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Alternative Ireland: Modernism and Urban Space in Twentieth-Century Irish Literature

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

ALTERNATIVE IRELAND: MODERNISM AND URBAN SPACE IN TWENTIETH-
CENTURY IRISH LITERATURE

By

Kurt Patrick Voss-Hoynes

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

August 2014

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ALTERNATIVE IRELAND: MODERNISM AND URBAN SPACE IN TWENTIETH-
CENTURY IRISH LITERATURE

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Alternative Ireland: Modernism and Urban Space
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Twentieth-century urban literature of Dublin and Belfast presents Ireland's alternative modernity as one that is ecumenical, heterogeneous, unique, and autonomous. Previous critics have tended to position articulations of an alternative Irish modernity as postmodern reactions to the "end of history," and in so doing reduce the cultural, political, and artistic reactions of authors to singular elements of a fractured postmodern identity. In "Alternative Ireland: Modernism and Urban Space in Twentieth-Century Irish Literature," I look to modernism, rather than postmodernism, as the aesthetic mode by which twentieth-century Irish novelists sought to re-think contemporary Ireland's relationship to history and imagine a modern Ireland alternative to either imperial or provincial modernity. I argue that an alternative Irish modernity articulates a mass culture that not only rejects the mythological past but also recognizes cultural, social, and political possibilities that have been silenced in a traditional Ireland. Focusing on Dublin-born James Joyce and Roddy Doyle and Belfast natives Robert McLiam Wilson and Glenn Patterson, I argue that twentieth-century Irish writers create what I call "experiential maps" to remap their cities in accordance with the contemporary experience of modern Ireland. I define these maps as essential connective webs that redefine space

by attempting (if often failing) to negate immobile colonial borders and unite individuals whose voices have been suppressed in a traditional Ireland. When read in conjunction with one another, the literatures of Dublin and Belfast—both capitals of their respective nations and staging grounds for political, civic, and cultural unrest—present fertile ground for the development of cultural forms that more expansively convey what it means to be a modern Irish subject.

“Alternative Ireland” argues that an alternative modernism provides twentieth-century Irish fiction with a critical framework for reacting to the ideologies of traditional Ireland that do not provide adequate language for expressing the modern Irish experience. Significantly, the re-mappings in the texts I study reject the mythological past but accept the historical past as a means of both understanding the present and suggesting a future; they foreground the desire to accurately and autonomously depict what it means to be a twentieth-century Irish citizen. For Joyce, Doyle, McLiam Wilson, and Patterson experientially mapping Dublin and Belfast is a reaction to an imperial modernity that inhibits the Irish developing their own unique modes of engaging with modernity. Furthermore, their experiments in mapping often render the boundary between the North and the South fluid and invisible, thus suggesting that any distinctly Irish form of modernity should entail reconsideration of not only individuals’ experiences in individual cities, but also the meaning of “nation,” and the Irish nation, especially, as a whole. For these writers, a nation becomes a community in which difference and disagreement unite rather than divide. History becomes a point of difference that must be understood but not relied upon in the creation of twentieth-century Ireland. Though I do not overlook the complicated and often destructive relationship Ireland has with history, my dissertation

ultimately focuses on the ways Irish novelists see Ireland productively creating new modernities, building dynamic national and global relationships, and taking responsibility for its present and future. My project insists that an alternative Irish modernity is heterogeneous, that it fills the void between the local and the global, and that it constructs contemporary orientations to the past as forever askew. It challenges the temporal boundaries and implicit aesthetics associated with modernism and suggests that a transnational cultural imaginary is the basis for specifically Irish modes of national belonging.

For: Amanda
Mom
Dad
Heather
Grandma

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List of Abbreviations

- C* *The Commitments*. In *The Barrytown Trilogy* by Doyle. New York: Penguin, 1995. 1–140.
- ES* *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland Like no Other*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997.
- FL* *Fat Lad*. London: Minerva, 1993.
- P* *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Edited by John Paul Riquelme. New York: Norton, 2007.
- RB* *Ripley Bogle*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998.
- S* *The Snapper*. In *The Barrytown Trilogy* by Doyle. New York: Penguin, 1995. 141–341.
- U* *Ulysses*. Edited by Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe, and Claus Melchior. New York: Vintage, 1986.

Introduction: Experientially Mapping Twentieth-Century Modern Irish Literature

The task for contemporary literature is to deal with the legacy of modernism.
—Tom McCarthy¹

“Alternative Ireland” concerns twentieth-century Irish literature of Dublin and Belfast and focuses on social, political, and cultural ruptures as they manifest themselves in the re-presentation of both cities. Twentieth-century Ireland saw yet another failed rebellion, the Easter Rising; the Irish War of Independence; the Irish Civil War; Partition; the establishment of the Irish Free State which, in 1937, was transformed into Éire or Ireland; the Troubles; Celtic Tiger; and, most recently, economic collapse. During that time, James Joyce published *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), both canonical modernist works that are thoroughly enmeshed in most discussions of high modernism.² Joyce’s work marks a decided rupture with the traditional representations of Ireland, its people, and their culture. Despite being a part of the high modernist literary canon, Joyce’s works demonstrate that Irish modernism in general occupies a unique place in the canon of literary modernism. In Joyce, I see what I call an experiential map—essential connective webs that redefine space by attempting (if often failing) to negate immobile colonial borders and unite individuals whose voices have been suppressed in a traditional Ireland—of Dublin and positions the early twentieth-century Irish urban experience as a lived experience that must be understood on its own terms.

Chapters 2, 3, the Epilogue of “Alternative Ireland” expand the project of literary modernism into late twentieth-century Dublin and Belfast by insisting that Irish

¹ David James and Urmila Seshagiri also cite this as an epigraph in their article “Metamodernism: Narratives of Continuity and Revolution.”

² From this point forward I will refer to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as *Portrait*.

modernism is, indeed, alternative to canonical Western modernism. Each chapter focuses on literary texts: Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* (1987) and *The Snapper* (1990) in Chapter 2; Robert McLiam Wilson's *Ripley Bogle* (1989) and *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland Like no Other* (1996) in Chapter 3; and Glenn Patterson's *Fat Lad* (1992) in the Epilogue. Joyce published *Portrait* a quarter century after the downfall of Charles Stewart Parnell, in the midst of the Government of Ireland Act, published *Ulysses* as the Irish Free State came into being; Roddy Doyle published *The Commitments* and *The Snapper* before the onset of the Celtic Tiger during a time of economic strife; and Robert McLiam Wilson and Glenn Patterson published *Ripley Bogle* and *Eureka Street* and *Fat Lad*, respectively, during the final decade of The Troubles. Taken together, this selection of authors marks ruptures in Irish history wherein Irish forms of cultural production do not accurately represent the modern Irish condition. Chapters 1 and 2 examine Joyce's early twentieth-century Dublin and Roddy Doyle's re-articulation of the same city in the late twentieth century. Chapter 3 and the Epilogue explore political disillusionment in late twentieth-century Belfast from home and abroad. Through spanning the twentieth century and two nations, my dissertation looks to modernism, rather than postmodernism, as the aesthetic mode by which twentieth-century Irish novelists seek to re-think contemporary Ireland's relationship to history and imagine a modern Ireland alternative to either imperial or provincial modernity. I argue that an alternative Irish modernity articulates a mass culture that not only rejects the mythological past but also recognizes cultural, social, and political possibilities that have been silenced in a traditional Ireland. Furthermore, when read in conjunction with one another, the literatures of Dublin and

Belfast present fertile ground for the development of cultural forms that more expansively convey what it means to be a modern Irish subject.³

I. Definitions

i. Experiential Maps

In order to re-present unique, modern versions of either Dublin or Belfast, each author re-maps the city according to lived experience. My understanding of these maps, what I call “experiential maps,” stems from Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the importance of examining and recreating maps. More specifically, re-mapping a space is an aspect of modernity that enables an individual to re-appropriate this space—which, for the purposes of my dissertation, is a city—in a manner that speaks to his or her unique experience in and of this site. Benjamin’s discussion of mapping considers the way in which “the sphere of life—*bios*” can be graphically represented on a map (*Selected Writings, Vol. 2* 596; italics original).⁴ In experimenting with graphically depicting the sphere of urban life, Benjamin drafts a form of “Lived Berlin” that marks places in which he is active (*SW2* 596):

I have evolved a system of signs, and on the gray background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked the houses of my friends and girlfriends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the ‘debating chambers’ of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of the Communist youth, the hotel and brothel rooms that I knew for one night, the decisive benches in the Tiergarten, the ways to different schools and the graves that I saw filled, the sites of prestigious cafés whose long-forgotten names daily crossed our lips, the tennis courts where empty

³ According to the mission statement of the Modernist Studies Association, the group “is devoted to the study of the arts in their social, political, cultural, and intellectual contexts from the later nineteenth-through the mid-twentieth century,” which clearly ends modernism around the end of World War Two (msa.press.jhu.edu). In her article, “Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies,” Susan Stanford Friedman also cites the MSA’s mission statement and calls for the organization to change “the periodization of modernism if it wants to reflect the work actually being done under its umbrella” (439).

⁴ Future references to the five volumes of Benjamin’s *Selected Writings* will be cited with *SW* followed by the volume number.

apartment blocks stand today, and the halls emblazoned with gold and stucco that the terrors of dancing classes made almost the equal of gymnasiums. (*SW2* 596–97)

This map of Benjamin’s lived experience of modern Berlin is one that defines a unique experience of modernity. It is not something that can be lived or fully understood by another; yet it maintains contact with other individuals in both public and private gathering spaces. Additionally, Benjamin’s map establishes different communities—ones that are based on relationships, shared interests, and activities—that introduce new forms of human sociality. More specifically, his map suggests a form of community that is structured around everyday life, or a form of community that is unclassifiable and defined by the banal, mundane aspects of life and reinforced by human improvisation, intuition, and play.⁵ Through an emphasis on the everyday, individuals are able to come together for a single purpose, and once this purpose is met the community can be dissolved. Such momentary unification enables an individual or group of individuals to defy planned communities or established borders that guide and direct life. Benjamin’s “lived Berlin” becomes a staging ground for resisting the controlling impulse of modernity.

The experiential maps that are created by each author do, indeed, resist controlling forces that attempt to order space in ways that contradict a personal lived experience. As a result, by experientially mapping a city these authors not only construct maps that come from actual experiences within each modern metropolis, but also serve to question the relationship between lived space and, to borrow from Jon Hegglund, cartographic space. For Hegglund, cartographic space is defined by “an emergent *cartographic realism*” or “a ‘real world’ determined not by thick description and shared

⁵ See Amin and Thrift 43–6.

knowledge of space, but by the increasingly formal abstractions of geographical *space*, most visibly through the widespread production and consumption of maps” (4; italics original). Heggland asserts that through cultural forms of production “maps were widely invoked as objective indices of the world. This map-based realism becomes allied with notions of territorial sovereignty, as strictly demarcated boundaries establish the precise, mathematically calculated space of governance for sovereign nation-states” (4). In other words, this cartographic realism led to a politics that governed both space and the body.

Whether it be Dublin in either the early or late twentieth century or Belfast as The Troubles were coming to a paramilitary end, each city, its inhabitants, and those who chose to depict that city in literature fell victim to the creation of boundaries and borders that severely curtailed the possibility for political, social, economic, and cultural growth. The authors and novels I examine demonstrate that when mapping becomes a creative endeavor it is able to imagine alternatives that defy imposed boundaries and borders. As a result, the novels’ maps and spaces embody Stephen Kern’s notion of “positive negative space” or space that is not merely an empty void; instead, it is a positive, independent, foundational entity that facilitates resistance to immobile boundaries and borders (153). Experiential maps become tools through which James Joyce, Roddy Doyle, Robert McLiam Wilson, and Glenn Patterson can imagine and present versions of the built environment that do not align themselves with established iterations of each city.

These maps, furthermore, extend the idea of community inasmuch as they establish networks of interpersonal relationships that deviate from normative constructs. Such relationships remap each city because they establish it as a fluid place wherein individuals are able to move in and out of different cultural, political, and social circles.

For these authors, their experiential maps are a “sociospatial system with its own internal dynamic” (Amin and Thrift 8). In establishing that each city has its own unique dynamic, each author and novel suggests that the institutionalized re-mapped city does not accurately represent the modern, everyday experience of its citizens. These re-presentations of both Dublin and Belfast react to traditional representations of each city and capture the rhythm of each city where city rhythms are, according to John Allen:

anything from the regular comings and goings of people about the city to the vast range of repetitive activities, sounds and even smells that punctuate life in the city and which give many of those who live and work there a sense of time and location. This sense has nothing to do with any overall orchestration of effort or any mass co-ordination of routines across a city. Rather, it arises out of the teeming mix of city life as people move in and around the city at different times of the day or night, in what appears to be a constant renewal process week in, week out, season after season. (55)

City rhythms provide the context through which the city can be understood because they are made up of the everyday interactions that average citizens have with the built environment. The mundane banality of everyday life becomes that which defines the city.

In foregrounding ordinariness, experiential maps seek to recapture the city through the perception of its citizens. The views and perceptions of those who live outside of the city become secondary. Dublin becomes Dublin as experienced by Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, Jimmy Rabbitte Jr., The Commitments, Sharon Rabbitte, and Jimmy Rabbitte Sr; and Belfast becomes Belfast as Ripley Bogle, Jake Jackson, and Drew Linden perceive it. In other words, those who inhabit the city become the individuals who re-present the city to the outside world. The creation of these experiential maps, therefore, can be understood as an act of revolution for two different

reasons: first, the ability to create the city as one lives it is an act that is available to every citizen but, because of the imposed boundaries and borders, it is often obscured. Second, the creation of these maps is an act of resistance against articulations of the city that are controlled by outsiders. The authors and their characters figuratively regain control of their living environments through presenting each city from the perspective of an insider.

These representations of each city produce a “lived space” that differs from the “lived space” that is dictated by both “perceived” and “conceived” space (Lefebvre 39; 38). If “perceived space” is the physical space that society produces, masters, and appropriates and “conceived space” is “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived,” then “lived space” or that which is “directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols” becomes a production of society and those at its disposal (Lefebvre 38–9).⁶ However, experientially mapping the city re-creates it. In mapping the city by giving voice to the lived modern experiences of the city, the authors and novels effectively resist the familiar and accepted space, articulate a mass culture that not only rejects the mythological past but also recognizes cultural, social, and political possibilities that have been silenced in a traditional Ireland, and articulate an Irish modernity that is alternative to that of canonical western modernity.

⁶ According to Lefebvre, the triadic relationship between these spaces is dialectical in that we must consider the ways in which the three forms of spatial production relate to each other. See *The Production of Space* 26–51.

ii. Modernism, Modernity, and Alternative Modernities

In “Planetary: Musing Modernist Studies,” Susan Stanford Friedman asserts that “Modernity, of course, has no single meaning, not even in one location,” signaling the contested definition of a term that is so broadly used and understood (473).⁷ Likewise, modernism’s relationship to modernity further complicates the definition and understanding of both terms. The “end” of canonical modernism is deemed to be in the mid-twentieth century, between 1945 and 1950. Furthermore, this understanding of modernism is one that focuses on writers from the west—James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, to name a few—and ignores those who fall outside the purview of either this time frame or location. However, as I argue, the modernist project of the early twentieth-century is not the only articulation of modernism; instead, this project is one that reappears in literary works of the late-twentieth century and its reincarnation suggests that there are “alternative” modernities that articulate other relationships to modernity.

When understood as an adaptation to “the hostile reality of naturalism,” the reactionary nature of modernism becomes readily apparent (Lehan 3). Indeed, writing in 1978, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane insist that in order to understand modernism, we must “look at the way it was seemingly compelled, over and over, at moments it knew were both testing ground and breaking point, to set itself . . . the task of Enlightenment, or the task of bourgeois philosophy, in its world-breaking and world-

⁷ Before making this assertion, Stanford Friedman collects seven different definitions of modernity in seven different languages. Each definition points to a form of self-definition and realization that facilitates a more productive engagement with the past, present, and future (471–2).

making mode” (26). Bradbury and McFarlane’s understanding presents the idea that modernism’s project is invested in the reactionary project of simultaneously destroying and creating. In reacting to that which came before—primarily realism—modernism dismantles its predecessors and reacts to its own powers of destruction by creating a new “world” in which to live.

