and for a change. Miss Ivors thinks he goes to avoid contact with his own language, his own people and his own country. Gabriel replies, with his first obvious emotion, that Irish is not his language and he is sick of his country" (p. 189). The dancing counterpoints their conversation. They do "the Lancers" an English import into Ireland, a country where in the older language no word for dance exists. An example of the effect of this lack comes in the twelth Century Irish version of the Passion of St. John the Baptist. Because the scribe could find no Irish word to convey "dance" or "dancer" he describes Salome as

excelling "fri lemenda ocus fri hopair - echt" ("in feats of leaping and activity").[7] But the patterns of the dance, where intimacy occurs only within imposed limits, are made into an analog for their discussion. Miss Ivors reaches out, Gabriel ducks away. They meet in the chain, she presses his hand, looks at him quizzically. He smiles but it is a nervous reaction. There is no reapprochment. "West Briton" she whispers into his ear as she moves along the chain. In A Portrait Emma will hold and then release Stephen's hand in the same manner. But that is an encounter of youth and promise. Here Gabriel rejects his youth, his past friendship with Miss Ivor and claims on the younger self he is burying in flesh and literary opinions.

If Gabriel cannot respond to the positive qualities of Miss Ivors, Gretta can. She comes to Gabriel with a message from Aunt Kate. He is to carve the goose "as usual." "Were you dancing?" Gabriel asks with perhaps a hint of the jealousy that will consume him shortly. But Gretta will not be drawn. "Of course I was. Didn't you see me?" She knows he has and meets head on any undercurrent of disapproval he may wish to stir up. Instead she asks "What words had you with Molly Ivors?" He uses a question to answer. "Why? Did she say so?" He cannot match Gretta or Miss Ivors' directness. Joyce chooses Gretta to give us Miss Ivors' first name -- Molly to allude to the common ground the women seem to find with less self torment than the men. Gretta

will become Molly Bloom. Here she and Molly Ivors have talked about the "words". If Gabriel demurs Gretta will not coax him. Instead she moves on to the next thing - her efforts to get the "conceited" D'Arcy to sing. Joyce wanted Molly and Anna Livia to reflect what he found in Nora's mind and thought existed in all women - thought as a flow of unbounded ideas, images and words free of the grandiose phrases with which men enclosed it. Gretta's mind moves on but Gabriel's is stuck.

> -- There were not words, said Gabriel moodily, only she wanted me to go for a trip to the West of Ireland and I said I wouldn't. (p. 191)

To Gretta it sounds wonderful. She reacts to the trip itself, free of any jealousy because another woman suggested it. "His wife clasped her hand excitedly and gave a little jump -- O, do go, Gabriel, she cried, I'd love to see Galway again." Her spontaneous reaction elicits a cold reply from Gabriel. "You can go if you like" (p. 191). Now Gabriel, who had worried that his encounter with Molly Ivors made him "ridiculous before people," but answers Gretta this way in front of Mrs. Malins. But Gretta will not allow Gabriel's rudeness to diminish her. "She looked at him for a moment and then turned to Mrs. Malins and said: -- There's a nice husband for you, Mrs. Malins" Instead of covering up or pretending that Mrs. Malins had not heard the exchange, Gretta is direct. She expects the other woman to take her side, to

understand her view. It is her husband who cannot hear her.

Nor does Gabriel listen to Mrs. Malin's conversation. His mind on his speech, Gabriel retreats to the "embrasure of the window." "Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the old pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the tree and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument." Is it the cold world of intellect without passion that Gabriel seeks? Does he want to be alone so no one will question the false self he is creating because he cannot allow all the sides of himself to co-exist? But the ice coated Wellington monument witnesses to what is lost when outer forms repress the inner instincts. It is hard to look at that pointed ramrod straight structure rammed into the rolling grounds of the Phoenix Park, a name that means "Spring" and "Fresh" and not see it as both a symbol of male sexuality and the impalement of Erin by John Bull. Gabriel looks for comfort to an alien symbol. The pillar, capped with snow, is frigid and removed. Are there echoes here of the "supercunning world of English scholarship" so overwhelmingly male.[7] Is Gabriel making himself kin to the bachelor dons of Oxford and Cambridge who also cycle on the continent to keep in touch with languages? It would be more "pleasant" to be alone in the cold landscape than at the supper-table, Gabriel thinks,

but perhaps what he really means is that it would be safer. His passions would be stilled.

However, he has created a role for himself at the supper table. He is speaker and carver and has notes to guide him through. His headings juxtapose Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, Paris, the quotations from Browning. The phrase from his review that runs through his head describes his own mental processes: "One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music" (p. 192). In "The Dead" the women make the music - Mary Jane plays the piano, Julia sings and Gretta, whose body is musical, inspires song. But Gabriel's music is his thoughts and they torment him. He worries about Miss Ivors possible reaction to his speech. He is glad his reference to "the very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us" will take her down a little. This thrust against her outweighs for him the compliments he pays his aunts' hospitality. "What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant women" (p. 192)? This thought seems all the more cruel and unworthy as the next scene unfolds.

Aunt Julia moves through "an irregular musketry of applause" to take her place next to the piano. Mary Jane sits down to accompany her. The older woman "no longer smiling" dominates the room with her presence and her song.

> It was that old song of Aunt Julia's "Arrayed for the Bridal." Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit

> the runs which embellish the air and though she sang rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. To follow the voice looking at the singers' face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift sure flight. (p.193)

Here is the sovereign Irish woman. Alive here, one with Medb and Macha, Brigid and Grace O'Malley, in strength, clarity and confidence. Aunt Julia is "great in grace and giving." Though she sings very rapidly "she does not miss even the smallest grace note." She is indeed arrayed for the bridal. But then as if to dampen this display of ever-renewing life and confidence Mr. Browne, the Protestant, takes her over. "--Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery," (p. 193). Freddy, whose praise was honest if overly sentimental, objects to his possessive joking tome. Aunt Julia tries to claim her own triumph and says with "meek pride" that "Thirty years ago I hadn't a bad voice as voices go." But her sister will not allow such self-deprecation.

Kate says that "Julia had a wonderful voice but instead of striving to become an individual star she threw herself away in a choir "slaving there night and day, night and day." "Six o'clock on Christmas morning and all for what?" Mary Jane gives the rationale that persuaded generations of Irish woman to sacrifice personal satisfaction for the common good of family, Church or country:" -- Well, isn't it for the honor of God, Aunt Kate"? Aunt Kate's answer shows

that the women of Ireland did not acquiesce as willingly as clerics and husbands might think.

> I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it's not at all honourable for the pope to run out the women out of the choirs that slaved there all their lives and put little whippersnappers of boys over their hands. (p. 194)

But Mary Jane cannot meet this passion. She resorts to the usual weapon Catholic Ireland wields against dissent: "--Now Aunt Kate, you're giving scandal to Mr. Browne who is of the other persuasion." It works, seemingly. Kate says that she is not questioning the pope, she's just "a stupid old woman." However the fire is still there:"... but there's such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia's place I'd tell that Father Healy straight up to his face..." (p. 195). A note of what is to come sounds here. The Church had better take care, the women are not as easily led as they may appear to be.

It is interesting in light of present developments that Gerty MacDowell says in _Ulysses_"....There ought to be women priests that would understand without your telling out" (p. 359). Father Hans Kung said recently in an address to the women's caucus at the University of Chicago that the bishops of the Catholic church by denying rights to Catholic women are placing their power in the greatest jeopordy it has ever known.[8] Kate's speech contains a hint of such a revolt. Perhaps Joyce could articulate Aunt Kate's feelings

because he was learning with Nora that women have their own wants and desires. "I read Nora Chap. XI which she thought remarkable but she cares nothing for my art," Joyce wrote to his brother two months after he and Nora left Ireland. "Ask hairy Jaysys what am I to do? He ought to know" (Letters, p. 47). This reference is to Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, a pioneer in the practice of using both the name of wife and husband as a gesture of solidarity with women's rights. That Joyce would ask advice from a man who proclaims himself a feminist is revealing. So is his remark in a later letter when after detailing how much he has really entered into the life of a woman but going through Nora's daily routine and her preganancy with her in Trieste, he says:

> I think it best for people to be happy and honestly I can see no prospect of her being happy if she continues to live this life here. You know, of course, what a high esteem I have for her...I suppose you know that Nora is incapable of any of the deceits which pass for current morality and the fact she is unhappy here is explained when you consider that she is really very helpless and unable to cope with any kind of difficulties. (Letters, p. 66)

It seems the source of most of Nora's difficulty was that she was pregnant and sick in a country whose language she could not speak with very little money and a companion determined to live a bohemian life in a bourgeois city. However Joyce then goes on to admit to Stanislaus that "I know very little about women and you, probably, know less and I think you ought to submit this part of the case to

Aunt Josephine who knows more than either than us" (p. 67). What a refreshing insight in an age of male arrogance. Women were expected to look to men for guidance. Joyce was never one for false humility but the artist in him, the reporter of feminity, really wanted to know and so unlike his alter ego Gabriel Conroy he asks a woman. Further Joyce says that as for the "verdict" of "many people" who say that "Nora was not worthy of me... it requires such a hell of a lot of self-stultification to enter into the mood which produces such a verdict that I am afraid I am not equal to the task" (p. 67). So at twenty-two Joyce is beginning to learn something many men never discover. Self-stultification follows repression of another. He will not be a whole person if he cannot see her as one. Joyce remembers that "it is Skeffington and fellows like him who think that woman is man's equal. Cosgrave, too, said I would never make anything of her, but it seems to me that in many points in which Cosgrave and I are deficient she does not require any making at all" (p. 67). Moreover when Nora quotes one of his poems to him, it "made me think for the first time in nine months that I was a genuine poet" (p.67). In light of Cosgrave's betrayal his disdainful judgement of Nora seems one more mistake in a life that ends in suicide. At least at twenty-two Joyce realizes "she does not require any making at all" (p. 67). Moreover when Nora quotes one of his poems to him it "made me think for the first time in nine months that I

was a genuine poet" (p. 67). Aunt Kate's impassioned speech is the fruit of such thoughts.

Gabriel has not learned this about women yet. Molly Ivors decides to leave before supper and the speech. Gabriel "hesitating a moment" offers to see her home, in a sentence heavy with under-currents."--If you will allow me Miss Ivors, I'll see you home if you are really obliged to go." The "if you are really obliged to go" is Gabriel's way of suggesting that she is just leaving because of their "words" and that she is not obliged to go. But Miss Ivors "broke away from them"--"I won't hear of it, she cried. For goodness sake go into your suppers and don't mind me. I'm quite well able to take care of myself." And she seems to be. To the accompaniment of Gretta's "Well, you're a comical girl Molly," Miss Ivors laughs and runs down the staircase. The freedom she shows, her abandon awakens a moody puzzled expression on Mary Jane's face but Gretta simply listens for the hall door, leaning over the bannister to see Miss Ivors out. If Mary Jane who still beleived in sacrifice for the glory of God finds Molly Ivors' actions vaguely threatening, Gretta accepts them. Not so Gabriel, he still thinks he is the cause and stares "blankly down

the staircase" reminding himself that she went away laughing, so could not be angry with him. Still--Her words: "I'm quite able to take care of myself" and "Beannacht libh" (a blessing on you; good-bye) hang in the hall (pp. 195-196).

Perhaps living with Nora had taught Joyce that women were able to take care of themselves and if a relationship between man and woman were to work out more had to be exchanged than sustenance from one and service from the other. "You proud little ignorant saucy dear warm-hearted girl how is it that I cannot impress you with my magnificent poses as I do other people? You see through me, you cunning little blue-eyed rogue, and smile to yourself knowing that I am an impostor and still you love me" (_Letters_, p.194). For Gabriel Conroy, who is intent on presenting himself rather than on being himself, the idea of being loved while known as an "imposter" would seem impossible. The laughter the aunts and Gretta share at his solicitude shows acceptance is available if he could take it. He cannot. He must "prepare a face" to meet the others and outside of that face he cannot imagine salvation"--Where is Gabriel? she cried. Where on earth is Gabriel? There's everyone wait ing in there, _stage to let_, and nobody to carve the goose". (p.196) Joyce's father carved the goose every year at this party and give a speech. Like Gabriel he preferred performing to confronting reality.

Gabriel "boldly" takes his place at the end of the table before the guests -- his audience, and the food and drink -- his troops. Joyce describes the "well laden table" in great detail, emphasizing the colours: "red and yellow jelly," "a large green leaf-shaped dish with a stalk-shaped handle of which lay bunches of purple raisins and peeled almonds." He also anthrophomorphizes the food, the meats are "rivals", a dish is a "companion" the bottles are "squads "drawn up according to the colours of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest squad white, with transverse green sashes" (p. 197). The last native Irish army sailed away in the seventeenth century and now the only regiments that truly serve the native Irish are these bottles of stout and ale. Of these Gabriel, like Joyces' father, is general and king.

> Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table and having looked to the edge of the carver plunged his fork firmly into the goose. He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table. (p.197)

Indeed he does do a good job, serving each of the ladies with galantry and dispatch. Here he seems at ease. His role is defined. His relationship to those around him is limited and he can be generous with the food without worry since someone else supplies it. In Ulysses, Bloom shops and cooks for Molly himself.[8]

Later in Finnegans Wake HCE will be the host writ large and make sharing food and drink an act of real com munion. However here Gabriel Conroy substitutes physical food, which can be lined up and managed, for spiritual nourishment. While Joyce does not condemn Gabriel for this lack, he presents it is an incomplete way of life which makes much of experience unavailable.

The show Gabriel makes of delaying his own eating reinforces this sense that he holds himself aloof from these people and also from himself. When he does decide to eat his comment is revealing."...kindly forget my existence ladies and gentleman for a few minutes" (p. 198). That sounds very much like an expression of John Joyce. The real meaning, of course, is please do not forget my existence, ladies and gentleman, even though I must pause in my performance. The dinner table conversation in which Gabriel takes no part in revolves around the opera company at the Theatre Royal. Mr. D'Arcy the tenor who will sing "The Lass of Aughrim" and will appear again in Ulysses as one of Molly's interests, interupts the talk of the great singers of the past to say "I presume there are as good singers to-day as there were then." Mr. Browne disagrees defiantly but Mary Jane says she would give anything to hear Caruso sing. Joyce was on one of his

three visits to Dublin when Caruso appeared and the novelist tried unsuccessfully to interview him. He also showed a great deal of interest in Caruso's trial for immorality in New York. I would like to quote the passage from his letter on the subject to Stanislaus to show an interesting correlation with The Dead."

> Renan was right when he said we were marching towards universal Americanism. I suppose you read about Caruso being arrested in the monkey house at New York for indecent behavior towards a young lady. By the way is 'Lily is a lady' a song or a cant? I wonder they don't arrest the monkeys in New York. It took three N.Y. policemen to arrest Caruso. His impressario ridicules the charge and says Caruso has to answer shoals of 'offers' from N.Y. women of the upper classes. The papers are indignant. So Americans know how they are regarded in Europe? (Letters, p. 134)

Joyce himself attempted a singing career, tried to help his son Georgio who did sing professionally, and championed the career of the Irish tenor John Sullivan. If Gabriel Conroy is the alter ego that would have resulted if Joyce had not left Dublin perhaps Caruso represents his life if he had given himself totally over to his dramatic impulses and had became the larger-than-life opera star.

There are resemblances between Caruso's arrest and that of HCE for indecent behavior. The interposition of the question about the "Lily is a Lady" song or cant shows Joyce made some connection in his mind between Caruso and this song. Perhaps he liked the ideas of Caruso refusing the upper class women who pursued him and choosing a "common

girl" or maybe he just enjoyed another country's foolishness as far as morality is concerned. However the point at the table is that since there are living singers who are great it is not necessary to remain tied to the dead. In the same letter in which he talks about Caruso he mentions that Nora "who read Hedda Galber twice with interest before forgetting it" remarked about the stories of Sean O'Kelly, (who romanticized versions of peasant life in Connacht) that they were "tiresome rubbish." To romanticize the present out of reality is equivalent to looking only to the past, as with the dead singers. In both cases the dead are preferred to the living.

The conversation ends as Gretta and the women serve the pudding. Again, Joyce gives us the colors. However, Gabriel does not eat this sensual looking dessert. " As Gabriel never ate sweets the celery had been left for him" (p. 200). So the bounty of this feast is limited for Gabriel. For him the real dessert is his own speech . Joyce builds up to that moment very carefully.

First the conversation changes to a discussion of the monks of Mount Mellaray who sleep in their coffins to remind them of their last end. Mr. Browne, the Protestant, cannot understand when Freddy explains that the monks undertake these penances "to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world." Freddy, who will follow the excesses of the holiday season with a week of mortification

with the monks, repeats an ancient Irish pattern. As early as the sixth century there are reports of week long feasts followed by equal periods of penance. One king supposedly stood in a river of icy water for eight hours after a time of particularily intense celebration. The alternation of indulgence and expiation seems more amenable to the Irish character than a life lived along the golden mean. This comes through in the Dubliners stories like "Grace" and indeed both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake revolve around the swings between spirit and flesh of their central characters. In "The Dead" passing the port and sherry interrupts the discussion of the monks (p. 201). Next some of the gentlemen "patted the table gently as a signal for silence. The silence came and Gabriel pushed back his chair and stood up" (p. 201).

The patting swells as an encouragement, then ceases. Is this repetition of "patting" an illusion to the only kind of encouragement the Irish "paddies" could offer each other, an inner homey appreciation that had little effect on the outside world? In a sense that is the theme of Gabriel's speech. Its style, Ellmann remarks, seems to owe much to the oratory of John Joyce on such occasions (p. 255). The father who stayed within the matrix of Dublin life speaks through a character who represents what the son would be if he had not left it. Thus does Joyce work his imaginative doublings.

Gabriel begins with a few witticisms. His "poor powers" are not equal to the occasion. The guests are all "victims" of the hospitality of these ladies. Expressions of emotion cannot be direct. Laughter and self-deprecation must pave the way. Joyce knew that his father wanted his wife's name alongside his own on his headstone. Alf Bergin relayed his father's wish to Joyce. It had been expressed, Joyce writes, "in the curious roundabout delicate and allusive way he had in spite of all his loud and elaborate curses" (Joyce, p. 656). Gabriel Conroy, too, moves toward his subject in a "curious roundabout way." Palaver again. Hospitality is a tradition to be proud of, "unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations." He immediately gives the other side of the argument. "Some would say, perhaps, that with us it is rather a failing than anything to be boasted of." But then again, "granted even that it is, to my mind, a princely failing" (p. 202-203).