Bradbury and McFarlane’s definition of modernism is limited to developments in literature that occlude the larger, social developments that drove this specific literary turn. When discussing the sociological implications of modern development, Peter Wagner asserts:

Modernity is the belief in the freedom of the human being – natural and inalienable, as many philosophers presumed – and in the human capacity to reason, combined with the intelligibility of the world, that is, its amenability to human reason. In a first step towards concreteness, this basic commitment translates into the principles of individual and collective self-determination and in the expectation of ever-increasing mastery of nature and ever more reasonable interaction between human beings. (4)

For Wagner, modernity marks a point in history when individual freedoms first help to facilitate relationships with the outside world. Furthermore, these relationships foster the development of communal formations that provide the necessary framework for establishing relationships between individuals and groups of individuals and allow mankind to continue to develop ways of controlling nature. Indeed, Wagner’s understanding of modernity turns on the development of the individual and the relationships that he or she establishes in the modern world; however, he overlooks the importance of the environment in modernity. According to Marshall Berman, the environment is an aspect of the modern world that has also become both promising and destructive:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air.” (15)⁸

Being a modern individual mandates the individual understand that his or her relationship to the environment. Such an understanding is necessary because the modern environment is one that both counteracts immobile boundaries and borders and also has the ability to destroy what it has helped create. Berman’s understanding of the modern world differs from Wagner’s in their understandings on the power of the individual over nature. Wagner emphasizes the “ever-increasing mastery of nature” while Berman’s definition hinges on the power of the environment to ultimately decide the fate of the individual.

The relationship between these two aspects—the individual and the environment—facilitates reactionary measures which, to recall Bradbury and McFarlane, is a foundational aspect of literary modernism. Furthermore, these competing definitions also call attention to yet another perplexing aspect of modernism: the difference between modernism and modernity. Frequently, the terms modernism and modernity are conflated, their definitions are thought to be interchangeable, and/or they are thought to signify the same moments in history. The definitions of these terms point to two very different concepts yet still describe a mutual relationship that helps clarify the understanding of modernism. In *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, David Harvey

⁸ Susan Stanford Friedman cites an abbreviated version of Berman’s introductory definition as a way of establishing the various ways that modernity/modernism can be understood. See “Planetary” 494–7.

provides a succinct, yet powerful definition of modernity that discusses its relationship to the past and to itself: “Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures within itself” (12).⁹ For Harvey, modernity is a break with the past that marks a radical change; in addition, it is also a sociological phenomenon that constantly repeats through constantly disrupting its own history. Modernity is self-reflexive in that it calls into question its own history and when understood in this manner it is a reaction to the historical past that strives to avoid repeating itself. In constantly creating ruptures from within, modernity becomes a series of moments that will never rely on the past; instead, it will constantly question it and as a result, ensure that the present and future are established in a progressive manner.

Harvey’s understanding of modernity posits that anything that is a result of modernity is a reaction to the past and is an element of and not separate from modernity itself. Modernism, therefore, becomes a mere reflection of or response to modernity “as if the historical condition of modernity precedes the aesthetic response to it, as if modernism comes belatedly as the avant-garde of dissolving epistemological and political hegemonies” (Friedman, “Planetarity” 475). While the two are indeed connected, in agreement with Friedman, I do not understand modernism “as modernity’s self-reflexive other, its symptomatic reaction formation, [and/or] its oppositional consciousness” (“Planetarity” 475). Instead, modernism should be considered “as a powerful domain *within* a particular modernity, not something outside of it, caused by it, or responding belatedly to it” (Stanford Friedman, “Planetarity” 475; italics original). Modernism is a

⁹ Again, Stanford Friedman also cites David Harvey’s definition of modernity as a means through which one can begin to understand the ideological implications of modernity. See “Definitional Excursions” 494–7.

force that is able to effect change while also intersecting with other “domains of change” (Friedman, “Planetarity” 475). As a result, as Friedman suggests, modernism exists as “the domain of creative expressivity *within* modernity’s dynamic of rapid change, a domain that interacts with other arenas of rupture such as technology, trade, migration, state formation, societal institutions, and so forth” (“Planetarity” 475). Modernism is “centered in modernity’s aesthetic dimension” which distinguishes it but does not separate it from other aspects of modernity (Friedman, “Planetarity” 475). In other words, modernism is an endeavor of human agency that engages with these “other arenas of rupture.”

Modernism, however, is not always understood as a global phenomenon; instead, it has been viewed as a creation of the West which was subsequently exported to the world-at-large. “*Eurocentrism*,” Aamir R. Mufti asserts, is an “*epistemological problem*” and is one that extends to the project of modernism (473; italics original). If Europe continues to act as “the sovereign, theoretical subject” of historical knowledge and if modernism is understood as a movement that produces knowledge of modernity, then modernism becomes a phenomenon that begins in and is determined by Europe (Chakrabarty 27).¹⁰ As a result, modernities and modernisms that are present in and created by countries that are not European powers are frequently ignored, are thought of as responses to European modernity/modernism, or are considered as peripheral to modernity/modernism as it is understood by Europe. However, I argue that if we understand modernity/modernism to be relational, then we can begin to, and to invoke

¹⁰ Continuing this line of thinking about modernist studies, Susan Stanford Friedman states “But in modernist studies, Eurocentrism is the dominant centrism to confront because the West’s narrative of itself is the story of its own invention of modernity and because the field of modernist studies itself began in the West as a study of Western modernities and modernisms” (“Planetarity” 476–77).

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “provincialize Europe” and understand the modernities and modernisms that exist outside of Europe on their own terms.

In order to understand each modernity and modernism according to its geopolitical location, I argue that we must define these terms as they relate to their unique moments and locations of production. More specifically, “a relational approach . . . looks for the latent structure rather than the manifest contents of the root term” which then “stresses the condition or sensibility of radical disruption an accelerating change wherever and whenever such a phenomenon appears” (Friedman, “Definitional” 503).¹¹ Understanding modernity/modernism in such a manner posits the movement as a rupture that has the possibility of occurring multiple times in multiple places. A relational understanding “spatializes” instead of “historicizes” modernism which “changes the map, the canon, and the periodization of modernism dramatically” (Friedman, “Periodizing” 426).¹²

As a result, a singular Western modernity and modernism becomes plural and the modernities and modernisms of previously silenced regions are afforded their own

¹¹ Friedman also discusses a nominal definition of the words *modern*, *modernity*, and *modernism* and argues that such definitions “signify a specific content: a set of characteristics with particular material conditions and spatio/temporal locations” that “tend to be very field specific, with definitional dissonance and even outright contradictions developing as a result of disciplinary boundaries and considerable isolation of disciplinary discourses from each other” (“Definitional” 500). Furthermore, nominal definitions make visible a gulf between the social sciences and humanities in two specific areas because those in the social sciences understand modernity to “[signify] a specific set of historical conditions developing in the West” while those in the humanities associate modernity and modernism “with the radical *rupture* from rather than supreme embodiment of post-Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism and accompanying formations in the West” (“Definitional” 500–1). Essentially “the epitome of modernity for those in the social sciences is precisely what modernity dismantles for those in the humanities” (Friedman, “Definitional” 501). While somewhat valid, nominal definitions are often problematic—as any definition of modern/modernity/modernism is—because they suggest that there is the “possibility of consensual agreement about the meaning of the terms as nouns with a specific content: a set of characteristics existing within discernable boundaries of meaning, space, and time” (Friedman, “Definitional” 503).

¹² When referring to the historicizing impulse of modernism, I am thinking of Fredric Jameson’s exclamation “Always historicize!” (ix). Also see Friedman’s “Periodizing” 423–24.

primacy. My contention—that each author is attempting to come to terms with a uniquely Irish modernity—engages with the discussions in modernist and postcolonial studies that fall under the topic of “alternative modernities.” Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar discusses a cultural theory of alternative modernities that posits that each modernity begins within a specific context and leads to different outcomes (15). These “changes may be similar, but that does not amount to convergence. Different starting points ensure that new differences will emerge in response to relatively similar changes” (15). Gaonkar’s argument hinges on a lack of cultural convergence that intimates the interaction is not a compromise but an interaction that highlights each culture.¹³ His understanding of alternative modernities and the manner by which they allow differences to emerge leads to a discussion of “creative adaptation.” He continues and defines “creative adaptation” as

not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recoding the practice to soften the impact of modernity; rather, it points to the manifold ways in which a people question the present. It is the site where a people ‘make’ themselves modern, as opposed to being ‘made’ modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves identity and a destiny. (16)

Such adaptations allow a people and a culture to determine, on their own terms, what it is to be modern. However, as Goankar asserts, this “is not necessarily an inward movement of mobilizing the resources of one’s culture to cope with the seemingly irresistible cognitive and social changes that accompany modernity” because “such a construction is too passive and suggests a mood of embattled resignation” (17). When read in these terms, “Modernity is more often perceived as lure than as threat, and people (not just the elite) everywhere, at every national or cultural site, rise to meet it, negotiate it, and

¹³ In *Public Works* Michael Rubenstein also offers a reading of Goankar; see page 16.

appropriate it in their own fashion” (17).¹⁴ Modernism and modernity prove to be modes of experience that facilitate the assertion of selfhood and ethnic, local, regional and national sovereignty and which reaffirm that the possibilities that alternative modernities present are very fruitful. They allow for readings of texts that resist subordination and teleological modernism by emphasizing the ways that previously “ignored” peoples and cultures adapt and transform that which was forced upon them.¹⁵

Goankar’s articulation of an alternative modernity foregrounds the importance of understanding the cultural forms of peripheral peoples and countries as unique to instead of reliant upon Continental modernism. Continuing to highlight the differences of world literature Franco Moretti asserts “The modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials” (58).¹⁶ This compromise indicates the fact that no Western influence ever maintains its purity; instead, this “relationship of growing inequality” that Moretti highlights, serves to suggest that some form of transformation occurs—whether it be major or minor—when a new cultural form re-imagines a specific form or genre.

If either form or genre transform, then we, as scholars must adapt our language to address these changes. In “Conjectures on World Literature” Moretti addresses this issue and argues that, when considering world literature, “the *categories* [of analysis] have to

¹⁴ Goankar is quick to point out that despite the “positive ring” that “creative adaptation” carries it is not always successful. He states, “sometimes it is doomed to fail because one is looking for the impossible” (16). However, and as I argue, the act of attempting to adapt an aspect of another culture or ideology is that which carries power. Such an act is an act of questioning which seemingly fits into the discourse of modernity.

¹⁵ Moretti and Gaonkar are two amongst many scholars who have addressed the idea of alternative modernities. For further examples and discussions see Ashcroft, Knauff, Perry, Rubenstein, Schulze-Engler, and Sorenson.

¹⁶ Here Moretti situates this claim in reference to an introduction that Fredric Jameson wrote for Kojin Karatani’s *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. In it Jameson states “the raw material of Japanese social experience and the abstract formal patterns of Western novel construction cannot always be welded together seamlessly” (Jameson qtd. in Moretti 58).

be different” because the conditions of production are different in each scenario (“Conjectures” 55; italics original). This, according to Moretti, is “the point: world literature is not an object, it’s a *problem*, and a problem that asks for a new critical method” (55; italics original). In his aim to come to terms with a new method of reading and analyzing world literature,¹⁷ Moretti borrows “from the world-system school of economic history” in

which international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One, and unequal: one literature (*Weltliteratur*, singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is different from what Goethe and Marx had hoped for, because it’s profoundly unequal. (55-6; italics original)

World literature, then, is “one” but, like international capitalism, it is “not uniform” (64). Moretti continues and explains that “one and unequal” means that a culture on the periphery is transformed by another culture, typically from the core, that overlooks it. While my understanding of “alternative modernities” will engage with economic developments, Moretti’s triangulation—the core, the periphery, and the semiperiphery—is immensely helpful in positioning Ireland’s modernism and modernity as one that developed and continues to develop separately from that of other European powers. More specifically, the ability to both universalize the development of a system of world literature and maintain that each literature is inherently different enables a system of analysis and exchange. Such a system effectively puts the literatures into conversation

¹⁷ For Moretti a new system of reading is not solvable by simply “reading more” (55). Instead, he argues for what he calls “distant reading,” or a system of reading “where distance ... *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems” (57; italics original). Moretti’s call enables readers and critics alike to evaluate each text as its own unit of analysis. As such, these texts do not have to be read in conjunction with the dominant political system(s) of their time.

with one another and also allows those cultures, which have been “ignored,” to create a space in which they can communicate and illustrate what it means to be modern in their own terms. Moretti’s claim that these literatures that are connected in a “relationship of growing inequality” illustrates the manner by which cultural forms are introduced into modern texts and demonstrates that each modernity is uniquely represented.

In sharp contrast, other scholars see alternative modernities as a way of bolstering canonical Western modernism. Jim Ferguson asserts that the idea of an alternative modernity simply obscures the real problem of global inequality; he states “The application of a language of alternative modernities to the most impoverished regions of the globe has become a way of *not* talking about the non-serialized, detemporalized political economic statuses of our time—indeed a way of turning away from the question of a radically worsening global inequality and its consequences” (179–80; italics original). For Ferguson, the idea of an alternative modernity only allows those who are deploying such language to avoid the actual problem. Similarly, in “The Scale of World Literature,” Nirvana Tanoukhi attempts to shed light on the problems of alternative modernities. In particular, she critiques Moretti’s argument and argues that his idea of “distant reading” is inherently problematic because “as literary critics, we often *begin* with strong ideas about what needs to be measured” (607; italics original). Essentially, as critics, our interests will prefigure our answers. She continues and directly addresses the idea of alternative modernities:

Adopted as an analytical framework, “alternative modernity” has proved immensely fertile, producing a rich descriptive literature that demonstrates the versatility and creativity of “local” forms, despite compromises with larger forces of homogenization. But the anachronism that belies this critical gesture is unmistakable. Is it really possible to borrow the cultural slogan of an era of economic optimism to describe the uneven world that

emerged in its painful aftermath? This spirited body of work must neglect, as Jim Ferguson has observed, that the early postcolonial investment in cultural alterity lost currency when the prospect of economic progress became dim. That in fact, when economic convergence was no longer believed to be a historical inevitability, cultural alterity appeared more like the symptom (or even the cause) of permanent economic troubles. The language of alternative modernity thus disguises a real dissonance between an academic thesis that celebrates the periphery's specificity and a local outlook that experiences "specificity" as a mark of inferiority. (609)

For Tanoukhi, alternative modernities pose a problem because the very idea of alterity begins to emerge as the prospects of economic development appear to be futile.

Alternative modernities "can be understood in its most sinister aspect as simultaneous with the rise of, or rather as a sign of the acceptance of, the development of underdevelopment" (Rubenstein 17). For critics of alternative modernities this paradigm is only a method that reinforces the ability of the Western world to dictate ways that other cultures interact with the world.

To further compound the problematic rise of alternative modernities, Tanoukhi continues by critiquing Moretti's "new" system of reading that he sets forth in "Conjectures." She argues that both the theoretical impetus behind alternative modernities and Moretti's argument seem to eliminate the actual breakdown of the paradigm of development, which, when ignored makes it hard to understand how such a theoretical framework actually functions¹⁸:

If, as he [Moretti] suggests, the ethos of development is the historical condition that allowed the two terms 'alternative' and 'modernity' to be sensibly conjoined, what seems most troubling about the anachronistic redeployment of 'alternative modernity' is that it *should* bear some *trace* of the actual decomposition that befell the paradigm of development, and

¹⁸ In addition to Tanoukhi's criticism of Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature" see Pendergast, Orsini, Kristal, Arac, Apter, Ferguson, Dimock, Parla, and Spivak (see page 108 in *Death of a Discipline* where she directly responds to Moretti's idea of distant reading).

which broke the once reassuring tie between cultural ascendance and economic progress. (610; italics original)

While Tanoukhi's objections are poignant, and I cannot pretend to have the answers for all of her questions, the texts that I examine address her issues with the paradigm of development. Joyce, Doyle, McLiam Wilson, and Patterson all highlight ways that their respective cities' underdevelopment encourages individuals to re-think and re-present the culture and the city. For example, the plight of the Dedalus family drastically affects Stephen's mode of being in the world. While I concede that Simon Dedalus does tend to waste money and can be held responsible for his family's financial decline, the situation in which the family finds itself speaks to a larger economic problem that Andrew Gibson calls "West Britonism" (142). For Gibson, the façades that both Mr. Dedalus and Uncle Charles put on signify the dire economic situation of the family and Ireland. As such, this episode merely illuminates one aspect of the downfall of the "paradigm of development."

Despite the differences in opinion, the aspect of alternative modernity that seems to run throughout these arguments and, indeed, the entire discourse, is the idea of compromise.¹⁹ Alternative modernities illustrates the careful negotiations and compromises that redefine culture as a space that can incorporate both Western and locale-specific ideas into one, site-specific understanding and definition of modernity. For Joyce, Doyle, McLiam Wilson, and Patterson, the project of experientially mapping Dublin and Belfast articulates a formal conception of each city that captures the lived experience of modern Irish citizens. According to Joe Cleary, Irish modernism must be understood on its own terms because unlike other European modernisms, Irish

¹⁹ Consider Moretti's discussion of the system of world literature, in which he argues that nothing is ever uniform; see "Conjectures" page 64.

modernism did not extend beyond literature: “In the end, what distinguishes Irish modernism above all from its European counterparts was that its literary modernism began so early and still managed to extend itself across several successive stages of modernist literary development, yet without ever reaching much beyond literature” (*Outrageous Fortune* 93). Cleary’s argument effectively illustrates the fact that Irish modernism spanned multiple stages of modernist development and was “essentially linguistic” and “concentrated in literature” (*Outrageous Fortune* 93–4).²⁰ In differentiating itself through its “precociousness” and its “restriction to literature,” Irish modernism was less dependent on both political and economic support and constraint than was Continental modernism (Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune* 94).²¹ As a result of its relative freedom, Irish modernism deftly critiques colonialism and the lasting effects that it has had on the country.²² Through reading these texts under the umbrella of alternative modernities, I argue that each author is responding to a provincial understanding of Ireland by re-presenting their respective cities as spaces that think through history to reject immobile boundaries and borders. Instead, in their works, each author rejects tradition and articulates a more nuanced understanding of the modern Irish experience in Ireland. James Joyce, Roddy Doyle, Robert McLiam Wilson, and Glenn Patterson each write “home” in a manner that speaks to and for a largely overlooked people while asserting an individual and national sovereignty on a global scale.