This back and forth movement continues in the speech. It is interesting to note that in the Irish language there is no simple negative. Directness is not considered a virtue and many things are said in a roundabout way. I was told by an Irish-speaking person in Ireland that there is no way to state directly that a person is drunk. Rather one expression that is used means "he walked from side to side on the road." There are many indications, some given by

Professor Alan Bliss in "The English Language in Ireland" that Irish forms were translated into English.[9] The so-called Irish bulls results from such efforts to fit Irish ideas into inamicable English phrases. In the early Irish literature some language was purposefully obscure such as some of the laws harts and certain "rosc" messages in the epics, are examples. In fact D.A. Binchy suggests, only half in jest, a direct line from the archaic language of the law text to Finnegans Wake.[10] Language in both is meant to do something other than inform. So as Gabriel speaks, he uses a language that grew out of the tension between English and Irish, with the older language representing in its very nature a coun terpull of revelation and concealment. In Ireland today "not saying" protects against the thing itself. Seamus Heaney titles one poem on the tragic events in Ulster "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing." These unsaid things, the undersense that Ellmann speaks of, press against surface speech. But to leave emotions unarticulated as a denial of their existence would lead to consequences.

Brendan O Hehir in his ground breaking Gaelic Lexicon for Finnegans Wake shows to what all-pervasive use Joyce put the Irish language.[11] Not a page of Finnegan's Wake lacks words or pharases which allude to Irish. Reading O Hehir and thinking of the bits I have been able to pick up about the character of Irish makes me wish that an Irish speaker who knows how Irish patterns influence English in Ireland would apply that knowledge to Joyce's work.

In this countersense of language lies perhaps one source of the doubling and redoubling richness of the Joycean imagination. However, even those unaware of the older languages' effect, reflect it in their own speech. So, while Gabriel's rhetorical style certainly owes much to the fashion of his day, he may be more influenced by Irish than either he or Miss Ivors imagines. It is also interesting that Joyce represents Irish as a woman, Molly Ivors. Is he alluding to the separation from the mother tongue, the loss of the language in which the Sovereignty of Erin was celebrated?

Gabriel goes on to praise the more spacious days of old while reminding his audience of the duties of the present. It is when he speaks of the three women that real emotion breaks through. Gabriel presents himself as a Paris who cannot chose which goddess shall receive the prize. In light of Ulysses this early Homeric allusion acquires a certain significance. Jane Ellen Harrison has written that a beauty contest is not much of an opening for an epic but then goes on to speculate on Homer's possible incorporation here of material from the older Aegean culture that underlies so much of what we now know as Greek. Penelope herself belongs to this older world where she is a powerful goddess rather than an adjunct to Ulysses. Now if Paris' choice has hidden meaning then Joyce invokes a symbol more potent than

Gabriel intends. The Aegean material is a substratum hidden like Gretta's past and the lack Gabriel will find in his own soul. At this moment in his speech Gabriel hits a true chord, and we see him at his best: "...seeing the large smile on Aunt Julia's face and the tears which had risen to Aunt Kate's eyes...He raised his glass of port gallantly." He waits until the company fingered a glass expectantly and then loudly proposes:

> Let us toast them all three together. Let us drink to their health, wealth, long life, happiness and prosperity and may they long continue to hold the proud and self-won position which they hold in their profession and the position of love and affection which they hold in our hearts. (p. 205)

This is a moment of grace and tribute. Gabriel in acknowledging the "profound and self-won position" affirms an essential truth about these women. In a real way the traditions of an older Ireland are here. However these women maintain this place partially because sexuality is no longer in their lives. It remains for Gretta to stand for the woman who combines sex and independence.

There is a straight cut from the cheers of the dinner table to "the piercing morning air." The party is over, the guests are leaving. Some hilarity accompanies the last few departures. Gabriel tells the story of Johnny, their grandfathers horse who could not be prevented from walking around the statue of King Billy and thus frustrate the

efforts old Patrick, "a very pompous old gentleman," made to put on a show for the "quality." Johnny, the horse, refuses such foolishness, and Gabriel enjoys contrasting the old pretentions and "humble origins." It takes three paragraphs to settle the trio of Freddy, Mrs. Malins and the Protestant Browne into a cab and give directions to the cabman. The affected Mr. Browne is headed for Trinity College which does not seem surprising (pp. 206-9). Gretta stands apart from all this confusion. Gabriel finds her in the hall.

> There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light one. Distant Music, he would call the picture if he were a painter. (p.210)

Gabriel senses what Gretta is, but so accustomed is he to thinking in terms of poses and symbols that he only sees her "attitude", not the complexities of her inner life. She stands so because she is listening to D'Arcy sing a song "in the old Irish tonality." Even the few lines we hear mark it as significant. It is full of true feeling and the deep grief that Gabriel and the other try to keep at bay with talk of "sad memories". The "Lass of Aughrim" is about heartbreak and death - the peasant girl with her baby stands in the rain, begging the child's father, Lord Gregory, to let her in. Nora's mother who taught Joyce the song would

not sing the more tragic verses. D'Arcy cannot sing it all. The women protest his rude refusal but he blames his cold. "I am sick of my country" said Gabriel earlier. D'Arcy also seems too weak for Ireland. "It's the weather, said Aunt Julia, after a pause." However, the women say they love the snow, "But poor Mr. D'Arcy doesn't like the snow" (p. 211).

There is a chorus of good nights. It is really morning but "still dark." On the walk home Gretta's figure excites a variety of emotions in Gabriel. She walks ahead of him "so lightly and so erect" yet this evidence of her strength makes him want to say "something foolish" to her. He sees her as frail and longs to defend her, wants to be alone with her. Intimate details of their private life go through his mind, "He longed to recall to her those moments to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years had not quenched his soul or hers" (p. 213). Joyce then recalls the words he himself wrote to Nora, "Why is it that words like these seem so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name" (Letters, p. 31). These words seem to him like distant music. However, lost as he is in this dream of Gretta as symbol, Gretta as stimulus for his own feeling, Gretta as "distant music", he has no contact with the woman herself. While he imagines them making love in the hotel room, she is thinking of a young boy in Galway. And Gabriel has not the least notion of this split.

Finally their bodies do touch. It reminds him that when they were dancing he had "felt proud and happy then, happy that she was his" (p. 215). But that is his mistake. If he sees her only as "his" as "wife" he loses Gretta. Gabriel wants illusion. He tells the porter, "We don't want any light," and uses phrases like "my good man" reminiscent of his pompous grandfather. His conversation with Gretta is false too. Full of desire all he can do is make small talk. He blames her; "Why did she seem so abstracted?...He longed to be master of her strange mood." He tells her about lending a pound to Freddy Malins and is angry when she responds.

And yet this evidence of his generosity moves her... "suddenly raising herself on tiptoe and resting her hands lightly on his shoulders, she kissed him" (p. 217). At first Gabriel is delighted. But he again attributes her mood to him. "Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him and then the yielding mood had come upon her" (p.217). That sets up a counter thought, "now that she had fallen to him so easily he wondered why he had been so diffident." So again he misses the truth. When he does finally ask her what she is thinking about, she neither answers nor "yields" to him. Finally she tells him. She is thinking of the old Irish song (p. 218).

Breaking loose, Gretta astonishes Gabriel by running to the bed and hiding her face. As he questions her finding

out that the song reminds her of a boy she used to know, Gabriel grows very angry. How dare Gretta have a past. How dare she have lived a life without him. How dare she be a person in her own right. Gabriel's jealousy comes out in insensitive questions. Gretta answers with distracted honesty. "He is dead, she said at length. He died when he was only seventeen. Isn't it a terrible thing to die so young as that?" (p. 219) Gabriel cannot respond to such direct emotion. He tries irony. "What was he?" But Gretta continues to be direct. "He was in the gasworks." For Gabriel it is a moment of realization, an epiphany. "A Shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. "He now saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror" (p. 219). He does not want to face such knowledge. And he turns from Gretta so she cannot see.

But this picture of himself is not the truth of Gabriel either. That image is really what he is afraid he is, the image he worked so mightily against. And yet he really is better than he thinks he is. He would discover this if for once he dropped the pretenses that have become second nature to him. With Gretta he does drop them, in spite of himself. Meaning to remain cold "His voice when he spoke was humble and indifferent." I think by "indifferent" Joyce means real

or neutral, not manipulative, just there. Later in describing Molly Bloom he will say she is the flesh, "indifferent" (Letters, p. 285). In this voice Gabriel can actually say directly what he is thinking. "I suppose you were in love with him." She replies "--I was great with him at that time" He really listens to Gretta now and sees "how vain it would be to try to lead her whither he had proposed." Instead he caressed her hand and they really talk. Gretta tells him the story. Michael Furey was the boy's name, he left a sick bed to stand under her window in the rain. "He died for me." Gabriel comforts her as she tells the story but 'shy of intruding on her grief" he lets her hand "fall gently and walked quietly to the window" (p.221).

Gretta is asleep. Gabriel looks at her and he sees here as she is and as she must have been in "her first girlish beauty." Joyce learned quickly that his wife Nora needed no "making" from him and now Gabriel learns this about Gretta. The shock of this revelation opens his eyes to other truths. He has patronized his aunts and yet will feel real grief when Aunt Julia dies and he will sit in the drawing room where he heard her sing, consoling Aunt Kate. He sees himself casting around for words to console her and knows he will find none. All his life Gabriel has used words to protect and insulate himself from pain but now he sees in doing this he has cut off passion too. But there is a chance.

"He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife." Michael Furey said he did not want to live without Gretta. Gabriel never felt that toward any women " but he knew that feeling must be love." Tears gather in his eyes and they are not the false sentimental tears he might have shed earlier. He is not just crying for himself but for Michael Furey and Aunt Kate. "his soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead." The material world on which he has set such store disappears. All the separations of class and education, vulgarity and taste, old and young, male and female that preoccupied Gabriel dissolve with that solid world. And as if confirming in space and time the inner reality he has just discovered, it begins to snow (pp. 222-3)

The incomparable last paragraph of "The Dead" is a manifestation, Joyce's report on the lesson both he and Gabriel have learned, "The time had come for him to set out on his westward journey." The West was Gretta's home and Nora's. It was the region of Queen Medb and the Tuatha de Danna. It was the place to which Cromwell had driven the Irish and where they kept the old traditions through the most intense suffering. The West was where the people starved and left empty cottages with "Gone To America" scrawled on the walls. Thomas Davis wrote a song called <u>The West Awake</u>. "Alas and Well may Erin weep while Connacht lies in slumber deep." The West was the essential Ireland

not the region of backwardness Gabriel had seen. "Yes, the newspapers were right the snow was general all over Ireland." The snow will fill the rivers and the stream, replenish the wells where the old goddesses dwell. The people of the west suffered through each revolution. The song says, "Sing oh! They died their land to save at Aughrim's slopes and Shannon's waves." But now the waves of the Shannon are "dark" and "mutinous" Why mutinous? Because as the song says:

> But hark! A voice like thunder spake,
> The West's awake! The West's awake!
> Sing Oh! hurrah! let England quake,
> We'll watch till death for Erin's sake'

The voice of the thunder will begin Finnegans Wake to announce the beginning of a new era. Joyce ends Juan's sermon to the girls of St. Bride's with this:

> The silent cock shall crow at last. The west shall shake the east awake. Walk while ye have the night for morn, lightbreakfastbringer, morroweth whereon every past shall full fost sleep Amain. (Finnegans Wake p. 473)

The end of the sermon is reminiscent of St. Paul's exhortations to stay awake. Be alert because the Lord is coming who will raise the living and the dead. But instead of walking "while ye have light" Joyce says to walk "while ye have night." In "The Dead" too it is the moments before dawn, when the solid world still lies dissolved and is "grey" and "impalpable," that the soul can move beyond itself. Before this Gabriel was isolated from a world he

saw only in dualistic terms --the old and new generations, Ireland vs. the Continent, servants vs. masters, men vs. women and his living love for Gretta vs. Michael Furey's love unto death. But the snow changes this. It brings the west and east together.

In Irish mythology the blessed isle of the other world lay off the West coast. Saints like Brendan and heroes like Bran sailed off to find these places. Sometimes mortals entered them unawares. These happy lands beyond space and time beckon. The entrances to some were in the soil of Ireland itself. Gabriel sees one place of entry in the "lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried." If Gabriel was the messenger of the Incarnation, Michael is the angel of the Last Judgement and resurrection who, in the Roman Catholic funeral service, greets the dead and leads them into Paradise. Michael is usually pictured as slaying the serpent. He is a warrior angel, invoked the prayer said until recently after every low Mass, which Joyce uses in Ulysses and mentions parodying in a letter to his brother.

> "Defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. Restrain him, oh Lord, we humbly beseech thee, and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host by the divine power thrust into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander the world seeking the ruin of souls."

The fury in Michael is directed against those

"wandering evil spirits who seek the ruin of souls." But the snow seems to soften such military spirituality. The flakes "silver and dark" fall softly. Joyce repeats that twice first as "falling softly" than as "softly falling." The snow becomes a warm blanket covering the treeless hills. The invaders devastated the forest of Ireland and the loss of the trees is a reoccuring image in Irish poetry. Geoffry Keating's History of Ireland begins with the three strippings of the trees from land of Ireland and the three replantings. Somehow this snow reconstitutes the land, healing the wounds that scar her surface. In the Galway churchyard the snow "lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns." Here too the snow smoothes away pain --softening the sharpness of spear and thorn. Mary Jane had said that the monks slept in coffins to remind them of their last end. Such a practice seems artifical in comparison with this more natural, intimate union with death. Mellaray and the other great monastic institutions came late to Ireland. In the earlier native tradition monks lived alone or in small groups in just such lonely places as Michael Furey's churchyard. In their poetry a great love for nature comes through, a sense of contact with the mystery of God in creation that reverberates with the old belief that the two are not separated.

Gabriel has been straining all evening after music--

his aunts', Gretta's, even D'Arcy's, are drowned out by his own thoughts. But now that is changed. "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe..." He hears without effort the quiet snow, "faintly falling" and "falling faintly." This faint fall is "like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead." St. Paul assured the early Church that both living and dead would be raised up together on the last day. And so differences between the living and the dead are only temporal. In the regions of the soul where time does not exist they are together. Earlier Gabriel had envied Michael Fury because he lived still in Gretta's memory and because he died "in the full glory of some passion." Gretta had said Michael was going to study singing "only for his health." Like Aunt Julia "he had a very good voice." In contrast to such glory, Kate will die another kind of death. She will "fade and wither dismally with age." However in this last moment as his soul swoons away, GAbriel knows that all the living and the dead are falling from life into death and perhaps back again. Anna Livia says, "First we feel. Then we fall." Why hadn't she stayed up in her "great blue bedroom, the air so quiet, scarce a cloud." "It's something fails us." she says (p. 607). Through Gretta Gabriel's soul begins to change. Like Joyce who said of himself that Nora's love passed through

him "and now I feel my mind something like an opal, that is full of strange uncertain hues and colours, of warm lights and quick shadows and quick shadows and of broken music" (Letters, p. 161)

"The Dead" ends with a falling into life. Mac Cana listed various ways of reaching the other world of Celtic mythology. Entrance could come through a lake, a river or a mist, or even "a sudden insight."[11] The Celtic other world is not the long sleep of physical death. Indeed it is only in this world that we come must truly awake. Gabriel journeys west ward not to die but to wake up. The West can shake the east awake. Gretta is the first of the "lightbreakfastbringers," Molly Bloom follows her and then Anna Livia comes. But none of these women could Joyce have created without Nora, his Galway bride and "tender love from Ireland." In "The Dead" he celebrates his discovery of the real nature of Nora and of Ireland too. Such insight comes not through reason but through love.

MOLLY

> they might as well try to stop the sun
> from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you
> (Ulysses, p. 767)

In the Penelope chapter of Ulysses the word is made flesh. Joyce wrote to Frank Budgen:

> Penelope is the clou of the book. The first sentence contains 2500 words. There are eight sentences in the episode. It begins and ends with the female word Yes. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words because, bottom (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart) woman, yes. Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent Weib. Ich bin der [sic] Fleisch der stets bejaht.[12]

In Goethe's Faust Mephistopheles identifies himself with these words, "I am the spirit that always denies." Joyce says in the voices of Molly/Penelope/Woman, "I am the flesh that always affirms" (Letters, p. 285). With Penelope, as with Anna Livia, we leave the world of straight lines and geometry and enter the circle after, as Joyce said, "struggling with the acidities of Ithaca-mathematico-astronomico-physico-mechanico-geometrico-chemico sublimation of Bloom and Stephen (devil take 'em both) to prepare for the final amplitudinously curvilinear episode Penelope."[13]

While Stephen and Bloom end their travels by looking at the distant stars, Penelope is of the earth. "The last word," said Joyce, "human all too human is left to Penelope. This is the indispensible countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity" (Letters, p. 278).

Joyce set out to be the priest of the imagination. In Molly he did finally make the Word flesh. He calls her the "countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity." One of the titles of the Blessed Mother is Gate of Heaven, "Porta Coeli." Marion Bloom, based as she is on Nora, who, Joyce said, was to his young manhood what the Blessed Virgin was to his boyhood, speaks the word that opens the door for Bloom (Letters, p. 165). The word is "yes."

Why must this word become flesh? Because in Bloom's Dublin the barrier to communication between men and women, and thus communion with the inner self, was the flesh. The "sins of the flesh" killed the spirit, according to the Church's teaching. The social and economic reasons for this approach have been discussed, but the effects were not rational. Thomas Kinsella's poetry records his battle to fight past the nay saying spirits. A life like that of Patrick Kavanaugh's Maguire results when that spirit of negation vanquishes the flesh. The straight lines and geometry of rules and precepts, of balanced syllogisms and square corners imposed to contain the flesh, can destroy the spirit. The flesh must be honored if it is to be reunited

with the souls that fall through the impalpable grey world of "The Dead."