²⁰ Also see Nolan “Modernism and the Irish Revival” and Rubenstein 31–4.

²¹ Cleary does point out that there was “a very modest modernism in painting” but stresses that modernism failed to touch any other part of Irish culture (93).

²² When discussing Joyce’s views on the relationship between colonialism and the modern, Seamus Deane argues, “For Joyce, the matter is both simple and involved. To be colonial is to be modern. It is possible to be modern without being colonial; but not to be colonial without being modern. Ireland exemplifies this latter condition and presents it in such a manner that the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ elements seem to be in conflict with another, like two competing chronologies. But in fact there is little of the traditional in Joyce’s Ireland” (“Dead Ends” 26).

II. Plan of the Present Work

My project asserts the alternative modernism of Joyce, a writer who is understood to be an exemplar of literary modernism, may certainly cause confusion and must be addressed. In his discussion of the importance of provincialism in British modernism, Terry Eagleton argues that because James Joyce “had immediate access to alternative cultures and traditions” he was able to situate and understand the “erosion of [the] contemporary order” (15).²³ Though Eagleton’s discussion highlights the influence that exiles and émigrés had on the development of British modernism, it reinforces the idea that modernism was a product of countries controlling colonial empires. However, when understood relationally, Joyce’s modernism is one that reflects on the Irish experience of modernity. As we know, Joyce’s self-imposed exile from Ireland did not preclude his writing about the country of his birth. Instead, this exile enabled him to critique the Irish situation in two ways: first, his work is a reflection on Ireland’s position within the United Kingdom and on how political, social, and cultural ties affected the daily lives of citizens. Second, writing about Ireland from the periphery re-centers the country and enables him to reflect on the ways Ireland has come to stifle political, social, and cultural development.

When understood in this manner, Joyce’s modernism is certainly “eccentric” but also permits a new understanding of the ways in which he writes the Irish experience (Rubenstein 47). Joyce’s writing develops, to borrow from Gregory Castle, an “anthropological modernism” that seeks to reconstruct and translate oral and folk cultural

²³ In this discussion Eagleton also includes T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats, and D.H. Lawrence.

material.²⁴ More specifically, Joyce's modernism is one in which "the subaltern and the constitutively different suddenly achieved disruptive articulation" and as a result, is able to develop modernist practice and thought that is representative of the Irish experience (Said, "Representing the Colonized" 223). In Chapter 1, I argue that Joyce's experiential maps of Dublin, as created and lived by Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, reconstruct Dublin in a manner that assigns a defined place to the modern Irish experience. In addition, the reconstruction of Dublin counters destructive nationalistic beliefs, rejects the mythological past, reappropriates spaces within the city, and articulates modern Dublin as it is experienced by its inhabitants.

In the case of *Portrait*, Joyce creates a lived map of Dublin to delineate the way in which the city has changed to account for the generational shift that separates Stephen Dedalus's understanding of Dublin from that of his parents. *Portrait* describes two Dublins, one that is reliant upon the past and is stagnant and another that forges the foundation of modern Dublin by dissociating itself from the traditional past. An equally significant view of Dublin is that of the "outsider," Leopold Bloom, in *Ulysses*. Through Bloom, Joyce directly addresses the problematic nationalistic reliance on the mythological past and suggests that any form of Irishness that blindly adheres to such a history is one of enslavement. Thus Joyce's works indict xenophobic nationalism and reclaim and appreciate Dublin and its inhabitants on their own individual terms, rather than through an outdated, idyllic notion of a singular Irish character.

In remapping and re-presenting Dublin, Joyce defamiliarizes the city and re-creates it as a "positive negative space" wherein Stephen and Bloom are able to defy

²⁴ For an in-depth discussion of Joyce's anthropological modernism see Castle's *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*.

immobile boundaries and borders that previously restricted their experiences of Dublin. Furthermore, Joyce's reconstruction of Dublin facilitates the creation of unknowable others. More specifically, in allowing Stephen and Bloom to move throughout the city in new ways, Joyce creates modern characters who resist traditional articulations of the Irish subject. Instead, these two figures, who map a new version of Dublin, "reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 219). Neither Stephen's nor Bloom's experiential maps, however, prove to be completely effective. Stephen's flight at the end of *Portrait* and decline throughout *Ulysses* and Bloom's utopian failings in *Ulysses* demonstrate that Joyce's articulation of modern Ireland is not *the* authentic articulation of the country.

The failure of the project—to represent what it means to be a modern Irish citizen—does not indicate a failure of Joyce's modernist project. Instead, it serves to demonstrate two aspects of Joyce's modernism that drive my understanding of his work. First, both Stephen's and Bloom's experiential maps demonstrate the latent potential of the Irish to re-create the city. Such creative acts, furthermore, enable the people to begin to break with tradition and give voice to their experience of modernity on their own terms. The desire to break with tradition leads to the second point about Joyce's modernism; that is, the importance of being self-critical. More specifically, because Stephen and Bloom are more complicit in upholding the traditional structures than they acknowledge, the ultimate failure of their projects emphasize the importance of being able to critique the tradition that paved the way for the present. Instead of being concerned with, to borrow from Declan Kiberd, "Inventing Ireland," individuals like Stephen and Bloom must first critique and come to terms with that which came before.

Such an understanding, then, demonstrates that in being committed to cultural self-analysis, Joyce's modernism is one that seeks to represent the Irish experience on its own terms as it relates to the global world.

Publishing his first book 55 years after *Ulysses*, Roddy Doyle re-presents Dublin in a very different way. While Joyce's city is one that is recognizable, Doyle's Dublin is one that is character driven. His Dublin is one that is portrayed through the spoken language of his characters. In fact, when discussing the role of dialogue in his novels, Doyle insists that he wants to write the city that he hears on a daily basis and does so by removing the voice of the author and the figure of the narrator; he states:

I've always wanted to bring the books down closer to the characters—to get myself, the narrator, out of it as much as I can. And one of the ways to do this is to use the language that the characters actually speak, to use the vernacular, and not ignoring the grammar, the formality of it, to bend it, to twist it, so you get a sense that you are hearing it, not reading it. That you are listening to the characters. You get in really close to the characters. (White 181–2)

Doyle's project becomes one that aims to re-inscribe his subjects—primarily the Irish working-class—into mainstream discourse. Doyle's linguistic approach to the novel defamiliarizes both the novel and the city about which he writes. As a result, he is able to experientially map Dublin in a way that gives voice to an often overlooked and underrepresented segment of society.

Addressing the way in which the working-class experiences modernity, Chapter 2 considers Roddy Doyle's depictions of Dublin in *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*. Through an appropriation of soul music, Doyle maps Dublin that gives voice to the working-class and positions modern Ireland as a country that is no longer isolated. Instead, by looking to 1950s America, a period of civil rights and increased awareness of

diversity, a group of twenty-somethings addresses the ideological failure of a mythical past that does not accurately reflect their experiences in contemporary Ireland. Likewise, *The Snapper* maps the Dublin of Sharon Rabbitte, a twenty-something, single, pregnant female who does not fall into the traditional mythological categorization of Ireland as woman. Sharon's Dublin calls into question normative definitions of Irish masculinity by examining the state of the nuclear family through her out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Using tropes of modernization, community, and disillusionment, Doyle's experiential mapping of Dublin presents modern Ireland as a country in the midst of an ideological conflict between tradition and modernity.

Doyle's modernism emphasizes the importance of the everyday banality of working-class life. In providing an account of lives that have previously gone unnoticed, Doyle's articulation of Dublin and Ireland unsettles prevailing notions of life in the city. Instead of being a land that is "The home . . . of a people living the life that God desires that men should live," the city and country become a desolate space devoid of a future (de Valera 466). The haunting presence of the past, that which depicts Ireland as a rural, mythological place, is not an aspect of the country that Doyle wishes to recover. Like other modernist authors, Doyle is at odds with the traditional past and has to come to terms with a sense of loss. Paradoxically, however, this loss is not a yearning for the past; indeed, it manifests itself as the mourning of the loss of a viable future.

This is not to say, however, that there is no potential for a future in Ireland. Doyle's modernism is a vernacular modernism that emphasizes the importance of unique communal traits as opposed to those that are shared by all of modern Ireland. Like Miriam Bratu Hansen I use the term 'vernacular' because the term "combines the

dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability” (243). In other words, Doyle’s modernism is one that preempts the traditional understandings of Ireland by foregrounding the voices that have been silenced. The aesthetics of both *The Commitments* and *The Snapper* which, as he states, chronicle what he hears at the level of the characters, demonstrate the way in which his modernism works. More specifically, by writing in a dialect that *is* the voice of the working-class Doyle effectively catalogues and writes the experiences of these people into existence. This articulates a culture that speaks to the Irish experience while also considering and addressing the way in which foreign forms of cultural expression can augment the understanding of this specific experience. Roddy Doyle’s alternative modernism represents the diversity of the everyday within a defined narrative form while also experimenting with aesthetic form. As a result, his work resists silencing occluded voices by articulating the lived experience of underrepresented people in modern Ireland.

Unlike Joyce and Doyle, Robert McLiam Wilson uses modernist techniques to address the sectarian issues within Northern Ireland and the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Focusing on disillusioned twenty-somethings’ reactions to an outmoded way of life, my third chapter considers McLiam Wilson’s *Ripley Bogle* and *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland Like no Other*.²⁵ In *Ripley Bogle*, the eponymous narrator and homeless “Irish-British” wanderer reframes everyday experience through the eyes of a tramp and calls attention to the way in which ordinary citizens interact with the troubled history of Northern Ireland by refusing to confront it; instead, like Bogle, they flee and create a revisionist history to cope with the violence that

²⁵ From this point forward I will refer to *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland Like no Other* as *Eureka Street*.

dominates their lives. In contrast to *Ripley Bogle*, *Eureka Street* remains in Belfast and follows politically disaffected Jake Jackson as he traverses and apolitically re-presents the city. Jake's re-presentation of the city moves beyond politics and violence, humanizes the built environment, and, through unlikely relationships, confronts that which has divided the city and nation and articulates methods by which citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland can establish the foundation of mutual understanding.

In contrast to Roddy Doyle, Robert McLiam Wilson explicitly engages with the rich literary history of Ireland. For example, the perverse *bildungsroman* of *Ripley Bogle* and the bomb-blast and subsequent tour of Belfast in *Eureka Street* are reminiscent of Joyce's *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, respectively. I argue that Robert McLiam Wilson's engagement with the literary past exemplifies what David James and Urmila Seshagiri have recently called "metamodernism." For James and Seshagiri, metamodernism "regards modernism as an era, an aesthetic, and an archive that originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" wherein the "narratives of modernism" are reassessed and remobilized (88; 89). The concept of "narratives of modernism" carries two meanings: first, it addresses "experimental fiction shaped by an aesthetics of discontinuity, nonlinearity, interiority, and chronological play" (James and Seshagiri 89). Second, it "describes fictions—overtly experimental or otherwise—plotted around the very creation and reception of modern art and letters" (James and Seshagiri 89). Metamodernist narratives "extend, reanimate, and repudiate twentieth-century modernist literature" and "their stylistic affiliations and derivations, as well as their reimagined tableaux of modernism's origins, demand a critical practice balanced between an

attention to the textures of narrative form and an alertness to the contingencies of historical reception” (James and Seshagiri 89).

McLiam Wilson’s version of modernism further complicates the understanding of modernism that drives the first two chapters of this dissertation because his modernism “clash[es] with the current academic understanding of modernism as a temporally and spatially complex global impulse” (James and Seshagiri 88). If both Joyce’s and Doyle’s modernisms demonstrate that “polycentric modernities produce polycentric modernisms,” then their iterations of modernism further emphasize the argument that modernism spans the twentieth century and the globe (Friedman, “Periodizing” 435). Robert McLiam Wilson’s engagement with the literary past, however, articulates the importance of understanding the modernist movement of the first half of the twentieth-century as distinctly separate from the reanimations of modernism that occur in the latter half of the twentieth century. This, for McLiam Wilson, is of the utmost importance because “Without a temporally bounded and formally precise understanding of what modernism does and means in any cultural moment, the ability to make other aesthetic and historical claims about its contemporary reactivation suffers” (James and Seshagiri 88). If McLiam Wilson’s modernist articulations were not to be understood as elements of his particular cultural milieu, then the Northern Irish context would be lost. With the loss of the Northern Irish context, McLiam Wilson’s Northern Ireland and Belfast would become unimportant; the stories and transformations could occur in any city, anywhere in the world.

Because the cultural, social, economic, and political contexts of Northern Ireland are central to McLiam Wilson’s work, his modernism exhibits that modernism is “a mode

that arises in conjunction with impending modernity in many places, guises, attitudes, and temporalities” that is repeatedly “demonstrating the continuum of political engagement that helps to motivate it” (J. Berman 32–3). The political apathy that both Ripley Bogle and Jake Jackson espouse speaks to a particular moment and mindset in Northern Ireland. Instead of being caught up in and controlled by politics and violence, both Ripley and Jake make these aspects of Northern Irish life peripheral to, in Ripley’s case, simply finding money for food and cigarettes and, in Jake’s case, imagining and creating an alternative Belfast. However, without an understanding of the complicated history of Northern Ireland, both Ripley and Jake would fail to even begin their projects of imagining and articulating what it means to be a modern Northern Irish citizen.

McLiam Wilson’s modernism illustrates that, though one may attempt to break from the past there is, indeed, a continuity between the past and present that is critical to the success of mobilizing an alternative modernity that speaks to a specific cultural milieu.

In giving voice to those who are seemingly disconnected from the politics and violence of Northern Ireland, McLiam Wilson imagines a public that has yet to be considered in discussions of the country. Through conceptualizing a new public that exists in and experiences modern Belfast, McLiam Wilson creates a new “sensual and affective manner of encountering modernity’s public worlds” which, in turn, articulates an alternate, unique experience of modernity (Nieland 7). As represented by Ripley and Jake, McLiam Wilson’s politically disillusioned public—one that seems unimaginable in a politically divided nation—effectively imagines a way to move through The Troubles and create a new Belfast that is not limited by the sectarian politics that have come to be defining characteristics of Belfast and Northern Ireland. This public demonstrates the

potentiality of these groups to move beyond normative ideological positions and suggest alternative methods of engaging with the modern world.

Through the exploration of the turbulent history of the Linden family, Glenn Patterson, a Northern Irish Protestant, addresses the divide between the two communities in Northern Ireland. In *Fat Lad*, Patterson re-presents Belfast from the point of view of Drew Linden, an exile who has recently returned to the city. Unlike the work of Joyce, Doyle, and McLiam Wilson, Patterson's *Fat Lad* both articulates a specific experience of modern Belfast and suggests a method to begin reconciliation. Instead of creating a single re-creation of Belfast, the novel confronts the division of Belfast and the mishandling of history through tracing Drew's abuse at the hands of his father. As a result of the beatings, Drew internalizes the violence of The Troubles which separates him from his family and drives him away from his city. *Fat Lad* demonstrates the issues that arise when one does not discuss what has happened; indeed, because Drew and his family do not communicate he is unable to work through the past and as a result, feels the only way to handle his history is to run from it. For Patterson, the Linden family's problems illustrates the importance of communication in reconciling a violent history.

While the problems of the Linden family are isolated, they are also representative of the larger problems in Northern Ireland. Through Drew and his father, Patterson emphasizes the need to come to terms with the past in order to open lines of communication. As both parties will never fully agree, Patterson's family-as-community demonstrates that a community is "a web of overlapping and often incompatible relationships" that "is necessarily composed of rather than simply threatened by disagreement and difference" (Cliff 33). Opening lines of communication will facilitate

productive dialogue which will enable disparate parties, like Drew and his father or Republicans and Unionists, to come to terms with their differences and disagreements. As a result, the larger alternative community will be strengthened through coming to understand multiple histories. This understanding will allow this alternative community to establish a foundation that will present the opportunity for a productive future. Glenn Patterson's *Fat Lad* articulates a solution, as simple as it may be, to problems encountered by Joyce, Doyle, and McLiam Wilson's projects. That is, until divided communities understand that their differences and disagreements can serve as a foundation for establishing a stronger alternative community they will be unable to communicate and violence will persist. Once this is understood these disparate communities will be able to establish a relationship whereby the futures for each party's members will be far more productive.

When read together, the various modernisms that Joyce, Doyle, McLiam Wilson, and Patterson employ demonstrate the danger of a singular modernity because each novel determines what Ireland we come to know. Moreover, the fact that the novels determine what Ireland we, as readers, understand, then they point to the fact that the act of reading Ireland is not an act of unification; instead, such a reading articulates there is a sense of national dislocation that pervades Irish literature. Ultimately, the alternative modernisms of Joyce, Doyle, McLiam Wilson, and Patterson provides twentieth-century Irish fiction with a critical framework for reacting to the ideologies of traditional Ireland that do not provide adequate language for expressing the modern Irish experience.

Significantly, the re-mappings in the texts I study reject the mythological past but accept the historical past as a means of both understanding the present and suggesting a

future; they foreground the desire to accurately and autonomously depict what it means to be a twentieth-century Irish citizen. For these authors experientially mapping Dublin and Belfast is a reaction to an imperial modernity that inhibits the Irish from developing their own unique modes of engaging with modernity. Furthermore, their experiments in mapping recognize the superficiality of borders and suggest that any distinctly Irish form of modernity should entail reconsideration of not only individuals' experiences in individual cities, but also the meaning of "nation," and the Irish nation, especially, as a whole. History becomes a point of difference that must be understood but not relied upon in the creation of twentieth-century Ireland

Chapter 1. James Joyce's Cartography: Mapping Modern Dublin

And, although the present race in Ireland is backwards and inferior, it is worth taking into account the fact that it is the only race of the entire Celtic family that has not been willing to sell its birthright for a mess of pottage.
—James Joyce, "Ireland, Isle of Saints and Sages"

I. Establishing an Entrance

In Chapter Five of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen, while talking to Davin, declares, "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (179). Upset with the social, political, and economic conditions, Stephen emphasizes the importance of disregarding institutions—the state, culture, and the Catholic Church—that promote an outmoded way of life and hinder the development of a contemporary understanding of how to successfully navigate modern Ireland. For Joyce, Stephen's forays in Dublin provide the proper context for formulating an alternative Irish modernism and an alternative way to engage with modernity. Because Dublin is, according to Fredric Jameson, "not exactly the full-blown capitalist metropolis, but like the Paris of Flaubert, still regressive, still distantly akin to the village, still un- or under-developed enough to be representable, thanks to the domination of its foreign masters" it hosts conflicts between old and new and past and present (Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* 145). Based in Dublin, Joyce's iteration of Irish modernism addresses the fraught relationship between modernity in the colony and the uneven spread of European modernity, whereby the modernity of the colony has been subordinated by that of the colonial power. In response Joyce's alternative modernity focuses on the banality of everyday life. For Joyce, banality and the resulting boredom of everyday life points to

the detrimental effects of the colonial modernity that has been forced upon colonial subjects. However, the focus on the everyday also provides an avenue through which Joyce can establish what constructs an alternative Irish modernity. Through exploring the boredom that is a result of an imposed relationship to modernity, Joyce critiques the political, cultural, and social restraints that have been placed on the Irish.

Many of the restraints that restricted Irish development were a result of reactions to the colonial relationship that Ireland shared with England. Joyce's specific reaction is one that is rooted in his explorations and discovery of a version of Dublin that is alternative to a traditional Ireland that has dominated Irish consciousness. In recreating a version of Dublin that is both highly idiosyncratic and wholly antithetical to the conservative institutional structures that organize the city, Joyce constructs this urban experience as a connective web between individuals within the city whose voices have been suppressed by and submerged in the traditional, institutional Ireland that is incommensurate with modern Irish experience. An alternative Irish modernity, then, "resist[s] the impulse to redeem the past and instead rest[s] content with the fact that our orientation toward it remains forever perverse, queer, askew" (Best 456). The insistence to separate the present from the past enables Joyce to focus on the culture that exists during his time which, in turn, will speak to the specific conditions of Ireland. Joyce's modernism is an "effort to produce a mass culture . . . to produce a culture distinctive to the twentieth century" (Tratner 2). This mass culture is one that encompasses the modern Irish experience. Instead of, like the Irish Revival, relying on the countryside and ancient mythology to define what it means to be a modern Irish subject, Joyce's modernism is based on the lived experience of Irish citizens. However, this does not mean that Joyce's

modernism excludes those outside of the purview of the built environment. More specifically, as Joyce addresses institutional structures—the Catholic Church, schools, the government, and the family—that control the lives of all Irish citizens, the city is the space in which such resistance is established. Furthermore, because Dublin is still regressive and under developed, Joyce’s modernism does account for experiences outside of the city. As a result, Joyce’s modernism and the modernity that it engages is heterogeneous, ecumenical, and inclusive and creates a country that is not isolationist; rather, it looks beyond its borders (oftentimes overseas) and in so doing fills the void between the local and the global. An outward looking modernism, one that is developed from both an Irish and continental perspective, suggests that the nation is not and does not need to be a homogeneous space and, as a result, is able to move beyond the problematic construction of an exclusionary nationalism.

Through a rejection of the mythological past and the xenophobic, exclusionary nationalism that pervades the social, political, and cultural spheres, Joyce’s modernism is metafictional in that it is aware of the way in which it reflects on colonial modernity and how it seeks to redefine what it means to be a modern Irish citizen. Joyce’s alternative modernity questions Irish history and aspires to envision Ireland so that it is not creatively stifling. As a result, the Irish will be able to establish their own unique cultural forms that speak directly to their experiences of modernity thus subordinating colonial modernity to the local, alternative, distinctly Irish modernity.

As a result of his mother’s cancer and his failure in Paris, Stephen returns to Dublin between the end of *Portrait* and the beginning of *Ulysses*. Stephen’s destitution at the beginning of *Ulysses* is a consequence of both factors and further underscores

Joyce's articulation of a distinctly Irish modernism. Despite imagining an Ireland that moves beyond a xenophobic, exclusionary nationalism, Stephen's failure to speak to and for the Irish people and Joyce's life as an exile indicates that one must leave Ireland to poignantly critique it. Stephen's journey throughout *Portrait* depicts the initial attempts of articulating an Irish modernism and of developing an understanding of Irish modernity.

Stephen's development of an Irish means to enter modernity is inextricably linked to the urban; indeed, his understanding of modern life develops as he grows up in Dublin. In fact, throughout *Portrait* Stephen's most poignant moments, those in which he reflects and comes to his own conclusions, come as he is walking through the city. Irish modernism is hardly the first modernism to use the city as a staging ground for engaging modernity. However, Joyce's use of Dublin to engage with an alternative Irish modernism establishes that Ireland's urban centers, like those of other countries, are the sites in which one can come to terms with the effects of a specific modernity. Furthermore, through developing Irish modernity in the metropolis Joyce demonstrates that the once subordinated colonial modernity is as politically, socially, and culturally important as that of the colonial power which destabilizes the center-periphery dichotomy. My argument in this chapter is that, in *Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus is a figure who establishes an Irish entrance into modernity by mapping his experiences in and of modern Dublin. The experiential maps that Stephen creates reappropriate Dublin and confront the conservative institutional structures that thwart personal, cultural, and communal development. As such, I read *Portrait* and Joyce's "eccentric" modernism as the text that begins Joyce's formulation of a heterogeneous Irish modernity that responds to the issues

of an imposed colonial modernity (Rubenstein 47).²⁶ Through tracing the beginnings of the development of Stephen's urban consciousness, Joyce takes the framework of the classical city, which is "defined essentially by the nodal points at which all those pathways and trajectories meet, or which they traverse," and illustrates how it functions in a distinctly Irish context (Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* 143).

Stephen's journey through Dublin in *Portrait* is a reaction to modernity which begins to formulate a distinctly defined modern experience. Stephen's exploration of Dublin redefines the urban in such a way that creates it as a space that resists social, cultural, and institutional impositions. Throughout this journey, Stephen must relinquish parts of his individual being in order to establish an authentically Irish engagement with the modern world. More specifically, in order to highlight the potential of the Irish people, Stephen must become a member of the masses and demonstrate this group's capabilities. This integration requires sacrificing individuality for the betterment of the people and nation. Because Stephen believes he represents the Irish experience, then what the masses produce will become representative of an Irish experience of modernity. In *Observations on Modernity*, Niklas Luhmann argues: "We understand modernity to be a release of individuality and a search for (or despair of) authenticity made possible by this foundation" (4). For Luhmann an individual is "someone who can observe his or her own observing," which is precisely what Stephen does throughout the majority of *Portrait* (4). If we are able to read Stephen as observing his own observing as he

²⁶ For my argument, *Portrait*, instead of *Dubliners*, marks this beginning because it traces the life of one individual, not a group of Dubliners. As such, we see the full development of one individual's way into modernity. In fact, the only individual in *Dubliners* who seems to be modern in outlook is Gabriel Conroy, whose galoshes are a defining characteristic throughout "The Dead." If modernity is "the age of the object" and galoshes were an item that indicated an awareness of being progressive in the changing world, then, clearly, this object serves to confirm Gabriel's "identity and self-worth" (Leonard 168). Essentially, these simple shoe coverings indicate Gabriel's advanced knowledge of current commodities, which as a result, also mark him as being conversant in the goings-on of the modern world.

wanders through Dublin forming his own aesthetic vision, one that is a response to a fixed, imposed modernity, then he becomes an individual who is immersed in the city and the masses. In other words, he is reminiscent of Baudelaire who, according to Walter Benjamin, was the first modern poet because he was a “kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness” (Baudelaire qtd. in Benjamin *SW4* 328). However, unlike Baudelaire, Stephen is not yet out of place in the city; instead of living a life of leisure, Stephen finds himself mourning the nonexistent representation of his and his people’s way of life.²⁷ As a result, he is not the quintessential *flâneur*. Stephen is immersed in Dublin and attempts to re-articulate the power of the city so that it meets his desired goals.²⁸ As such, Stephen can be read as an individual who allows Joyce to begin his imagining of a heterogeneous, ecumenical, and metafictional Irish modernity; a project that reaches its culmination in the utopian vision that is found in *Ulysses*.

II. Dedalus the Cartographer

Stephen’s journey through Dublin is a result of his family’s dwindling wealth; as they become poorer, he is forced to move into smaller homes in less prestigious neighborhoods. This constant constriction serves two separate functions: first, it forces Stephen to interact with the environment that surrounds him, and second, with limited space, Stephen must find ways to appropriate and reappropriate the spaces that do exist to meet his desired ends. Consider, for example, the following passage which illustrates Stephen’s attitude towards sexuality, shame, and his discovery and reappropriation of urban space:

²⁷ According to Scott Kaufman, the *flâneurs* we encounter in Joyce’s work are atypical because they are not out of place in the modern city. Instead, they are unemployed Dubliners whose way of presenting themselves to the world condemn them to social inferiority (218).

²⁸ See Benjamin’s speculations on Baudelaire in *The Arcades Project*, 3–13.

As he crossed the square, walking homeward, the light laughter of a girl reached his burning ears. The frail gay sound smote his heart more strongly than a trumpetblast, and, not daring to lift his eyes, he turned aside and gazed, as he walked, into the shadow of the tangled shrubs. Shame rose from his smitten heart and flooded his whole being. The image of Emma appeared before him and, under her eyes, the flood of shame rushed forth anew from his heart. If she knew to what his mind had subjected her or how his brutelike lust had torn and trampled upon her innocence! Was that boyish love? Was that chivalry? Was that poetry? The sordid details of his orgies stank under his very nostrils: the sootcoated packet of pictures which he had hidden in the flue of the fireplace and in the presence of whose shameless or bashful wantonness he lay for hours sinning in thought and deed: his monstrous dreams, peopled by apelike creatures and by harlots with gleaming jewel eyes: the foul long letters he had written in the joy of guilty confession and carried secretly for days and days only to throw them under cover of night among the grass in the corner of a field or beneath some hingeless door or in some niche in the hedges where a girl might come upon them as she walked by and read them secretly. Mad! Mad! Was it possible he had done these things? A cold sweat broke out upon his forehead as the foul memories condensed within his brain. (*P* 101–2)

At this moment, Stephen is contemplating the thought of eternal damnation because of his encounters with various women. Prior to describing every memento, Stephen attaches a negative adjective which communicates a sense of guilt and/or shame about his sexual desire that the Catholic Church instilled in him. In his discussion of the arrested *bildungsroman* and sexuality, Jed Esty asserts that “Most of the novels of colonial adolescence . . . resist or forestall the traditional plot of libidinal closure in the *bildungsroman* by homoerotic investment, sexual indifference, homosexual panic, and same-sex desire” and continues to argue that “sexually dissident protagonists . . . suggest a deep epochal link between the queer/adolescent [*sic*] and the colonial/native as twin subjects of arrested-development discourse” (22). In other words, Stephen’s sexual panic about his desires demonstrates that, because of colonialism and the influence of the Catholic Church, he is an underdeveloped individual who does not fully comprehend his

desire. However, because “heterosexual romance is queered so that it no longer stands as the allegorical basis for reconciling social antagonisms or projecting a national future,” Stephen’s unease about his desires emphasizes that he will not be responsible for continuing Ireland’s adherence to an imposed modernity (Esty 23). Instead, his panic marks a break with normative sexual desire and intimates that he will defy the institutions that have controlled him and his countrymen and women.

In addition to illustrating Stephen’s defiance of normative sexuality, this passage also serves to illustrate how Stephen is able to continually make and remake Dublin fit his own personal needs. Consider, for example, the manner in which he hides both the pictures and the letters; he finds places that usually go unnoticed—the flue of the fireplace, in the grass and hedges, or under hingeless doors. Such actions serve him in two different manners. First, utilizing such spaces allows Stephen to have the opportunity to resurrect these impure, as the Church defines them, thoughts at any moment he desires. Second, by hiding these items throughout Dublin, Stephen redefines the way in which a specific space is used. Instead of existing only to vent smoke from homes, the flue of a chimney becomes a repository for Stephen’s basest desires. Similarly, Stephen’s use of the grass and hedges, two aspects of the environment that are groomed, and not allowed to grow wild, for visual appeal, become a place that hide his natural instincts. Finally, the space under a hingeless door, something that, because of its seeming lack of function, is particularly small and should not work, becomes a place where he can, once again, have access to his erotic fantasies. Stephen, then, does not lose the connection with his natural instincts; in fact, he is able to maintain it through his desire to continually relive his erotic past. Stephen’s use of often overlooked spaces

turns these and other ignored areas into a “positive negative space” (Kern 153). Through inscribing meaning to areas that were previously only understood as part of the background, Stephen gives purpose to elements of the built environment that, for the majority of the population, are useless. The meaning and purpose that Stephen ascribes to these spaces function in a manner that creates possible sites of resistance. More specifically, because these nooks enable Stephen to hide mementos that resist the teachings of the Church, the spaces become areas that promote the subversion of institutional control.

The re-purposing of such spaces extends beyond Stephen’s personal use; indeed, he considers the implications of a random girl finding them. The fact that he does emphasize his desire for an anonymous girl or other passer-by to find the mementos highlights that he strives to connect with other individuals anonymously. Such anonymity is one of the opportunities that the modern urban environment provides. If a random girl comes upon these items, Stephen will no longer have such thoughts alone; instead, he will share the experience with another who will then associate such desolate spaces with the same erotic fantasies. The urban is redefined as an erotic space that can facilitate clandestine meetings. In addition, Stephen’s ability to transform the urban into an erotic space resists the ordering of sexuality that an imposed colonial modernity relies upon. Considering the implications—the formation of a momentary relationship, coming to terms with one’s sexuality, a reappropriation of the site of discovery, or a general physical and imaginative awakening—of a random individual finding these erotic pictures and messages highlights the disconnected nature of modern urban life. Modernity fragments life, upends morals, and subverts previously established thoughts.

As a result, a distance is created, one that alienates individuals from one another and which limits the possibility of any form of intimate contact. An individual who is able to force public interaction is a necessity because this individual will foster individual connections and has the potential to lead the masses. He is able to achieve such ends by awakening an individual's awareness of place and self through shock.

While Walter Benjamin finds the fragmentation of modern life overstimulates and anesthetizes individuals, I argue that the potential shock value of finding Stephen's mementos acts as a stimulant. Consider Benjamin's neurological understanding of modern life whereby "exposure to shock [*Chockerlebnis*] has become the norm" and, as a result, consciousness has to screen and attempt to avoid such stimuli and perceptions (*Baudelaire* 177).²⁹ While Benjamin sees shock as something that disorients life and prevents individuals from becoming aware of their environment, Stephen's scraps, things that will truly shock a random passer-by, serve as a meager tool to potentially order the modern experience. The pictures and/or letters will force whoever finds them to take notice of his or her surroundings and interact, albeit in a disconnected fashion, with Stephen. At the moment of discovery, the flue, the field, the hingeless door, and the hedges become spaces in which the discoverer can potentially connect with his or her sexual instinct. This instinctual connection, however, is not synonymous with Stephen. Instead, the importance of the interaction is found in the possibilities that it creates. Even if the second party, much in the same way Stephen currently reacts, is disgusted by these artifacts, such a reaction forces him or her to come to terms with his or her environment and instincts. The blasé attitude that is, according to Benjamin, so very common in modern experience vanishes in this setting. Instead, those who were once passive must

²⁹ Also see Buck-Morss 104.

become active and will presumably, when encountering these same spaces, remain active. In this instance Stephen's actions have the ability to foster anonymous interactions in the modern world. The fact that neither Stephen, who is reacting to his loneliness, nor the reader know if his tactics work does not remove meaning from the possibilities he creates. Instead, the uncertainty of the results emphasizes the potential of Stephen's actions. Because there is no resolution to the scene, Stephen and the reader can imagine the results—whether positive or negative—of an anonymous girl or passer-by finding these sordid mementos. Such interactions develop a relationship that is based on instinct and not societal norms that are dictated by imposed institutions. In this sense, these relationships fall outside the purview of an imposed modernity and help facilitate interpersonal interaction based on actual, lived experience.