For two thousand years the heroines of Irish literature demanded freedom of sexual expression because without that sovereignty of body no other sovereignty can exist. Molly Bloom, like Medb, needs a husband free of jealousy. It is not because she is the sexually voracious woman of Bloom's imagination--Ellmann's careful analysis shows Molly has had only two lovers since Bloom no longer could have full sexual relations with her after their son's death twelve years before (Ellmann, p. 388). She was twenty-two at that time. No, Molly requires a husband without jealousy because her body belongs to her as does the right to use it as she pleases. To think otherwise is to split flesh and spirit--and that is death. Molly is round, and like the earth, her energy must be used to be renewed. To share is not to diminish, a point made by author Meridel Le Sueur in a recent interview.[14]

Bloom knows Boylan is Molly's lover. However, while Bloom enjoys his mental intercourse with Martha Clifford precisely because it is secret and somehow shameful--he uses another name and asks her to enact the role of punisher--Molly does not pretend. In one sense Bloom, like Gabriel, hears thought tormented music. And though Bloom's thoughts are more whole than Stephen's, both men proceed by division of ideas. In the catechism of "Ithaca" every experience

must be fit into questions and answers. This supreme example of dualistic thinking leads, however, to separation. Union begins when they look together at the moon, listing its affinities with women:

> Her antiquity in preceding and surviving successive tellurian generations: her nocturnal predominance: her satellitic dependence: her luminary reflection: her constancy under all her phases, rising, and setting by her appointed times, waxing and waning: the forced invariability of her aspect: her indeterminate response to inaffirmative interrogation: her potency over effluent and refluent waters: her power to enamor, to mortify, to invest with beauty, to render insane, to incite to and aid delinquency: the tranquil inscrutability of her visage: the terribility of her isolated dominant implacable resplendent propinquity: her omens of tempest and of calm: the stimulation of her light, her motion and her presence: the admonition of her craters, her arid seas, her silence: her splendor, when visible: her attraction when invisible. (Ulysses, p. 686)

Then a visible luminous sign attracted Bloom's attention. He in turn attracted Stephen's gaze. The invisible person "denoted by a visible splendid sign, a lamp" is Marion (Molly) Bloom. When "with indirect and direct verbal allusions or affirmations with subdued affection and admiration: with description: with impediment: with suggestion" Bloom elucidates the mystery of Molly, both become silent (p. 687). The dissection ceases. "Silent each contemplating the other in both mirrors of the reciprocal flesh of theirhisnothis fellowfaces" (p. 687).

Hopkins translated one of St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns, "Adoro Te"--which Stephen refers to--this way:

> Godhead here in hiding whom I do adore
> Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more
> See Lord at Thy service, lo lies here a heart
> Lost all lost in wonder at the God Thou art.

The impetus for this prayer is the mystery of the Eucharist, which, like the mystery of Molly, is one of the flesh. "This is My Body," says the priest, and according to Catholic doctrine, the substance of the bread changes into the substance of Christ--a true change of essence though appearance may remain the same. The Church calls this a "strict" mystery, one which reason cannot comprehend and the "miracle by which the mystery is effected is transubstantiation."[15] When Joyce became the priest of the imagination he sought to become the agent of just such a transubstantiation. In the mass the matter of the sacrament is bread and wine, the form is the consecrating words of the priest; for Joyce the matter is daily experience and the form, his own carefully chosen words. The result of the sacramental rite is the Presence of Christ. Against all heretical attacks the Church held that "He is really present, not merely by idea or imagination. He is there whether men believe it or not, whether they know it or not."[16] This is how the doctrines were phrased that implanted themselves in Joyce's mind from earliest childhood. Thus are habits of thought born.

Joyce saw that even the Church realized Christ had to be there "in the Flesh," permanently available. The swoon of Gabriel Conroy's soul, the silent union in contemplation of Stephen and Bloom come through flesh, through a woman. Now to crown his achievement Joyce must make a woman present. Words can easily contain ideas, but in the Mysterium Tremendum, the Word becomes Flesh and Leib ist Weib.

First the matter. Molly comes primarily from Nora. But around Nora coalesce other Irish women--historical and mythical. They are there in the way she looks, speaks, feels, and behaves. "Mrs. Joyce," Budgen remembers,

> was a stately presence, but what most impressed on acquaintance was her absolute independence. Her judgments of men and things were swift and forthright and proceeded from a scale of values entirely personal, unimitated, unmodified. In whatever mood she spoke it was with that rich agreeable voice of Irish women.[6]

Grace O'Malley could answer to the description. So could Medb or Macha or Brigid. Mary Jane Murray Joyce was of that matter, too, and Aunt Josephine, the Misses Flynn, the Sheehy and Powell girls--Irish women all. Molly's appearance may come from other sources, but her substance comes from the matter of Ireland. As with the ordinary bread, the matter of the Eucharist, it is best to use what is close at hand, what is common.

The form is words--"Because, Bottom, Woman, Yes." "Yes Because he never did a thing like that before . . ." (<u>Ulysses</u>, p. 723). The first time we meet Molly she is distanced by the opposite word "No." "She did not want anything." But Molly does not need speech to draw attention.

> A sleepy soft grunt answered.:
> --Mn.
>
> No. She did not want anything. He heard then a warm heavy sigh, softer, as she turned over and the loose brass quoits of the bedstead jingled. Must get those settled really. Pity. All the way from Gibraltar. Forgotten any little Spanish she knew. Wonder what her father gave for it. Old style. Ah yes, of course. Bought it at the governor's auction. Got a short knock. Hard as nails at a bargain, Old Tweedy. (p. 56)

When Ulysses returned, Penelope affirmed his identity after he revealed the secret of their bed's construction. This Irish Penelope brought the bed as part of her dowry in the same spirit as Medb. She surrenders neither her bed nor her body to her husband. Rather they share both.

Later Bloom brings in the post, and we find out who the "she" in the bed is. He gives her a letter addressed to Mrs. Marion Bloom. The <u>Marion</u> is as important as the <u>Bloom</u>.

> Two letters and a card lay on the hallfloor. He stopped and gathered them. Mrs. Marion Bloom. His quick heart slowed at once. Bold Hand. Mrs. Marion. (p. 61)

"--Poldy" Molly calls. Joyce considered "P" a female letter. Molly leaves out the "Leo" part and the words that

will affect the change, the woman words, begin. Bloom lays the card from Milly and the letter near "the curve of her knee"; after she reads the card she "curled herself back." Molly makes circles with "her large soft bubs," the "O Boylan" with which she tells him who the letter's from and the vowels of the song she will sing, "Loves Old Sweet Song." Even as she listens to Bloom explain metempsychosis she has her words--"Yes" and "O" with spirals of cream in her tea.

> --Here, she said. What does that mean?
>
> He leaned downwards and read near her polished thumbnail.
>
> --Metempsychosis?
>
> --Yes. Who's he when he's at home?
>
> --Metempsychosis, he said, frowning. It's Greek: from the Greek. That means the transmigration of souls.
>
> --O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words.
>
> He smiled, glancing askance at her mocking eye. The same young eyes. (p. 64)

Molly can incorporate knowledge with the correct, that is to say, the "plain words."

On his part Leopold wants to explain the term to Molly, not just discourse. Her physical presence and the physicality of her world keep him from becoming abstract.

> --Some people believe, he said, that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before. They call it reincarnation. That we all lived before on the earth thousands of years

> ago or some other planet. They say we have forgotten it. Some say they remember their past lives.
>
> The sluggish cream wound curdling spirals through her tea. Better remind her of the word: metempsychosis. An example would be better. An example. (p. 64)

We have all lived on the earth, but some have forgotten. For some, life is broken lines that begin and end. But in Molly's tea the spiral forms. The associations with cream/milk are feminine--as seen with Brigid and Boand. "Tea" is the name of the Irish goddess of Tara. Bloom wishes to "remind her of the word." But it is the picture that gives the example.

> The Bath of the Nymph over the bed. Given away with the Easter number of Photo Bits: Splendid masterpiece in art colours. Tea before you put milk in. Not unlike her with her hair down: slimmer. Three and six I gave for the frame. She said it would look nice over the bed. Naked nymphs: Greece: and for instance all the people that lived then. (p. 65)

In conjunction we have: the Nymphs--sisters of the Irish goddesses manifest in the rivers and streams; Easter, the ancient fertility feast; Tea and milk again. All are "not unlike" Molly who wanted the picture hung over the bed. Molly's "hair down" will become the flow of Anna Livia who also lets her hair down. The process of shape changing souls--so familiar in the ancient literature--happens also

in the Universe Joyce creates. Bloom, however, can only define it now--he has not become part of the process . . . yet.

> He turned the pages back.
>
> --Metempsychosis, he said, is what the ancient Greeks called it. They used to believe you could be changed into an animal or a tree, for instance. What they called nymphs, for example. (p. 65)

At this Molly stops stirring and is staring ahead, "inhaling through her arched nostrils." But what she breathes in is the scent of something burning. Bloom runs to save the kidney. Thus does the flesh intrude.