If we are to understand Stephen as an individual who facilitates interpersonal relationships and is seeking a way to belong to modern Dublin, then it is crucial to understand the way in which the hiding of erotic artifacts speaks to this concept. When another individual stumbles upon these mementos he or she will experience some form of shock and either participate in the relationship with Stephen or simply discard the erotic images and/or letters. The possible encounters with Stephen's mementos present a new form of community that speaks to Joyce's modernism and back to the restrictive community of traditional Ireland. Instead of being insular, Stephen's community prefers the global over the local, is inclusive, can be maintained without close personal contact which intimates that this community introduces new forms of human sociality, and develops new forms of individual presence.³⁰ The community that Stephen forms permits individuals to participate even if they are not they are not present. In extending

³⁰ See Amin and Thrift 43–5

the reach of community, Stephen creates a far more inclusive environment that has the potential to bridge generational, class-based, and gender gaps that traditional Ireland cannot and will not. Through hiding his mementos, Stephen creates a new form of community that aligns itself with the lived experience of modern Dublin. Such practices demonstrate the opportunity that community provides; that is, community enables those involved to begin to engage with the modern world on their own terms.

Immediately after the Dedalus family's first eviction, Dublin is presented as a city inhospitable to the older generation yet a source of freedom to the younger one. The city, for example, exacerbates Uncle Charles's senility: "Dublin was a new and complex sensation. Uncle Charles had grown so witless that he could no longer be sent out on errands and the disorder in settling in the new house left Stephen freer than he had been in Blackrock" (*P* 57). The move to Dublin, which is an exciting yet potentially dangerous environment, results in Uncle Charles being unable to tend to daily tasks. Consequently, the Dedalus's home become a place of confusion and underscores how uncomfortable the older generation is in its new urban surroundings. Yet, because of the state of the house, Stephen finds himself feeling liberated and it is this newfound freedom that allows him to develop his own understanding of Dublin:

In the beginning he contented himself with circling timidly round the neighbouring square or, at most, going half way down one of the side streets: but when he had made a skeleton map of the city in his mind he followed boldly one of its central lines until he reached the customhouse. He passed unchallenged among the docks and along the quays wondering at the multitude of corks that lay bobbing on the surface of the water in a thick yellow scum, at the crowds of quay porters and the rumbling carts and the ill-dressed bearded policeman. (*P* 58)

Stephen's new found freedom allows him to create his own map of Dublin, which enables him to experience Dublin in his own, personal way. Through developing a

personal understanding of Dublin, Stephen speaks back to the restrictions that dictate the way in which an individual experiences the city. More specifically, if the order that was created by his parents in the house prevented him from exploring Blackrock, then the breakdown of this order marks the beginning of the fall of the older generation. With its demise comes the dissolution of restrictive traditions. Stephen's ability to understand Dublin on his own terms signifies an ideological shift that seeks to replace traditional, mythologized Ireland with a representation of Ireland that embodies the modern Irish experience. As a result, Stephen's understanding of Dublin demonstrates that defying the imposed, immobile borders allows for a city to be re-explored and as a result, space to be reappropriated and used in a manner that is in accordance with modern experience.

Like Benjamin, Stephen, during his initial explorations of Dublin, charts a map that is meaningful only to him, one that is indicative of and unique to his urban experience of Dublin. As he becomes more comfortable, he moves further and further from his home. His initial map brings him into contact with his immediate environment and extends to the customhouse, the docks, and the quays. When traversing the docks and the quays, he notices the filth that pollutes the water as well as crowds of porters and "illdressed bearded policemen." Both observations, furthermore, mark a failure of institutional control. More specifically, the inability of the government to adequately clean the city and the disheveled nature of the policemen demonstrate institutional failure to maintain Dublin.³¹ For Stephen, this failure allows him to explore and make observations about the city. However, this experience does not satisfy Stephen and he hopes to further explore Dublin. More specifically, the negativity of Stephen's initial

³¹ According to John O'Brien, in 1906 unemployment rates in Dublin were very high and nearly 4.5 million people claimed pauper status. As a result, in order to increase employment temporary positions that involved cleaning up the city and removing garbage were created (162-7).

experience drives him to search for his version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*'s Mercedes and, because of the filth, results in an ultimate feeling of dissatisfaction:

And amid this new bustling life he might have fancied himself in another Marseilles but that he missed the bright sky and the sunwarmed trellises of the wineshops. A vague dissatisfaction grew up within him as he looked on the quays and on the river and on the lowering skies and yet he continued to wander up and down day after day as if he really sought someone that eluded him. (P 57–8)³²

Without his personal map of Dublin, Stephen's imagination would have remained dormant. Furthermore, the filth of Dublin disillusioned Stephen; it forces his mind and his body to wander, to chase that which truly inspires him. Because of these stimulants, primarily in the form of the filth and detritus that litters Dublin's streets and quays, Dublin becomes a space of freedom for Stephen because the urban makes his mind work differently. He is forced to acknowledge and come to terms with that which is undesirable and, oftentimes, ignored. While his parents and Uncle Charles are extremely discommodated in Dublin, Stephen is able to avoid such confusion and discomfort by establishing a way to work in and through modern Dublin. Stephen's imagining of Dublin as "another Marseilles" transforms Dublin into a major port city in a country that controls the way that it is perceived. Instead of being thought of as inheriting modernity, Dublin, like Marseilles, becomes a city in a country that autonomously articulates its relationship to and production of modernity. Through resurrecting abandoned spaces and finding power in filth, Stephen's exploration of Dublin demonstrates the potential of experientially mapping an urban space. His map facilitates a representation of Dublin that embodies the experience of modern Dublin from the point of view of its citizens.

³² Throughout this portion of the novel Stephen reads and re-reads Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. As a result, the novel becomes the basis for many of Stephen's daydreams.

Such a representation, furthermore, empowers the Irish because it allows them to speak about their unique experience of modernity on their own terms.

III. Dedalus the Wanderer

Stephen's actions—both physically and mentally—posit the urban as a site in which he is able to counter the social and cultural demands that do not speak to his experience in or of modern Dublin and of modernity.³³ More specifically, the moments where Stephen establishes his own worldview occur while he wanders throughout Dublin; his wandering allows his mind to work in a manner that accurately depicts his experience of the city and permits him to respond to political, religious, and cultural impositions. Such occurrences begin when a young Stephen would walk with his father and granduncle through the small Dublin suburb, Blackrock:

On Sundays Stephen with his father and his granduncle took their constitutional. The old man was a nimble walker in spite of his corns and often ten to twelve miles of the road were covered. The little village of Stillorgan was the parting of the ways. Either they went to the left towards the Dublin mountains or along the Goatstown road and thence into Dundrum, coming home by Sandyford. Trudging along the road or standing in some grimy wayside publichouse his elders spoke constantly of the subjects nearest their hearts, of Irish politics, of Munster and the legends of their own family, to all of which Stephen leant an avid ear. Words which he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him. The hour when he too would take his part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended. (*P* 54)

These walks expose Stephen to politics, myth, and family stories. Despite not understanding exactly what his father, uncle, and his peers discuss, Stephen gathers that these conversations, ideas, and words are important, memorizes them, and gains access to the “real world” that surrounds him. Furthermore, these encounters introduce Stephen to

³³ See Valente, “Metro-Colonial Tactics in Joyce’s *Dubliners*” 325–40.

the power that is found in the masses by demonstrating the energy that a unifying ideal has over men. More specifically, these shared topics of interest become a point of unification and shift Stephen's focus from his physical surroundings to thinking about his future. At this moment, a group of men—albeit a small group of men—present various topics of conversation that alter Stephen's perception of the world; instead of living in the moment, he begins to think about his potential, his future.

Although these walks are taken when the Dedalus family lives in Blackrock, Stephen is able to gather information wherever he travels. In fact, when moving into Dublin, a place where he and his family are not as comfortable as in Blackrock, he is able to glimpse into his future: "The sudden flight from the comfort and revery of Blackrock, the passage through the gloomy foggy city, the thought of the bare cheerless house in which they were now to live made his heart heavy: and again an intuition or foreknowledge of the future came to him" (*P* 57). While this portrait may be one of his future destitution, it still indicates the fact that Stephen is destined to become an inhabitant of the city; a space in which he will be able to engage with and alter modernity. Furthermore, this description illustrates the paradoxical nature of the modern environment; it is simultaneously full of promise while threatening to decimate daily life. Stephen's recognition of the ability of the modern city to destroy everything he knows, however, does not prevent him from thinking. In fact, it gives him the ability to understand his future. The imposition of the modern world facilitates intellectual growth that will continue to stimulate Stephen.

Stephen, however, does not come to understand his relationship to the city at a constant rate. Instead, social institutions often restrict Stephen's understanding of the

outside world. These restrictions are placed on Stephen when he is not free to roam the city. Consider, for example, the tundish scene where Stephen's argument with the dean about the proper word for "funnel" evolves into a discussion of the colonial implications of language and affirms that "Stephen understands himself as partial heir to a baleful legacy of colonial impositions" (Esty 163). In this instance, Stephen's conversation with the Dean demonstrates that "Power relations are here shown to be embedded within the very words through which Stephen understands his social order," an order that has been *taught* to him by the very individuals who are called to guide their "flock" to a more spiritually fulfilling life (Stasi 98). The English language makes Stephen incredibly uncomfortable, so much so, in fact, that he is never content when using it: "I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language" (*P* 166). Stephen's unease with the English language demonstrates that "everything in a colony petrifies, laws, fashions, customs too, so that a point is reached at which the planter may come to resent the parent country's failure to remain the model it once was" (Kiberd 274). The petrification of language and the discomfort that it causes illustrates Stephen's overall anxiety of attempting to create art in Ireland while he is forced to serve Irish institutions.

Such institutional control and confinement is reinforced when Stephen, after the sermon on the retreat, chooses to repent, modify his life, and deny his senses. His weekly schedule is now quite regimented: "Sunday was dedicated to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Monday to the Holy Ghost, Tuesday to the Guardian Angels, Wednesday to Saint

Joseph, Thursday to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, Friday to the Suffering Jesus, Saturday to the Blessed Virgin Mary” (*P* 128). His daily life, which was “laid out in devotional arenas” and “divided by what he regarded now as the duties of his station in life, circled about its own centre of spiritual energy” and highlights the ability of the Catholic Church to eliminate personal choice and control his life (*P* 128). The schedule that controls Stephen’s life is organized spatially. His life is divided into specific “arenas,” all with clearly demarcated boundaries, that focus on one central point. The rigid structure of this religious life mirrors the institutional control that Stephen reacts to when he experientially maps Dublin.

Furthermore, Stephen’s desire “to undo [his] sinful past” results in his bringing his senses “under a rigorous discipline” by consciously choosing to make himself and each sense uncomfortable (*P* 131).³⁴ This self-regulation, which is dictated by institutional control, serves to limit Stephen’s ability to experience life and interact with those around him. In restructuring his life according to the demands of the Church, Stephen demonstrates how a life devoted to faith restricts one’s ability to explore. The importance of allowing his senses to experience the world is foregrounded as Stephen ponders the existence of poor girls he encounters on his way to confession:

He walked on and on through ill-lit streets, fearing to stand still for a moment lest it might seem that he held back from what awaited him, fearing to arrive at that towards which he still turned with longing. How beautiful must be a soul in the state of grace when God looked upon it with love!

Frowsy girls sat along the curbstones before their baskets. Their dank hair hung trailed over their brows. They were not beautiful to see as they crouched in the mire. But their souls were seen by God; and if their souls

³⁴ For a detailed description of the methods through which Stephen chooses to discipline his senses see *Portrait* 131–2.

were in a state of grace they were radiant to see: and God loved them, seeing them. (*P* 122)

Stephen's journey emphasizes many aspects of the urban that enable Stephen to begin to understand and define what it means to be a modern Irish citizen. More specifically, the forced mental reaction to all that is not holy and is, in fact, ambiguous and disembodied are aspects that help develop Stephen's urban consciousness. In order to react to unfixable aspects of the urban environment Stephen must think beyond the rigid structure of the Church. As a result, however Stephen engages with these girls, he will do so in a manner that is determined by their shared environment; what surrounds the girls, after all, is an aspect of their character. Stephen must be aware of and interact with the city that surrounds him. Here, the version of the city that Stephen encounters is full of pitfalls. Stephen cannot stand still because, if he does, he will deviate from his path of redemption. Similarly, when he passes the "frowsy girls," who are a hideous, mass of poverty sitting in filth on the curb he is forced to react to them.

However, in both instances, the real is juxtaposed with the spiritual and, for Stephen, the spiritual provides an escape from the abjection of the street. But, because the spiritual escape is grounded in the Catholic Church, it, for Stephen, is not an escape. Instead of allowing Stephen to explore on his own terms, the spiritual world attempts to map the lived world in a way that locates and fixes everything. As a result, the spiritual world creates a version of Dublin that is defined by immobile boundaries. It is yet another instance of the Ireland that is forced upon Stephen and the rest of society restricting any sort of movement. This restriction is lifted as soon as Stephen recognizes his surroundings: "Consciousness of place came ebbing back to him slowly over a vast tract of time unlit, unfelt, un-lived. The squalid scene composed itself around him; the

common accents, the burning gas-jets in the shops, odours of fish and spirits and wet sawdust, moving men and women” (*P* 123). Importantly, Stephen’s consciousness returned without his being aware, indicating the fact that this space and this scene are knowable. In fact, the urban reconfigures itself around Stephen who is the center of the scene and becomes a figure who contributes to the understanding of his environment.³⁵

After the scene composes itself around Stephen, the situation moves from the world of the abstract and spiritual to that of the concrete and knowable. The common accents of men and women performing everyday tasks are presented in a manner that indicates Stephen’s connection to the world of Irish poverty. In fact, Stephen interacts with individuals who would otherwise go unnoticed. His dealings with an old woman, for example, illustrate both his ability to move individuals to action as well as his connection with those who are often forgotten:

An old woman was about to cross the street, an oilcan in her hand. He bent down and asked her was there a chapel near.

—A chapel, sir? Yes, sir. Church Street chapel.

—Church?

She shifted the can to her other hand and directed him: and, as she held out her reeking withered right hand under its fringe of shawl, he bent lower towards her, saddened and soothed by her voice.³⁶ (*P* 123)

Before encountering the old woman to ask for directions, Stephen’s soul was lost: “One soul was lost; a tiny soul: his. It flickered once and went out, forgotten, lost. The end: black cold void waste” (*P* 122). Once Stephen becomes aware of all the “common” things that surround him, he becomes conscious and interacts with the old woman. For

³⁵ In Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, Robin Vote, like Stephen, exhibits the potential to augment the masses. Part of her ability to do so comes from the fact that she maintains a connection to her prehuman past and is able to act instinctually. See page 60 for a demonstration of her ability to connect wandering strangers.

³⁶ The moment in this passage where Stephen “bent down” is meant to echo a passage that comes earlier in the novel in which Stephen courts a prostitute: “With a sudden movement she bowed his head” (*P* 88). This interaction further illustrates the fact that without the marginalized factions of Irish society Stephen finds it hard to act. In other words, their actions result in his acting instead of simply thinking.

Stephen, his soul is found through his interactions with the people who make up Dublin. This is not to say, however, that becoming conscious in the city marks the retrieval of his soul. Instead, he is able to recover his soul when he breaks from the regimented life of the Church. Essentially, Stephen and the world of Ireland that exists outside of the Church are inextricably linked; Stephen must interact with both the positive and negative aspects of this Ireland, his Ireland, in order to develop his project while this very same marginalized Ireland requires Stephen's project in order to develop into a truly autonomous nation.