Downstairs, Milly's letter introduces the daughter who will become part of the circle of life. Though Anna Livia will realize the mystery of daughter becoming mother more directly, it begins here with Molly and Milly. Milly has received "mummy's creams." Though Bloom thinks she is anemic because she "was given milk too long," the milk belongs to the breasts which never dry up (p. 66). The old woman who brought milk to Stephen in the tower and "he drank at her bidding" was

> old and secret she had entered from a morning world maybe a messenger: . . . . Silk of the kine and poor old woman names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and gay betrayer, their common cuckquean . . . . (p. 15)

Milly, Molly, the old woman share the same essence. Slowly

Joyce's words make them present. The accidents of appearance are not as important as are the secret life they carry. The Goddess, the Sovereignty of Erin, returns as the spiral turns.

But for some women any inner life binds them to the Church. Bloom sees them in Church "crimson halters around their neck, heads bowed." They do value the body but their way is "Shut your eyes and open your mouth. What? Corpus Body. Corpse" (p. 79). Later Molly will object to Boylan's mechanical approach to sex. These women have to contend with the same emotionless service. But Bloom grasps the "big idea behind it." It is the miracles of the Blessed Mother that provide the real feeling in this religion "Lourdes cure, waters of oblivion and the Knock apparition" (p. 80). Indeed, Molly herself sang the Stabat Mater after Father Vaughan's sermon. But he didn't touch the crowd like Molly. Bloom remembers, "I could feel the thrill in the air, the full, the people looking up: Quis est homo?" (p. 81). "Is there one who would not weep/Whelmed in miseries so deep/Christ's dear Mother to behold?" Like Mary, Marion lost her son and felt "that Mother's pain untold." The Blessed Mother, too, shares that essential woman life Joyce tries to evoke. She enclosed the body of Christ and so can be the "fount of love" can "make the soul to glow and melt."

Molly's birthday is September 8, the Nativity of the Blessed Mother. Joyce was born on February 2, Candlemas, the Purification of Mary in the Temple. He always celebrated his birthday as a day of light, once entertaining Martha Fleishman by candlelight. This feast follows St. Brigid's Day, February 1. The story goes that Mary was shy and so Brigid came first to distract attention. Joyce, who wanted to enter Nora's womb, knew the need for a universal Mother, an accepting love rather than patriarchal judgment.

It is not blasphemous to identify Mary and Marion. The Blessed Mother represents a reality beyond the boundaries set her by the Church. The Great Goddess-Mother and Lover, in whom life and death join in a circle can take any form. Molly need not cease being unique to participate in this reality. The patriarchal Church desexed Mary. Not that she did not still serve them as an object of fantasies, <u>but</u> there could be no question of sexual enjoyment for <u>her</u>. By denying this to Mary they could isolate her from the tradition of the earth goddess. However, titles like Queen of Heaven, Morning Star, House of Gold from ancient goddess prayers kept appearing in Marian litanies. So the power of the older idea seems to have persisted.

When Molly does speak in the final chapter, she glories in her flesh and in the sexual expression possible because of the unity of soul and body. "O much about it if thats all the harm ever we did in this vale of tears God knows its

not much" (p. 765). For Molly sex is not a duty but a way of finding some pleasure in this "vale of tears." The whole of her chapter is a discussion of sex--its drawbacks are acknowledged--Boylan's overendowment, the general disruption it can cause--but the positive wins out. "Yes" is the last word. Never does Molly see sex as a diminisher of her self, on the contrary. Nor does she want to be punished for her enjoyment as Bloom does.

This would be the time to look at Joyce's attitude toward sex in his relationship with Nora Barnacle Joyce. His letters provide ample material. It is not necessary to examine Joyce's sexual guilts and fantasies as expressed in his letters to Nora. But it is important to point out that _they are_ talked about and expressed. He could put his desires into words. While not removing the guilts and repressions, saying it made them common property. Nora could respond in kind. Nor is humor absent from these exchanges. Much to Joyce's amazement he found a woman who loved him, enjoyed sex, was a good mother. Though she could only get to page 27 in _Ulysses_, still she could sum up a hypocrite in a phrase.

So can Molly. Father Corrigan in confession asks if she was touched "high up" or "where you sit down . . . O Lord couldnt he say _bottom_ right out and have done with it" (p. 726). Molly's impatience with such silly prudery contrasts with her feelings about God. "I always think of the

real father . . . I already confessed it to God." Molly knows what is wrong with priests. "Theyre lost for a woman of course." Who can comfort them when they cry? "Id liked to be embraced by one in his vestments and the smell of incense off him" (p. 726). Better than Boylan "I didnt like him slapping me behind going away" (p. 726). With the words bottom and woman and behind Joyce keeps the circling motion forward that traces the path of the earth and connects one life to the next. She passes both the priests and Boylan. Still, the ritual garments of the priests attract her and Boylan has his uses.

> Yes because I felt lovely and tired myself and fell asleep as sound as a top the moment I popped straight into bed till that thunder woke me up as if the world was coming to an end God be merciful to us I thought the heavens were coming down about us to punish when I blessed myself and said a Hail Mary. (p. 726)

This easy movement from flesh to spirit, punishment and protection mark Molly as one with the other Irish women who see the world whole. She lights a candle for May and it brings luck! Her husband says "you have no soul inside only grey matter because he doesnt know what it is to have one yes when I lit the lamp yes" (p. 727). Molly would like another baby--hopefully with her husband. "Poldy has more spunk in him yes thatd be awfully jolly" (p. 727). But while he knows a lot about the body, he is foolish in other ways. When Molly considers his possible affair, she both accepts his interest in other women and has a direct

solution. "Id just go to her and ask do you love him and look her square in the eyes she couldnt fool me but he might imagine he was" (p. 728). Molly looks, while Bloom imagines; she confronts, while he pretends. But she is secure "hed never find another woman like me to put up with him the way I do know me come sleep with me yes and he knows that too at the bottom of his heart" (p. 728).

The slow spin continues, weaving a union through knowledge by flesh: through their sleeping together, putting up with each other. Molly wishes for an aquamarine ring, her birthstone. Anna Livia, who is "aqua marine," will carry forward Molly's desires just as Molly fulfills Gretta's kissing Bartell D'Arcy after she sang Gounod's "Ave Maria." And Molly, like Nora, gives her husband doll's underwear. "drawers drawers the whole blessed time till I promised to give him the pair off my doll to carry about in his waistcoat pocket O Maria Santissima" (p. 731).

And so she goes mixing memories and miracles "the sun dancing three times Easter Sunday," bodily functions and spiritual insights. Molly thinks of when Bloom made love. "Theyre all mad to get in there where they come out" and "theres a wonderful feeling there all the time so tender how did we finish it off yes O yes" (pp. 744-745). But for all the intimacies of the flesh, men, if you are open in your affection, "treat you like dirt."

> I dont care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering when do you see women rolling around drunk like they do or gambling every penny they have and losing it on a horse. (p. 763)

There is a reason women would do better "yes because a woman whatever she does she knows when to stop sure they wouldnt be in the world at all only for us." The earth turns and simple common sense has trouble being heard because "they dont know what it is to be a woman and a mother how could they where would they all of them be if hadnt all a mother to look after them" (p. 763).

What is it that separates men and women when the two were one flesh in birth and are again when making love? Killing, drinking, gambling separate body and spirit. Why don't they know when to stop? Don't they understand the flesh both liberates and limits? One doesn't happen without the other?

Molly's tragedy, the death of her son, can in some way be balanced through kindness to Stephen, who would be a fine son. "We were never the same since," she says of her husband and herself, yet thinking of Stephen leads her again to Leopold. Tomorrow she will go to the market

> to see all the vegetables and cabbages and tomatoes and carrots and all kinds of splendid fruits all coming in all lovely and fresh . . . Id love a big juicy pear now to melt in your mouth like when I used to be in the longing way then Ill

> throw him up his eggs and tea in the moustachecup she gave him to make his mouth bigger I suppose hed like my nice cream too. (p. 765)

It seems the time for generalities is past. Molly plans to gather the specific and distinct gifts of nature to share with Bloom. Perhaps after he eats from the cup his daughter gave him, like the kings of old he will become worthy of Molly and mate with the Sovereignty of Erin. But Molly is menstruating. Like Medb of the _Tain_ and Emma who experienced the "dark shame of womanhood" Molly's body moves through its cycle. "you never know whether to laugh or cry were such a mixture of plum and apple" (p. 766). And now as morning comes Molly fills the house with roses. For her "theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea and the waves rushing then the beautiful country of oats and wheat" (p. 767).

And now the word not only is flesh but it becomes food. Joyce brings us to communion. We nourish ourselves on Molly because the world which she brings us to is herself. We rejoice in the "smells and colours springing up even out of ditches primroses and violets nature it is." We listen too. "as for them saying theres no God I wouldnt give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning why dont they go and create something I often asked him" (p. 767).

Molly asked about metempsychosis as the day began. Now she wonders "why dont they create." But her last question

is an answer. Because Leopold does know "he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body."

Separation is over. We, men and women, "are flowers all a womans body." We all express that life, we are all full of grace. The dark Church is gone, "the sun shines for you today" (p. 767). We are back again in the world where nature is not divided, where the flesh and spirit are one and swept along in that "awful deepdown torrent" the colours of the earth, its scent and touch are there for us to embrace again

> and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (p. 768)

On this high hill older scenes reverberate--other women accept other men in "grace and giving"--Sovereign once more.