An appealing aspect of religion is its ability to provide solace and comfort for the faithful. However, in the same way that the order of the Church confines Stephen, Catholicism no longer comforts him. In fact, the soothing aspect of the apparently haggard, disheveled old woman is her voice, which forces Stephen to react emotionally and it is a reaction that, unlike fear and guilt, drives him to confession and intimates a sense of understanding. Stephen may be sad for a number of reasons: first, because the woman is living in abject poverty; second, perhaps he feels remorse for leaving this woman, and the masses she represents, behind; third, his family is not very far removed from living in these very same conditions; and finally, because once Stephen repents and devotes his life to God he will no longer interact with this world, the one that he knows, understands, and with which he has an undeniable connection, as an "equal." His question drives the woman to action, recognizes her as an individual, and ultimately places these individuals within society. Stephen's simple question, one that intends to extricate him from the corporeal world, serves to illustrate that he can be the force that unites ignored sectors of society, which in turn enables him to define what it means to

exist as a working-class subject in Ireland. In fact, despite repenting and attempting to lead a religious life, the urban calls Stephen from the spiritual world back to the physical. While walking home and reflecting on who he would be and how he would act as a priest, Stephen sees “the faded blue shrine of the Blessed Virgin” and then “The faint sour stink of rotted cabbages came towards him from the kitchen gardens on the rising ground above the river. He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father’s house and the stagnation of vegetable life” (*P* 142). The undesirable and tangible conditions in which his family exists are those that force him to interact with the urban and the individuals residing within it that ultimately “win the day in his soul” (*P* 142). Stephen’s ability to impose a comfortable reality onto ambiguous scenes and spaces emphasizes his need to be connected to the urban; indeed, his consciousness is awakened and driven by his urban surroundings.

When walking around Dublin with Cranly, Stephen demonstrates how his awakened urban consciousness has effected his future plans. While waiting on the steps of the library to meet Cranly, Stephen glances up at the birds who are flying “round and round the jutting shoulder of a house in Molesworth Street” in “The air of the late March evening” (*P* 197). While looking up at the birds Stephen recollects the conversation that he has recently had with his mother as well as Swedenborg’s theory “on the correspondence of birds to things of the intellect and of how they, unlike man, are in the order of their life and have not perverted that order by reason,” illustrating the advantage these animals have over the human understanding of life (*P* 198). Such thoughts about the restricting nature of reason lead Stephen to connect his life with that of his predecessors as he notes:

And for ages men had gazed upward as he was gazing at birds in flight. The colonnade above him made him think vaguely of an ancient temple and the ashplant on which he leaned wearily of the curved stick of an augur. A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings, of Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon. (*P* 198)

The connections to the past that Stephen makes cause him to reflect on the way that this history has and continues to effect his life. In thinking through the importance of his namesake, Stephen realizes that he is destined to break free of his captivity in Ireland. However, he fails to acknowledge the fatal flaw of Daedalus's design which intimates that Stephen does not have a complete understanding of his history. When addressing the importance of Toth, Stephen immediately thinks about the god as a "bottlenosed judge in a wig" and smiles (*P* 198). Like an Irish oath, Toth is a "folly" (*P* 198). By implying that both the Egyptian god of wisdom and writing and an Irish oath lack understanding and sense, Stephen undermines his decision to leave "the house of prudence and prayer" (*P* 198). His abstract thoughts abruptly end as the birds' "shrill cries" force him to observe them "flying darkly against the fading air" and realize that they are returning from the south (*P* 198). The migratory nature of the birds leads Stephen to conclude that he, too, is to leave Ireland just as the birds are constantly coming and going and building homes alongside the homes of men: "Then he was to go away? for they were birds ever going and coming, building ever an unlasting home under the eaves of men's houses and ever leaving the homes they had built to wander" (*P* 198). Stephen's realization that he must leave Ireland is one that temporarily frees him from that which he refuses to do; more specifically, it permits him to reject "serving."

This scene, which immediately precedes Stephen's long discussion about his future with Cranly, foreshadows the issues that Stephen has with both the environment and modernity. Interestingly, Stephen's reaction takes place in the metropolis where the natural world interacts with the built environment, which in this instance, is the modern city. This episode, which proves to be instrumental in the development of Stephen's consciousness, takes place in the spring during the evening.³⁷ These seemingly minor details prove to be significant because both the spring and evening are times of the year and day, respectively, that prove to be incredibly fruitful. More specifically, the spring is a time of rebirth while evening precedes night, a time that allows individuals to experience the metropolis and each other in unplanned, natural ways.³⁸ These moments are full of potential and also allow individuals, who have been corrupted by the mechanization of society, to naturally interact with each other and the built environment. Stephen's ability to connect with the birds reacts to this corruption because it emphasizes his ability to refuse mechanization by keeping his bond with the natural world alive. This association is further strengthened as Stephen intimates how his relationship with the birds ties him to the past; the modern library transforms into a Roman temple and his ashplant into the staff of an ancient Roman priest who would interpret the will of the gods by tracking birds' flight.³⁹ Stephen's connection to the powerful augurs of antiquity which brought Roman civilization emphasizes the understanding of Stephen as an

³⁷ According to William James, and an understanding of consciousness that is productive when discussing Stephen, consciousness is made up of continuously developing, always unfinished relationships that come to an end only when the individual him or herself dies. For a more detailed discussion see Wm. James.

³⁸ For a discussion on the power of the night see Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* pages 84–6. Also see Benjamin's "On the Image of Proust" in *Selected Writings, Vol. 2*, pages 237–47.

³⁹ When discussing the foundation of Rome, the historian Titus Livius states, "Who is there who knows not that it was under auspices that this City was founded, that only after auspices have been taken is anything done in war or peace, at home or in the field?" (Livius 6.41). For Rome, then, the connection to the natural world is something that cannot be denied; in fact, the foundation of the city relied upon it.

individual who has the ability to imagine both natural and man-made environments work together to create a unified space.

Such power is not lost on Stephen; in fact, he takes the responsibility quite seriously and hopes to discover a way to reach his voiceless people. This desire to establish a mode of communication, however, is intimately tied to his urban surroundings which suggests the extent to which Stephen's understanding of the Irish experience of modernity is not tied to the rural, a connection that only reaffirms the colonial past of the nation. While waiting for Cranly to decide whether or not he will play a game of billiards at the Adelphi hotel, Stephen "walk[s] on alone and out into the quiet of Kildare Street opposite Maple's hotel" and thinks about the troubled history of his country:

The name of the hotel, a colourless polished wood, and its colourless quiet front stung him like a glance of polite disdain. He stared angrily back at the softly lit drawingroom of the hotel in which he imagined the sleek lives of the patricians of Ireland housed in calm. They thought of army commissions and land agents: peasants greeted them along the roads in the country: they knew the names of certain French dishes and gave orders to jarvies in highpitched provincial voices which pierced through their skintight accents. (*P* 210)

According to Stephen, Maple's hotel houses wealthy individuals who are clearly thinking of methods of control that will continue to hold the Irish in a position of subservience. Interestingly, the patricians, who are representatives of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy class and speak "in highpitched provincial voices," are not distinctly Irish and are only able to maintain control over those individuals who live in rural areas by imposing alien cultures on these individuals and regions. Their influence does reach the urban, which is evidenced by the fact that they are meeting in Dublin, but it is not as substantial as it is in the country. Stephen believes that "the credulous Irish peasant" constitutes the true subject of both "British and Roman conquest" (*Esty* 144). As a result, Stephen wonders

“How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own?” a question that indicates his desire to alter the course of history (*P* 210). He hopes to find a way to influence the daughters of these patricians so that they, too, would be able to participate in his method of experiencing modernity. In addition to worrying about the patricians’ offspring, Stephen, “under the deepened dusk,” also “feel[s] the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged flitting like bats across the dark country lanes, under trees by the edges of streams and near the poolmottled bogs” (*P* 210). Stephen’s recognition that the peasants, those individuals who greet the patricians along the road, are also a part of Ireland indicates that he refuses to preclude any one individual’s or group of individuals’ way of life in his understanding of the Irish experience of modernity. Furthermore, his use of natural imagery to describe the thoughts of his people emphasizes their close relationship to the natural world. While the methods of the patricians will at some point cease to be effective, the potential that Stephen recognizes in the thoughts of the Irish people indicates that they will be able to define and re-define themselves as the times require. This highlights the fact that the Irish way of understanding modernity is one that reflects a certain experience; it can be defined only by an individual who has an innate understanding of the Irish way of life.

Stephen’s reflection on the individuals in the Maple hotel immediately precedes his journey throughout Dublin with Cranly when Stephen discusses the problems that he has with his mother and his decision to leave Ireland. Stephen begins by recounting the argument he had with his mother over his refusal to make his Easter confession and tells Cranly, “I will not serve,” clearly indicating his disavowal of the Catholic Church and all

that is forced upon him (*P* 211). Such negation directly challenges the accepted way of life in Ireland. By refusing to go to confession, Stephen denies the older generations of Ireland and is making a case for his generation's Ireland. At this point, Cranly and Stephen begin to discuss the merits of Catholicism and Cranly assumes the role of the confessor. However, because this conversation takes place at night in Dublin Cranly is able to debate these points with Stephen; Cranly is not confined by the restrictions that are placed upon an individual while in the proper confessional setting. Such freedom brings "Their minds, ... closer, one to the other" and allows Cranly to pose questions to Stephen that truly explore Stephen's belief or lack-thereof (*P* 211). Cranly begins to interrogate Stephen's theological opinions through a discussion of the Eucharist:

—Do you believe in the eucharist? Cranly asked.

—I do not, Stephen said.

—Do you disbelieve then?

—I neither believe in it nor disbelieve in it, Stephen answered.

—Many persons have doubts, even religious persons, yet they overcome them or put them aside, Cranly said. Are your doubts on that point too strong?

—I do not wish to overcome them, Stephen answered. (*P* 211)

In this initial exchange Stephen establishes his purpose for not serving. For him, it is more than refusing his mother, which can also be read as a rejection of mother Ireland; it is a general ambivalence towards religion. Such indifference allows Stephen to negate his doubts and consequently enables him to dictate his own life, which, again, rejects the traditional Church-driven nation. In addition, this indifference also separates Stephen from his peers who attempt to overcome their doubts in order to get along. Because Stephen disavows all that is holy and accepts his doubts, he will constantly question himself. Cranly continues to interrogate Stephen about what may happen to him when he is judged. Cranly begins by casting away a rotten fig into the gutter and exclaims,

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!” and then grabs Stephen by the arm and wonders whether Stephen “fear[s] that those words may be spoken to [him] on the day of judgment” (P 212). In his reply Stephen returns to discuss the beloved dean of students and ultimately rejects both religion and the academic world: “What is offered me on the other hand? ... An eternity of bliss in the company of the dean of studies?” (P 212). As such, Stephen commits himself to a life outside that which he has come to understand best and seemingly rejects the company of an individual who is not Irish. As a result of Cranly’s questioning, Stephen recognizes that he “had to become” (P 212) what he is and that he “cannot answer for the past” (P 215). It is essential that these discussions take place as they are walking around Dublin since the city is outside of institutional control. In fact, Stephen, Cranly, and Dixon have to leave the National Library, a place that is under institutional control, because a priest “has gone to complain” about the conversation that they are having (P 200). Such liberty enables Cranly to become a confessor and for Stephen to express his almost heretical views.

Indeed, such freedom also allows Stephen to explore and explain his aesthetic theory. At this moment, Stephen asserts himself as an artist who will attempt to lead his people into the future in a way that directly aligns itself with his yet unstated goals and the ambitions of the Irish people. Joyce intimates as such in the epigraph which reads “*Et ignotas animus dimittit in artes*” (Ovid VIII.188 qtd. in Joyce, P 3) which is translated as “He turned his mind toward unknown arts” (P 3n.1). By invoking Ovid, and specifically the Daedalus section of the *Metamorphoses*, Joyce establishes the method by which he and his work will revise that which came before him. More specifically, the fact that these arts are unknown illustrates how Daedalus sought to innovate and alter the world; in

fact, the next line reads “and altered the laws of nature” (Ovid VII.189). Stephen, who shares a name with Daedalus, seeks to accomplish the same goals with his art and aesthetic theory; he hopes to speak to the consciousness of his race and alter how they engage with the outside world.⁴⁰ Stephen maintains that proper art does not awaken kinetic emotions; instead, “It awakens, or ought to awaken, or induces, or ought to induce, an esthetic stasis, an ideal pity or an ideal terror, a stasis called forth, prolonged, and at last dissolved by what I call the rhythm of beauty” (P 181).⁴¹ In his formulation, “Rhythm . . . is the first formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its part or parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part” which ultimately arrests the mind and raises it “above desire and loathing” (P 181, 180). Stephen continues and explains “Art . . . is the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an esthetic end” and “beauty is beheld by the imagination which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the sensible. . . . The first step in the direction of beauty is to understand the frame and scope of the imagination, to comprehend the act itself of esthetic apprehension” (P 182; 183). He further clarifies his understanding of beauty by explaining that his understanding of art is “applied Aquinas” (P 184). Like other theories of art, Stephen’s aesthetic theory contains three variables—(1) the creator, (2) the act of creation, and (3) is the creation itself—which require an intense relationship between the creator and the creation. Stephen’s theory—or “applied Aquinas”—also speaks to the fact that no creation is devoid of its artist; instead, the

⁴⁰ In chapter 3 of *Joyce’s Cities*, Jackson Cope connects Joyce’s reading of Ovid to his reading of D’Annunzio. In so doing he asserts that Joyce’s use of myth bridges the classical past and the present. See 36–61.

⁴¹ Stephen states, “The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something, loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts” (P 180).

artist's soul is transmuted into his or her work (*P* 184).⁴² Because Stephen's not yet created art will contain at least a part of his soul, it will both give a voice to the underrepresented and misunderstood Irish and speak to the peasants and people he is striving to reach.

In addition, Stephen's theories are intended to fuel his production of art which, when received by the outside world, will force others to reevaluate their conceptions of the Irish. Stephen's aesthetic theories illustrate his, and by extension Joyce's, desire to devise a method by which the Irish can represent and interact with modernity. In so doing, Stephen effectively creates a manner for his race to engage with and discuss modernity on its own terms. Stephen's theory mandates that the soul of the artist must be part of the work which intimates that the values of the soul are also transmuted into the work. For Stephen's *future* art this means that his beliefs about the Irish and Ireland will become part of his artwork. These works of art will poignantly address the Irish situation by speaking about it from an Irish point of view. In asserting an Irish perspective, Stephen's art will preclude understanding Ireland and its people as underdeveloped and inferior. Instead, his theory calls for an understanding of Ireland and its people as they are on their own terms and as they participate in a larger, global conversation.

As Stephen wanders around Dublin he refines his aesthetic theory and concludes that he must leave Ireland to gain an understanding of Dublin that accurately communicates his lived experience. In formulating and refining his theory as he walks Dublin, Stephen re-appropriates the way that the city is used. As a result, and much like

⁴² When discussing the implications of this transmutation, Stephen states, "The narrative is no longer purely personal. The personality of the artist passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the action like a vital sea" (*P* 189). In addition, Stephen applies these theories in ways Aquinas never intended. For example, he develops an aesthetic theory that has no basis in moral or spiritual values.

the experiential maps that he creates as a child, Stephen's aesthetic map of Dublin rejects imposed borders and boundaries. Through demonstrating that spaces within a city can be appropriated for one purpose and re-appropriated for another, Stephen's artistic theory enables him to respond to spatial, temporal, and formal boundaries that present works of art as whole or harmonious. In addition, his ability to map and re-map Dublin and develop a unique method by which to understand and create art further highlights the ways in which the city can be used and re-used to meet specific ends. As such, Stephen effectively staves off habit, which, according to Benjamin, is a deterrent to forging a productive metropolitan life. When discussing the first sight of an urban area, Benjamin declares that habit obscures the aspects of urban spaces that highlight their uniqueness and possibility:

What makes the very first glimpse of a village, a town, in the landscape so incomparable and irretrievable is the rigorous connection between foreground and distance. Habit has not yet done its work. As soon as we begin to find our bearings, the landscape vanishes at a stroke like the façade of a house as we enter it. It has not yet gained preponderance through a constant exploration that has become habit. Once we begin to find our way about, that earliest picture can never be restored. (*SWI* 468)

In other words, it is of the utmost importance that dwellers in metropolitan areas seek to limit the negative effect that habit has upon their experience and their urban consciousness. If the effect is not limited, individuals will be reduced to automatons and, as a result, severely limit their own potential to effect change. Through his constant mapping and the development of his own aesthetic theory, Stephen, however, will effectively be able to combat the effects of habit and create in a manner that speaks to and for the consciousness of his race. The ability to connect with the larger population of Ireland in a manner that speaks to their specific experience of modernity serves Stephen

and the people on multiple, productive registers. First, Stephen's desire to pass ideas from himself to the underrepresented citizens urges that a conversation between the two be established. Regardless of the means of communicating, such a dialogue will only ensure that the voice and experience of these people will not be lost in a larger, global conversation. In addition, Stephen's ability to break the cycle of habit will extend to the individuals to whom he hopes to give voice in his art because it re-presents the urban experience in terms that they truly know, not ones they are forced to understand. As a result, this often ignored mass is given the ability to re-see, re-experience, and re-mobilize the built environment in which they live. In so doing, Stephen is, whether intentionally or unintentionally, reorganizing social life and undoing power structures by laying the groundwork for human networks outside of institutional control. Stephen then becomes a representative of the vanguard who has the ability to organize the Irish masses. However, because of his narrow conception of the Irish experience of modernity, Stephen's project is doomed to fail. While Stephen thinks that his ideas speak to and for the Irish people at large, he fails to recognize the importance of the non-urban Irish experience. Without a proper account of multiple experiences, Stephen's art will ultimately suggest a singular experience of modernity and as a result, strengthen or recreate the controlling institutions he wants to overcome.