The final note is still to come. Anna Livia gathers herself up for riverrun. Here on Howth, Ireland's eye, she will turn toward the sea. Her journey completes Molly's yes and brings the kind of liberation beyond the power of laws and constitutions. Such things are constructed of lines, and once drawn can be divisive. Molly and Anna Livia offer

roundness--a shape to circle Ireland while including the world.

Anna

> But she won't rain showerly, our Ilma.
> Yet. Until it's the time.
> Finnegans Wake (p. 621)

Molly and Penelope both affirm life by accepting their husbands "come home." Though both are mothers, their involvement with their husbands remains more intense than that with their children. Gabriel said of Gretta "Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls' tender fire" ("The Dead," p. 214). But now in Anna Livia Plurabelle Joyce presents a woman who does not remain in one place to welcome a husband. Rather she has her own journey--one with no end. She passes into the sea to return as her daughter--raining down in a manifestation of their shared nature. Women, in Joyce's final work, do not need to arrive because in always becoming they carry life beyond themselves.

In both the song and the book of Finnegans Wake Biddy O Brien asks "Orrah, Tim avourneen, why did you die?" Joyce changes her words to "Macool, Macool, orra whyi deed ye diie?" (p. 6). Returning to the Eucharist analogy where before Joyce used the form of words to consecrate the matter

of experience and thus bring forth a new substance, here he combines matter and form so that words are the experience. Finnegans Wake breaks down the acquired habit of distinguishing between this and that, defining difference between, to assert the essential unity of all the ancient experience. So Tim Finnegan can be Finn MacCool and remain near "machusla," my pulse/my darling.

The book is a literary analog of Neils Bohr complementarity of the universe and the "not other" of the mystics and philosophers like Erigenia and Nicholas of Cusa. Our minds may need to separate to cope with reality, but it is dangerous to forget that these categories are our own projection. They may reflect aspects of the essential mystery of Being, but they do not contain it. Tim Finnegan climbed the ladder feeling rather full. "His howd feeled heavy, his hoddit did shake" (p. 6). His head, the "how," the divider and figurer overbalances the rest of him. He is building a wall, "of course," a means of separation. His "great fall of the offwall" begins the story and "prumptly sends an unquiring one well to the west in quest of his tumptytumtoes: and their upturnpikepointandplace is at the knock out in the park where oranges have been laid to rust upon the green since devlinsfirst loved livvy" (p. 3). It is the "unquiring one" who does not inquire or acquire who can set off on a quest to the well and to the west.

The west belongs to Gretta, Molly, Nora, Medb, and Grace O'Malley. Here in the wells as in the rivers and streams the waters of life run. From there they flow, from the west to the east, emptying into the sea to begin again. But Finnegan falls in the park where the invaders who feared to penetrate the west are buried. The Vikings in their coast cities of Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, and later the English settlers within the pale feared the west, the lands that sheltered the savage Irish. And yet to get to Ireland at all each of the invaders sailed west, toward the blessed isle the Tir na mBan. They all "first loved livvy" but they become possessive and want to own her. This struggle to divide and "have" her brings death and destruction. "What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystrygods gaggin fishygods" (p. 4). Those who <u>will</u> take her are resisted by those who won't give her up. But what profit? "The oaks of ald now they lie in peat yet elms leap where askes lay" (p. 4). The oaks, sacred in the old religion, are cut down by the invaders. Ireland suffers both spiritual and material disfigurement. They lie in peat, victims of St. Peter, the Pope, representative of Christianity. However, the oaks also create peat which fuels the hearths of Ireland and continue the sacred fire. Elms leap over the ashes of questions of "askes." O'Hehir points out that the belle of Plurabelle along with beautiful also recalls the Irish word bile or sacred tree. As mentioned in the discussion of the

treeless hills of "The Dead" in the image of Ireland thrice clad (with trees) and thrice bare--Eire tri monga agus tri maola dhi--opens Keating's History of Ireland. Among these forests the specific sacred trees grew. Their exact function in the cults of the Celts is not known. However, as Joyce explained to Harriet Weaver: "The Irish alphabet (ailm, beith, coll, dair etc) is all made up of names of trees" (Letters, p. 305).

Like much else in Irish history this mythology, though imperfectly understood, is preserved and acts as a substratum to Irish Christianity. Both St. Brigid's foundation at Cill-Dare and St. Columcille's at Derry retain references to the "doir" or oak groves in their names and perhaps somehow in their worship. Thus does Anna Livia absorb her conquerors. "Phall if you but will, rise you must: and none so soon either shall the pharce for the nunce come to a set-down secular phoenish" (p. 4). "Fall if you but will" may mean the fall that must follow a conquest through force of will. William of Orange was Ireland's most devastating invader because with him no accommodation was possible. He came to the throne because his wife, whose will had been sapped by her Pauline Protestant upbringing, cited St. Paul's "let the woman be subject to the man" and refused to rule without him as her equal.

In the past Ireland had drawn each generation of invaders to her as she had inaugurated the ancient kings. But

with the body hating sexually inverted Puritans no fruitful intercourse seemed possible. The Laws forbade marriage between English and "mere Irish," the nobility were killed, exiled, or divided from their lands, sent to "hell or Connacht." These last invaders under William would not love livvy. They feared her and themselves too much.

Still, "rise you must." Be it in a resurrection, as a hill, in a sexual reawakening, or remembering the French "rire" through laughter. Molly said before, "you dont know whether to laugh or cry." The ironies of history both provoke laughter and encourage the hope of rising. For example, Grace O'Malley marries Richard Burke, the descendant of the Norman conquerors, and he speaks no English only Irish and Latin. W. B. Yeats as a child wanted to grow up to kill Fenians as befitted a descendant of supporters of the Orange order. No one is automatically excluded.

"None so soon either shall the pharce for the nunce come to a setdown secular phoenish" (p. 4). The "pharce" is somehow related to Anna Liffey who Joyce in a letter to Ettore Schmitz called "the Pyrrha of Ireland (or rather of Dublin) whose hair is the river beside which (her name is Anna Liffey) the seventh city of Christendom springs up." Her "phrases," too, flow together in the continuous curving motion Joyce also associated with Molly. The "nunce" recalls nunc, nonce, and now and also nuns to contrast, perhaps, with the "setdown secular phoenish." Joyce's

explanation to Harriet Weaver how Phoenix park--where "the orange rests" got its name might suggest some of the levels of meaning in "phoenish." Joyce wrote, "An English Viceroy heard as "Phoenix" the Irish "Fionn uirse (pron. finn ishghe = clear water) from a well of bright water there" (Letters, p. 328). The word "secular" which usually connotes "not religious" also recalls the ending of so many Latin prayers, "In saecula saeculorum" "forever and ever" or "now and ever shall be." Here is one small example of the kind of doubling intrinsic to Joyce's experience. English and Irish overlap in "Phoenix" park and a religious phrase can connote lack of religion.

The clear water well recalls the dwelling places of the goddess. At such a well Niall received the cup of Sovereignty and learned who can see the beauty of a hag and appreciate her.

According to Catholic theology "brightness" is a quality of the risen body. "Then the just shall shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). In the aisling poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth century the Gaelic poets referred to Erin as "brightness of brightness." The Risen Christ in his brightness first appeared to Mary Magdalen and then to the other holy women including the mother of James and John who carry the word of his resurrection to the Apostles.

Anna is connected with brightness, light seeing. "She has a gift of seek on site and she allcasually ansars helpers, the dreamydeary" (Finnegans Wake p. 5). She is Anna plus Sear, Finn's wife, and therefore, can answer helpers. Her second sight comes from "seeking on site," maintaining a connection to place while moving on in her search "all the livvylong night" until her "flittaflute in tricky trochees (O carina! O carina!) wake him" (p. 7). His fall came from "Phell felt tippling," her "flittaflute" will revive him. Phil the fluter gave a ball and Anna traces a circle.

"Grampupus is fallen down but grinny spreds the boord." Grinny with Grainne, in the ("Grace before Glutton") spreads out the meal. Food is important. In the Prankquean section Grace O'Malley demands that the family in Howth Castle keep their door open at mealtime and include all in their family circle. "So her grace o'malice kidsnapped up the jiminy Tristopher and into the shandy westerness she rain, rain, rain" (p. 21). Grainne takes the sun to the west, to feel the rain. "She washed the blessings of the lovespots off the jiminy" and, with the help of "four owlers master"--the Four Masters, who gathered together the streams of Irish tradition and collated it in the Annals, she "controverts" him "to the onesure allgood" (p. 21). She steals another son and "to Woeman's land she rain, rain, rain." This one the "wild old grannewwail" "provorted . . . to the oncertain allsecure and he became a tristian," a lover of women

(p. 22). The third foray against the Castle and Jarl van Hoother her opponent, is victorious again.

> And they all drank free. For one man in his armour was a fat match always for any gurls under shurts. . . . The prankquean was to hold her dummyship and the jimminies was to keep the peacewave and van Hoother was to git the wind up." (p. 23)

Grannewwail is an aspect of Anna as she sails the sea and welcomes the rain. Both share with"the louthly one," the hag at the well, lifegiving powers. Molly asked "where would they be without us." And Joyce answers here--without the "loab we are devorers of, . . . the lipalip one whose libe we drink at, . . . our breed and washer givers, there would not be a holey spier . . . nor a yew nor an eye" (p. 23).

Budgen says that the first time they met, Joyce recited a poem by Felix Berard which ended "Meiner weissen Leib."

> The word Leib (body) moved him to enthusiasm. It was a sound that created the image of a body in one unbroken mass. From liquid beginning it passes over the rich shining vowel. . . . He spoke of the plastic monosyllable as a sculptor speaks about a stone.[8]

Where Molly's body was flesh, Anna's Leib is water. Both give life. Molly offers the limits as well as the joys of the flesh while Anna, fleshy once too, dissolves all limits in her riverrun.

Molly's body and sexual love in Ulysses became the means of communion. This is not such a great jump since much

Eucharist imagery draws on erotic themes, as discussed before. For example, "I now receive you, the bridegroom of my soul," in the hymn "O Lord I Am Not Worthy." In "Anima Christo," a prayer attributed to St. Ignatius Loyola and used in the Spiritual Exercise, he asks "to hide in the wounds of Christ." The early Christians called the Eucharist an "agape," a love feast and one effect was to make the communicant a member of the mystical body of Christ. However, the all-inclusive nature of this body changed into an institution that took its shape from the notion of political sovereignty around it until the Roman Catholic Church as presented by the Vatican resembled the patricarchal models of its time, whether kingdoms, nations, or corporations. Molly's body, her flesh, was integral to her expression of love or agape. But Anna's Body is fluid, she is water. Her equivalent would be baptism, the primal sacrament. "Unless you be born again of water and the Holy Spirit," "without her no holey speer."

However, against the exclusivity of the Church's baptism is Anna's all welcoming self. "Arrah, sure, we all love little Anny Ruiny, or, we mean to say, lovelittle Anna Rayiny, when unda her brella, mid piddle med puddle, she ninnygoes nannygoes nancing by" (p. 7). Her name can include all Irish women-- Anu, Danu, Medb ("mid/med") Annie Rooney, Eva and Mary--(many Catholic prayers and hymns

comment on Ave as Eva reversed--Hail the new Eve) under her umbrella.

She need not surrender her joy as she dances by, she is "appy, leppy and playful." In the passages that precede Anna's "mamafesta" her joy does not weaken her power.

> Nomad may roam with Nabuch but let naaman laugh at Jordan! For we, we have taken our sheet upon her stones where we have hanged our hearts in her trees; and we list, as she bibs us by the waters of babalong." (p. 103)

Anna not only gives life and baptizes unto the spirit, she accompanies exiles into their captivity. But in this Babylon the trees where the harps/hearts hang can speak. They will become the washerwomen who discuss her. First, however, Anna has written a letter. She left a message for all to read. It was lost. Her words were distorted, hidden from view, thrown in the garbage. But Anna's letter, like the Ancient Irish manuscripts, must be rescued. However, when portions of her "mamafesta" are recovered the academic world tries to crush their spirit with too much myopic explanation. But Anna will overcome because she is: "Annah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities, haloed be her eve, her singtime sung, her rill be run, unhemmed as it is uneven" (p. 104).

If Stephen Dedalus is the artificer who thinks his way through the maze, Annah is the Allmazingful. She concludes

the maze. She, like Stephen's mother, is not old--all ma yet zi ful--gleeful girlish. No victim, she is Everliving bringer of plenty. In her name Eve is haloed not displaced. Here eve like St. Brigid's eve can include celebration of all traditions. The cadences of the Our Father are the substrata for the prayer to Our Mother--a reverse of the usual pattern. Anna has no kingdom to come, her time is now--"her singtime sung"--an action not a place. In "The Dead" even though Aunt Julia can sing the notes of each run rapidly without missing a one, because she is a woman the priest drives her from the choir to conform to new Church rules. Anna will not be excluded because she does not sing for the glory of a God shaped to serve patriarchal needs but for herself--in her own name. The Father God is Almighty and says "you may not, she is all "mays." Unlike Him, she does not separate "earth" from "heaven." Her reality "unhemmed as it is uneven" contains both. Not for her the folded hem sewn on a straight line. She is free and flowing--inclusive, "un-he-med." Her "mamafesta" is a manifestation of hr motherhood, her feasts. In it she "memorializes" Most highest and the "Most thighest" (p. 104). Queen Medb offered her "thigh friendship" to those who would assist her on the Tain. Like her, Anna's partners in love have "gone by many names" (p. 104). Rejecting patriarchal categories does not mean excluding men. They, too, are more than their classifications. Consider this title: "An

<u>Apology for a Big</u> (some such nonoun as <u>Husband</u> or <u>husboat</u> or <u>hosebound</u> . . .)," (p. 104). Like all the titles given, the meanings are interlocking and flexible.

Later in the Mookse and Gripes section Anna as her daughter realizes that some men cling so to their place in the imposed scheme that they cannot even see her. "She tried all the winsome wonsome ways her four winds had taught her" (p. 157). But neither as "la princesse de la Petite Bretagne" nor as "Mrs. Cornwallis-West" can she break through to them. So "she smiled over herself like the beauty of the image of the pose of the daughter of the queen of the Emperour of Irelande and she sighed after herself as were she born Tristis Tristior Tristissimus" (p. 158). The Mookse is not amused. And the Catholic Gripes is oblivious.

"--I see, she sighed. There are menner" (p. 158). She seems to mean there are men and then there are menner. The menner stay in a world of their own making. But even they cannot forget all women, "O me lonly son, ye are forgetting me!, that our turfbrown mummy is acoming, alpilla, beltilla, ciltilla, deltilla, running with her tidings, old the news of the great big world, sonnies had a scrap, woewoewoe!" (p. 194)

In the end Anna turns over her role to this daughterwife, "now they are becoming lothed to me. And I am lothing their mean cosy turns. And all the lazy leaks down over their brash bodies, How small its all" (p. 627). Anna in her greatness sees the smallness of the invaders. "I thought you were all glittering with the noblest of carriage. You're only a bumpkin. I thought you the great in all things in guilt and in glory. You're but a puny" (p. 627). And yet sonehow in seeing her partner consorts in their true proportion she frees herself. Before their standards were Anna's. She was "greater" perhaps but only greater "than." But their ways never did fit her. She belongs to an older, more noble tradition. "My people were not their sort out beyond there so far as I can" (p. 627). Out there beyond boundaries her true nature emerges : "Far all the bold and bad and bleary they are blamed the seahags. No! Nor for all our wild dances in all our wild din" (p. 627). This wildness, these dances and din, part of Anna, need no longer to be surpressed. "I can see myself among them allaniuva pulchrabelled" (p. 627). With her own people she is "all anew way" "pulchra belled."

Anna becomes all water. Her leaves are gone. All but one. She'll "bear it on me to remind me of Lff! So soft this morning, ours. Yes. Carry me along, taddy, like you did through the toy fair!" (p. 628). The cold mad father is gentle now. The waves come toward her like the angel wings

"Arkangels; I sink" (p. 628) - Michael Arklow, Michael Furey, Michael the Archangel who lead the soul into paradise. These males transcend the physical and become part of her as Anna flows into the sea. In her end is her beginning. Anna is Joyce's last woman. In her he reported on the primordial feminine, the woman who represents transcendent life not just of other women but of all. The divisions of male and female, past and future, near and far, time and eternity are merely categories upon the ineffable. Joyce studies the manifestations of the invisible without such categories. In his last work he did not simply report his observations but attempted with language to force a new kind of seeing on his readers.

Seamus Heaney's "The Forge" begins "All I know is a door into the dark." Within the shop the blacksmith "beat real iron out." In the smithy of his soul Joyce forged the uncreated conscience of his race. When I began this study all I knew of the Irish tradition was "a door into the dark." But, I found as the scribe who copied The Tain promised, a blessing does come to those who try to learn about its mysteries, conferred perhaps by Brigit, patroness of poets, blacksmiths and all those who hammer away.

NOTES

1 Ellmann, Joyce, p. 388.

2 Stanislaus Joyce, My Brother's Keeper (New York: The Viking Press, 1958) p. 233.

3 Davis, p. 159.

4 James Joyce, "The Dead" Dubliners (New York; Penguin Books, 1967) p. 175.

5 Kevin Sullivan, Joyce Among the Jesuits (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) pp. 8-9.

6 Richard Ellmann, The Consciousness of James Joyce (New York, Oxford University, 1977). p. 150.

7 O'Sullivan, p. 13.

8 Ulysses, p. 47.

9 Alan Bliss, The English Language in Ireland (Cork: Mercier Press, 1962) pp. 15-30.

10 D. A. Binchy, Backgrounds of Early Irish Literature, p. 13.

11 Brendan O Hehir, A Gaelic Lexicon for Finnegans Wake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

12 Letters, p. 285.

13 Ellmann, Joyce, p. 515.

14 Personal interview with Meridel Le Sueur 3 April 1982.

15 Our Goals and Our Guides (Chicago: Metzger, 1961). p. 185

16 Goals, p. 181

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