That *Portrait* intimates the importance of an understanding of what it means to be a modern individual in Ireland while arguing that an artist must leave to create speaks to the necessity to re-capture a modern picture—one that is not defined by “language, nationality, and religion”—of Ireland. Stephen serves as an example of what is needed to capture and define a modern Ireland; more specifically, an individual who is

disenchanted with the state of understanding in and about the place in which he or she lives. *Portrait's* aesthetic statement becomes one that articulates a means through which an individual can attempt to capture and give voice to a specific experience in a specific place. *Portrait's* end does not finish this project; indeed, it continues in *Ulysses* with Stephen's return and the introduction of another marginalized figure, the wandering Jew Leopold Bloom.

IV. Failed Flight: Stephen's "Return"

At the end of *Portrait*, in the diary entry dated 26 April, Stephen unequivocally states that he will be leaving Ireland to experience life:

Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. (*P* 224)

According to Stephen, his flight will allow him to begin to experience life which will, in turn, enable him to divorce himself from the constraining reality of Ireland and realize his desire to create a conscience for his race. As such, this conscience will be authentic because it is formed by an Irishman for Ireland. However, his project is problematic from the start because the flight is both a method by which Stephen can avoid the problems and is also guided by his mother, an individual who adheres to those "nets" by which Stephen hopes to fly. Not only does she prepare his suitcase of "new secondhand clothes," but also her prayers are those that inform Stephen's ambitions. Her desire for Stephen to learn "what the heart is and what it feels" is that which will allow him "to encounter . . . the reality of existence." This education, then, will empower him to create the "conscience of [his] race." In other words, the project that he sets forth to complete is

not devoid of the influences he aims to overthrow; instead, it is directly connected to “language, nationality, and religion.” If ever realized, which it is not, Stephen’s creation will only serve to strengthen what he sees as disastrous to his people and his country. In other words, this “conscience” will be yet one more iteration of those outside of Ireland speaking for the Irish, thus continuing the control and destruction of Ireland.

However much Stephen wants to experience life outside of Ireland, his failure in Paris and his mother’s cancer bring him back to Ireland. This return transforms Stephen from a Daedalian figure to being more like Icarus; he has been too ambitious, flown too close to the sun, and as a result, has come crashing back to Ireland, his version of the sea. Despite his inconspicuous homecoming, by the beginning of *Ulysses*, he immediately sustains his critique of the old Irish ways. His return forces him to continue to confront Ireland’s problematic triumvirate. Consider, for example, the milkwoman scene in “Telemachus” where Stephen analyzes the relationship between various Irish factions. These groups include the milkwoman who stands in for the older generation; Mulligan who represents the younger generation that plays into the hand of colonial power; Stephen who expresses the beliefs of the younger generation that rejects the old ways and those who adhere to the powers that be; and Haines who represents the conquerors.

When introduced, the milkwoman is presented as “An old woman,” which in the Irish context can be understood on various mythological registers (*U* 1.389). First, she can be read as the *Sean-Bhean bhocht* or the poor old woman who, keeping with the aisling tradition of native Irish poetry, personifies Ireland and establishes that the country must be defended.⁴³ In addition to the *Sean-Bhean bhocht*, the milkwoman also registers

⁴³ For lyrics to a 1797 version see Sparling 13–4.

as a manifestation of Cathleen ni Houlihan, who also stands in for Ireland as woman.⁴⁴

Regardless, in both instances this mythological woman serves as a nationalistic rallying cry for the men of Ireland to defend the country and fight for their freedom.

Despite the nationalistic impulse behind such a figure, Stephen rejects any notion of this old woman doing any good for Ireland. Instead of being a call to arms, the milkwoman, like Stephen's mother, is clearly beholden to Stephen's triumvirate of nets. First, immediately upon entering the Martello tower, she immediately states "Glory be to God," a greeting which illustrates her adherence to religion (*U* 1.390). While this can be read as a polite greeting, when read in conjunction with other events in the episode, it becomes clear that the woman is the only one of the four individuals present who respects religion. First, at the opening of the novel, Mulligan performs a mock mass whilst shaving. Secondly, when responding to the milkwoman's greeting Mulligan questions "To whom?" intimating that God is not present within the tower (*U* 1.391). Instead, Mulligan and Haines are busy discussing "The islanders," and Stephen is busy listening and inserting factoids at will.

To compound the problems associated with her adherence to the Irish faith, the milkwoman has no concrete understanding of the Irish language or the issues surrounding the use of the English language. Consider the exchange that begins with Haines speaking Irish to the old woman:

—Do you understand what he says? Stephen asked her.
—Is it French that you are talking, sir? the old woman said to Haines.
Haines spoke to her again a longer speech, confidently.

⁴⁴ In collaboration with Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats wrote *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, a one-act play that suggest that young men sacrifice their lives for Cathleen Ni Houlihan. Interestingly, when she seeks out the men to fight for her, Cathleen Ni Houlihan appears as an old lady who needs help regaining control of her "four beautiful green fields" (7). Only after the young man agrees to fight for her does she appear as "a young girl" who has "the walk of a queen" (11).

—Irish, Buck Mulligan said. Is there Gaelic on you?

—I thought it was Irish, she said, by the sound of it. Are you from the west, sir?

—I am an Englishman, Haines answered.

—He's English, Buck Mulligan said, and he thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland.

—Sure we ought to, the old woman said, and I'm ashamed I don't speak the language myself. I'm told it's a grand language by them that knows. (*U* 1.424–34)

This conversation clearly illustrates that the old woman has no direct connection to the Irish language. From Stephen's asking her if she actually understands to her confusing the language for French, it becomes obvious that the milkwoman is disconnected from her historical past. Furthermore, after learning that it is Irish, she immediately thinks that Haines must be from the west, or, more specifically, the Aran Islands. The stereotypical assumption that only those in the west still speak the Irish language emphasizes the reality that the old woman has little to no understanding of the politically charged debate around Irish. Instead, the milkwoman, who is personally ashamed of not speaking the language, relies on the opinions of others, in this instance Haines, to formulate her own thoughts on the Irish language. Such dependence proves problematic because if she relies on "them that knows" and these individuals are the very same people who sought to control Ireland, then her thinking is, like Stephen's mother's, nothing more than a reiteration of that which has kept the country and her people enslaved for almost 800 years. The milkwoman does no thinking for herself; she lets her oppressors think for her. As a result, she will never effectively cope with modernity; instead, she will continue to rely on those individuals, institutions, and nations in power. Such reliance only serves to reinscribe the colonial project, which allows outsiders to speak for the Irish and define what it means to be a modern Irish citizen. While Stephen is disgruntled by the

milkwoman's lack of historical understanding, he fails to recognize the irony in the fact that it is Haines, the Englishman, who thinks that the Irish should recover their language. Haines's position likens the recovery of Irish to the imposition of English; in both instances a language has been forced upon an unwilling people.

The milkwoman's blind adherence to the Church and ignorance of both the language and the politically charged situation surrounding the Irish language underscore the fact that she is nothing more than "A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning" (*U* 1.404–06). Stephen's categorization of the milkwoman as a "crone" further distances her from any credible embodiment of female modernity. The figure of the "crone" is a stock old-woman character in folklore, and the milkwoman again becomes nothing more than a traditional version of femininity who is supposed to maintain some sort of power over those around her, yet she does not. In fact, as she continues to converse with both Haines and Mulligan, she loses all national significance and becomes nothing more than a character who is represented and re-represented throughout folklore. While her initial connection to Ireland is weak, it does exist; her continued actions cause it to be nullified to the point where she loses all individuality. As such, she becomes a decrepit individual who is rendered impotent as a national figure.

Stephen does not fail to recognize such problems. In fact, it is through his reflections that we come to understand how impotent the milkwoman has become. Immediately instructing the milkwoman to dispense one quart of milk, Stephen "watched her pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich white milk, not hers. Old shrunken

paps” (*U* 1.398–401).⁴⁵ This indicates not only that the milk is not only “not hers,” but also that, because of her “Old shrunken paps” she is physically unable to produce such nourishment. The ability to produce is integral for both the milkwoman and Stephen. If either were able to yield anything of their own, then they would not be reliant on their peers. However, neither individual can produce anything—milk or art, respectively—of their own. As a result, they will always serve others. Such impotence results in Stephen’s dismissal of the old woman and his listening to her in “scornful silence” as “She bows her old head to a voice that speaks to her loudly, her bonesetter, her medicineman” all while slighting Stephen (*U* 1.419–20). At this moment, the only two individuals who may share a future have denied each other. Stephen denies the milkwoman because of her ignorance and the milkwoman rejects Stephen’s presence. Instead, she turns her attention to those who have controlled her past and will continue to control her future, a choice which ultimately prevents the establishment of any meaningful connection to the modern world.

The milkwoman is incapable of garnering enough agency to give voice to her own needs and desires; instead, she remains subservient to those individuals that appear to maintain control over her country and people. The milkwoman calls further attention to the Irish people’s underdeveloped consciousness which, in her case, prevents her from successfully navigating her way into and through modernity. Instead of coming to terms

⁴⁵ According to Gabler’s *Critical and Synoptic Edition*, Joyce changed “breasts” to “paps” while exchanging postcards and/or letters with Claud Sykes (1729). Ellmann states, “Sykes received the first episode about November 20, 1917, the second about December 16, and the third shortly afterwards. As usual, with Joyce, there were last-minute corrections and additions” (420). Joyce’s postcard reads, “Dear Mr Sykes: Just got your card. *Show MS at once* to Mr G and explain to him that it can be typed quickly while the sale or otherwise of his business is pending. That much at least should be done at once. In the other two episodes (which are not so long) it will depend on whether he disposes of his place or not. I take it you could do what I sent quickly. There is no use losing time. *Errors*: for ‘old shrunken breasts’ in description of the old milkwoman read ‘old shrunken paps’. For ‘plunged’ in description of Buck Mulligan searching trunk for handkerchief read ‘plunged and rummaged’” (Gilbert 109).

with her and her country's history, she has let it become an obstacle or a "relic—a surviving memorial of and to the past—both sacralized and naturalized in the present" (Jones 60).⁴⁶ By becoming a monument, history has developed into something that is both remembered and commemorated in a way that prevents any form of understanding and resolution. This lack of comprehension directly mirrors the milkwoman's blind, wholly accepting "worship" of both Mulligan and Haines. As such, much in the same way that the Irish Revival made rural Ireland *the* model for all of Ireland, the milkwoman's reality does not speak *for* the Irish; rather, it speaks *to* the Irish. In other words, the milkwoman's reality is dictated by others and serves to hinder her entrance into and negotiation of modernity in an effective manner.

While "monumental history" serves to hold a large percentage of Ireland back, Stephen's view of the past affords him the opportunity to begin to forge a method by which the Irish can enter and engage with the modern world on their own terms. Benjamin's assertion, that the past can become a monument, is that which Stephen must work to overcome and is precisely what he manages to do in his unequivocal rejection of the milkwoman and for what she stands. Stephen's categorization of the milkwoman as "A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer" results in his chastising her by deeming her "their common cuckquean" (*U* 1.404–5). In referring to the old woman as a "common cuckquean," Stephen asserts the fact that each individual—Haines and Mulligan—have successfully used the woman for their own personal gain while she has earned or achieved nothing. Furthermore, in allowing both "her conqueror," Haines, and "her gay betrayer," Mulligan, to cuckquean her, the milkwoman has lost all forms of support and, more importantly, any agency she

⁴⁶ For a reading of the way in which Joyce and Benjamin address history see Ehrlich.

may have had. If both Stephen and Mulligan's refusal to adhere to the mythic readings of the woman as Ireland did not silence any nationalistic rallying cry that the milkwoman could muster, then her actions have. The myth of Ireland as an old woman who both needs and actively requests support has been all but destroyed by Stephen, Mulligan, and the milkwoman herself.

Stephen's rejection of the milkwoman and all that she represents begins as his creative process transforms her from "*maybe* a messenger" into "a messenger from the secret morning (*U* 1.399–400, italics mine; 1.405–6). Within six lines the doubt of her being the messenger is erased and she becomes the messenger from "the secret morning." According to Gifford, the messenger is meant to represent Pallas Athena who, in *The Odyssey*, is disguised as Mentos or Mentor to help Telemachus reclaim what is rightfully his (21).⁴⁷ In this instance, Joyce's reworking of *The Odyssey* places Stephen in a position to reject the way of life that the milkwoman, a goddess, is hoping to preserve. Instead, Stephen wonders, "To serve or to upbraid, whether he could not tell: but scorned to beg her favour" (*U* 1. 406–7). As such, Stephen, unlike Telemachus, refuses to acknowledge the milkwoman's mission. Rather than encourage him to continue down the path she has chosen, the milkwoman inspires Stephen to create a path that is representative of that which he has experienced as well and continues to experience in Ireland. This path turns away from her ways and aims to establish a method by which the Irish can enter into a productive dialogic relationship with modernity. In other words,

⁴⁷ In a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the milkwoman and Pallas Athena, Gifford states "In Books 1 and 2 of *The Odyssey*, Pallas Athena appears disguised as Mentos and Mentor to encourage Telemachus to assert himself if not actually to upbraid him for his boyish lassitude. She also organizes the ship and crew for his voyage to the mainland. Since Telemachus realizes that he is in the presence of one of the gods, he can hardly be said to "scorn to beg her favour" (21).

Stephen understands the milkwoman as monumental history that seeks to prevent individuals, cultures, and societies from ever fully engaging with the present.

However, Stephen's rejection of the milkwoman points to another flaw in his project. Because the milkwoman represents both the older generation and mythologized Ireland, then Stephen's dismissal means that his work will fail to include this portion of the population. Despite disagreeing with her ideology, and if he desires to speak to and for the Irish, Stephen must find a way to represent this generation and these ideals. If he does not, then he will, much like he does in *Portrait*, only create another exclusive iteration of Ireland. What will result is an articulation of Ireland that replaces the Irish Revival's emphasis on mythology and the rural with an emphasis on the modern and the urban.

Stephen's Dantesque comment, "I see little hope . . . for her or from him," clearly speaks to the dire situation in which he finds himself (*U* 1.501). The milkwoman, or "silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times," highlights the break from the past that Ireland must make if she is to become a productive member of the present. More specifically, the country must create a new sense of nationalism that truly encompasses the current state of the country. In addition, individuals like Mulligan, who blindly adhere to causes promoted by people like Haines will do nothing productive for the people or the country. Instead, the "Mulligans" will aid outsiders and ensure that these same outsiders are the only ones who benefit. Ireland will be reduced to nothing more than brief, witty sayings that glorify a monumental history. In other words, both the older and factions of the younger generations have been rendered impotent by outside

influence and neither has found nor will ever find a way in which to promote Ireland for Ireland's sake.

Stephen's fatalistic attitude about the futures of both the milkwoman and Mulligan does not, however, extend to himself. Instead, his awareness of the faults of both of these individuals and the problematic position that Haines occupies enables him to reject that which constrains him. Stephen's understanding of the detrimental effects of depending on a mythological past is promising for two reasons: First, in turning to a mythologized past, movements like the Irish Revival are manufacturing a history for a nation. Because it is a history based in fiction, this version of the past proves to be a faulty foundation through which to mobilize a nation. Second, in rejecting the mythologized past, Stephen predicates his understanding of the Irish nation on recent and factual historical events which can be understood by the people. As a result, his articulation of the history of the nation enables him to become a Janus-like figure who has the ability to understand the past while moving into the future. While both the milkwoman and Mulligan are unable to evaluate the past and alter their respective futures, Stephen's treatment of the history of the nation offers a viable alternative to the ones proposed by the milkwoman and Mulligan. Stephen's rejection of the behavior of both the milkwoman and Mulligan is more than just a rejection of the past; instead, it is a realization of that which devastated and continues to devastate his "race" as well as an understanding of what must change in order for the country to move forward. However, Stephen's complete dismissal of mythology signals a limited understanding of the Irish nation. For Stephen, mythology may be detrimental to the nation's future but by

rejecting it he, once again, alienates a portion of the people to whom and for whom he hopes to speak.

Stephen's dismissal of the milkwoman, Mulligan, and Haines, marks the moment in which his project as set forth in *Portrait*, to present an Irish negotiation and method of engaging with modernity begins. He, at once, throws off the old mythologies, adherence to the Church, deference to the English, and dismisses the majority of "his" generation in order to create a foundation for an experiential map of his "new" Ireland. Mulligan's decree, "Ireland expects that every man this day will do his duty," means something very different to Stephen than it does to Mulligan (*U* 1.467–8). For Mulligan, who is "stony" or broke, it simply means that he must depend on others to provide money to "drink and junket," illustrating his never-ending dependence on others (*U* 1.467). Ironically, and despite Stephen's desire for his readers to believe otherwise, Mulligan is not the individual who depends on others. Indeed, the one who relies on others is Stephen. Although Mulligan claims to be "stony," it is he—not Stephen or Haines—who pays the milkwoman two shillings. Moreover, when reflecting on his debts, Stephen recalls that he owes Mulligan nine pounds. Such contradictions, which demonstrate that Stephen has a troubled understanding of his personal history in the present, further emphasize the limitations of Stephen's ability to see his project through. While he belittles and rejects the milkwoman for her relationship to the past, Stephen fails to note the importance of positioning oneself in the present. If he continues to be dependent on others, then he will be unable to control his own life. While he may have a grasp on the past, Stephen's present and future will always be dictated by others. This is problematic because his project demands that he discard the past and present to craft a method by which the Irish

can engage with the outside world on their own terms. As a result, because of his dependence on others he will remain unable to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race.”

V. Bloom, Faith, and the Nation

However enlightened his vision of what Ireland requires to become a productive, autonomous member of the global community, Stephen does not, in fact, set forth a complete methodology by which the Irish can alternatively engage with modernity. Instead, his work in *Portrait* and the beginning of *Ulysses* proves to be the foundation of a project that ultimately rejects the past in order to construct a new future. Leopold Bloom, the wandering Jew, continues Stephen’s project when he expands upon Stephen’s reflections on religion and begins the discussion about what it means to be a nation. As such, Bloom’s pointed critique of Ireland, as found in his discussion with the citizen in “Cyclops,” makes clear that the fractured nation-state and the varying political factions found within the country do nothing more than re-inscribe the past by which these same people are trying to move.

Like Stephen, Bloom actively distances himself from the religious tradition that manages the lives of so many of his peers. However, unlike Stephen, Bloom’s rejection of Catholicism does not come in the form of denying a mother’s last wishes or an overt rejection of the Church. Instead, Bloom presents his objections in a more thoughtful manner; he inserts his opinions as he sees fit and invites conversation.⁴⁸ For example, in “Hades,” when discussing Paddy Dignam’s death from a heart attack Bloom establishes that the best death is a quick death:

⁴⁸ In fact, despite never being a practicing Catholic, Bloom was baptized so he could marry Molly. This act demonstrates the fact that Bloom respects other people’s beliefs and traditions even if he does not subscribe to them.

- He had a sudden death, poor fellow, he [Mr Power] said.
- The best death, Mr Bloom said.
Their wideopen eyes looked at him.
- No suffering, he said. A moment and all is over. Like dying in sleep.
No-one spoke. (*U* 6.311–5)

Here, Bloom clearly professes his belief that a painless death is far better than one where an individual has to suffer but is still able to receive his or her last rites. As such, Bloom's declaration "separate[s] himself decisively from Christian conceptions of death" which is also "his first declaration of independence" (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* 49). Such a declaration establishes that Bloom does not fear contradicting those who adhere to the restricting institutions and ideals that they believe will free Ireland. For Bloom, overtly rejecting Christianity allows him to move beyond institutional control. He is then able to imagine an Ireland that is not restricted by Stephen's religious "net."

Furthermore, because he is able to operate outside of these controls, Bloom's experience in Dublin is not as confined as Stephen's. Unlike Stephen, who can never completely rid himself of the influences of Catholicism, Bloom's willingness to engage with dogma intimates that he is more aware of the present conditions in Dublin. Bloom becomes a figure who has the potential to unify the people, allow them to realize their inherent potential, and enter into modernity on their own terms.

While Bloom's encounter in the carriage in "Hades" shares aspects of Stephen's rejection of Catholicism, the encounter with the citizen in "Cyclops" further mobilizes the project of enabling the Irish to engage with modernity in a manner that is free from constraint and will allow them to speak about their experience on their own terms. The "Cyclops" episode engages with Irish mythology, politics, and ideas of the nation, each of which, in its current state, proves to be detrimental to the future of the country. When

introduced, the citizen, who is loosely based on Michael Cusack, is presented as “The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower” whose, among other things, “heart thundered rumblingly causing the ground, the summit of the lofty tower and the still loftier walls of the cave to vibrate and tremble” (*U* 12.151; 12.165–67).⁴⁹ In addition to his massive body, the citizen “wore a long unsleeved garment of recently flayed oxhide reaching to the knees in a loose kilt” with “a row of seastones which jangled at every movement of his portentous frame and on these were graven with rude yet striking art the tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity” (*U* 12.168–9; 12.174–76). The citizen becomes a caricature of Irishness as well as a romanticized version of the past, a fact which in and of itself creates a new mythology. However, this new mythology is deeply flawed since it is entirely dependent on historical circumstances that are no longer pertinent to modern Ireland. Like the milkwoman, the citizen becomes a living monument who is concerned only with past historical moments. Furthermore, this valorization also serves to promote the citizen’s narrow-minded, nationalistic view of Ireland. This viewpoint promotes alienating others in a manner that is counterproductive for the nation. If Ireland desires to engage with modernity and the global world and/or market as an autonomous nation, then the country and its people must accept differences within the nation itself. Finally, individuals like the citizen and the ideologies that they promote serve only to further divide Ireland from within and establish poisonous political positions as dogma.

Division from within is apparent when Bloom engages the citizen and his underlings in debate about what constitutes a nation and the implications behind using

⁴⁹ Cusack, the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, “possesses a one-track mind, which leaves him intolerant of all foreigners among whom, of course, he includes the Jews” (Kiberd 350). Also see Gifford 316.

force to revolt. A pastiche, for example, that appears in the episode describes Bloom as “the prudent member” and questions his heritage: “Who comes through Michan’s land, bedight in sable armour? O’Bloom, the son of Rory: it is he. Impervious to fear is Rory’s son: he of the prudent soul” (*U* 12.211; 12.215–218). When read in conjunction with another of the citizen’s questions, “What’s that bloody freemason doing . . . prowling up and down outside?,” the “othering” of Bloom becomes readily apparent (*U* 12.300–01). First, in referring to Bloom as “the prudent member,” Joe Hynes and the other men in the bar isolate Bloom as a thinking man who is able to formulate his own opinions, which prevents him from subscribing to their extreme nationalist viewpoints. In addition, this refrain also speaks to Bloom’s fractured relationship with his wife, Molly. It is well known that Molly is engaging in some sort of affair with Blazes Boylan and the phallic reference, “member,” is meant to question his virility. By constantly returning to this idea, the men in the bar call into question Bloom’s masculinity, insinuating that he cannot perform all husbandly duties. Essentially, he is characterized as a figure who must be dominated. Bloom is further marginalized when he is described as “prowling” in “sable armour.” While sable signifies a dark color, typically black, it is also a small animal that is typically active during twilight. Not only is Bloom feminized, but he is also transformed into a small, dark animal who is “prowling” outside of Barney Kiernan’s pub waiting to attack. Operating during times of low light, Bloom, the animalistic “freemason,” operates in some sort of secret circle that is “prudent” and thus rejects the extreme views of movements similar to the Fenians.⁵⁰ Turning to history and

⁵⁰ The Fenians was a revolutionary group that wanted to establish a republic through violence. The group was a combination of James Stephen’s secret organization, which later became the IRB and John O’Mahony’s Fenian Brotherhood. Stephens established his organization in Dublin on St. Patrick’s Day 1858 and O’Mahony set up his group in New York in April 1859. See Bartlett 300–3.

mythology, the narrator makes a significant reference to Rory, who according to Gifford could be either Rory Oge O'More (d. 1578) who was "'prudent,' [because] he rebelled repeatedly and was repeatedly pardoned" or Rory O'More (fl. 1641–1652), who "was the principal leader of the momentarily successful rebellion of 1641 and was noted for his courage and had the reputation among his Protestant enemies of being 'reasonable and humane'" (327). The allusion to "Michan's land," or Michan's parish where Barney Kiernan's pub, the site of Bloom's encounter with the citizen, is located, is yet another re-writing of Irish mythology (327).⁵¹

However, this re-working of history and mythology is one that undermines the revolutionary aspirations of the citizen and his cronies because, according to the citizen, the only good revolutionary is a martyred revolutionary. In both failing to act and staying alive, the citizen and his sympathizers demonstrate the futility of their cause. Recreating history and rewriting mythology does not unify a nation; instead it only creates scapegoats and alienates individuals like Bloom, who are invested in bettering that very same nation. The sensationalized accounts of Bloom, then, inscribe him as a true threat to the citizen. Bloom's unwillingness to adhere to the citizen's dogma and Bloom's ability to move beyond Irish history and mythology are forms of revolt. However, in this instance he is not fighting the English to remove them from Ireland; instead, Bloom is rebelling against the citizen. This rebellion demonstrates the danger of relying on a mythologized past to serve as the foundation of a modern nation. Because the citizen is unwilling to engage with current conditions, he fails to recognize and account for the actual lived experience of the people. As a result, the ideas that he proposes and ideals

⁵¹ When discussing Michan's land Gifford also notes, "The parish church, which dates from 1676, stands in Church Street, west of the Four Courts in Central Dublin. The church was founded in 1095 by the Danish Saint whose name it bears" (317).

that he supports serve to segment society; people either support the pursuit of an idealized Ireland or they hope to address actual conditions and issues. Instead of unifying Ireland, the citizen's radical ideology is self-defeating because it only divides the nation.

The attitude of the men in Barney Kiernan's towards Bloom appears to be, in part, the result of the fact that no one can place him. More specifically, he seems to be an individual without a definite identity marker. When wondering how Bloom identifies, Ned Lambert asks: "Is he a Jew or a gentile or a holy Roman or a swaddler or what the hell is he? . . . Or who is he?" (*U* 12.1631–32). Clearly, Lambert cannot place Bloom's religion and because for these men faith defines the individual, Bloom becomes unknowable. As such, the men are able to accuse him of being non-violent and one who espouses passive resistance. The men liken this to "the Hungarian system" which, according to Gifford "allud[es] to Arthur Griffith's *The Resurrection of Hungary*, serialized in the *United Irishman* (January–June 1904). The book recounts the history of Hungary's struggle for a measure of independence from Austrian rule and presents that history as an appropriate model for Irish enterprise" (*U* 12.1636; Gifford 367). This plan profoundly upsets the men in the bar; Griffith founded Sinn Féin, a political party that fought for and continues to fight for an independent Ireland, and, because of the Hungarian example, sought peace with England through nonviolent measures.⁵² The citizen and his cronies, however, strive to defeat England violently and feel that Bloom's nonviolent position is one of weakness.

However, considering Ireland's history of revolutionary failure, Bloom's position, as opposed to that of the citizen, is enlightened. Despite knowing that the men in the bar do not agree with him, Bloom refuses to back down from conversation; in fact, he

⁵² For more on this topic see Gifford 17, 170, and 366 as well as Kenner 133.

unabashedly defends his views. When Bloom engages the citizen in debate about the futility of using force, Bloom points to the cycle it creates: “But . . . isn’t discipline the same everywhere. I mean wouldn’t it be the same here if you put force against force?” (*U* 12.1360–61). Bloom understands the general principle that force anywhere, in any situation, results in repeating that which is being fought. The Irish would defeat the English but instead of freeing the people they would install some other dominant power to reign over the country. The use of force creates a cyclical pattern of control that tends to repeat instead of rewrite history. However, the citizen is completely ignorant of this fact and espouses a Fanon-like approach to the way in which the Irish must overthrow the English⁵³:

We’ll put force against force, . . . We have our greater Ireland beyond the sea. They were driven out of house and home in the black ’47. . . . But the Sassenach tried to starve the nation at home while the land was full of crops that the British hyenas bought and sold in Rio de Janeiro. Ay, they drove out the peasants in hordes. Twenty thousand of them died in the coffinships. But those that came to the land of the free remember the land of bondage. And they will come again and with a vengeance, no cravens, the sons of Granuaile, the champions of Kathleen ni Houlihan. (*U* 12.1364–66; 12.1369–75)

The citizen continues to advocate for the use of force and also points to the diaspora. He believes that those in the United States who have been raising money to help Ireland gain her independence will support the cause without consideration of the means.⁵⁴ Although according to Gifford the reference to “twenty thousand” people who died in “coffinships” can be neither confirmed nor denied, the term “coffinship” used in the citizen’s tirade is an accurate description for the conditions that many of the Irish experienced when fleeing

⁵³ See Fanon, specifically 1–62.

⁵⁴ See Gifford 358.

Ireland (359).⁵⁵ In addition, the citizen's invocation of both Granuaile and "the champions of Kathleen ni Houlihan" speaks again, to the old traditions of Ireland. What is problematic with these invocations is, much like the milkwoman, the citizen does not seek to alter or understand the past in any discernable way. Instead, both the milkwoman and the citizen attempt to mobilize these myths as if the myths are wholly applicable to the Irish situation. When combined with the numbers the citizen cites, these mythological references create a revisionist history that is extremely nationalistic. Similar to the situation with the connotations surrounding the milkwoman, the citizen reinforces the concept of Ireland as woman who needs to be saved. While this idea promotes the idea of unwanted dominance, it is rather problematic because it "[leaves] unquestioned a conceptual framework that is patriarchal and that plays a constitutive role in shaping . . . the nation" (Amireh 302). In other words, the citizen's history relies on the idea of Ireland as woman, which does not address the fact that if the country needs to be forever saved, then it will never be able to establish itself as an autonomous nation. Consequently, if events progress the way that he hopes, Ireland will never be able to engage with the modern world on its own terms; instead, as a weak woman she will always require a stronger power to dictate how and why she is to engage with modernity.

While neither Bloom nor by extension Joyce directly addresses a way to directly combat the citizen's viewpoint, Bloom does touch on these issues when he discusses what a nation is and what it means to be a productive member of one. When excitedly talking to John Wyse, Bloom, with his "dundeckety mudcoloured mug" and "old plum eyes rolling" states, "Persecution . . . all the history of the world is full of it. Perpetuating national hatred among nations," suggesting that all persecution can only further divide

⁵⁵ See Gifford 359.

nations (*U* 12.1414; 12.1416–17). He continues by explaining what a nation is: “A nation is the same people living in the same place. . . . Or also living in different places” (*U* 12.1421–22; 12.1428).⁵⁶ Here Bloom establishes the problematic situation that arises when the boundaries of a nation are a result of persecution. When this occurs, the nation becomes a place that is hospitable to a minority while excluding the majority. This division fractures the nation and creates internal borders and boundaries. Instead of unifying a country, ideologies that persecute create a divisive atmosphere. A nation that is constructed along the lines of persecution, the nation becomes a divisive entity that serves to separate rather than unite individuals. Bloom’s construction of nation thinks beyond these borders and actually unites the diaspora in a way that the citizen’s “greater Ireland beyond the sea” cannot. Instead of the citizen’s concept of nation which is founded on the hatred of the English and the desire to cast them out of Ireland Bloom’s nation considers what it means to associate with a land despite race or blood ties.⁵⁷ When asked what his nation is Bloom responds, “Ireland . . . I was born here. Ireland,” indicating that the requirements for membership are very broad and inclusive (*U* 12.1431). Bloom argues that birth, not lineage, politics, or race, defines nationality.

⁵⁶ In “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” Joyce addresses the folly of thinking that any race, especially the Irish race, is pure: “What race, or what language (if we except the few whom a playful will seems to have preserved in ice, like the people of Iceland) can boast of being pure today? And no race has less right to utter such a boast than the race now living in Ireland. Nationality (if it really is not a convenient fiction like so many others to which the scalpels of present-day scientists have given the coup de grâce) must find its reason for being rooted in something that surpasses and transcends and informs changing things like blood and the human word. . . . Do we not see that in Ireland the Danes, the Fírbolgs, the Milesians from Spain, the Norman invaders, and the Anglo-Saxon settlers have united to form a new entity, one might say under the influence of a local deity?” (165–66). Here Joyce advocates an understanding of the nation that understands her own history and realizes that there is no “pure” Irish race, thus calling attention to the folly in the citizen’s xenophobia.

⁵⁷ In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson theorizes an inclusive definition for being a member of a nation and argues that a nation can be formed through a common trait such as language, religion, or nationality thus expanding the idea of community and nation. As such, both Bloom and Anderson’s definitions of nations alter the way in which borders are considered and defined and make the conception of nation far more expansive.

Obviously, the citizen does not agree and his expulsion of “a Red bank oyster” illustrates both his disgust and utter rejection of such a thought (*U* 12.1433). The thought of an integrated and not pure Ireland undermines the mythologies that construct both the citizen and his ideologies. His guiding principles are rendered useless and his quest for a pure Ireland is another failed attempt to construct a feasible myth.

Bloom’s rejection of the citizen’s extreme nationalism does not stop with his redefinition of the nation. He continues to expand what it means to belong to a race when he describes what it means to be persecuted, stating: “And I belong to a race too . . . that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant. . . . Robbed . . . Plundered. Insulted. Persecuted. Taking what belongs to us by right. At this very moment . . . putting up his fist, sold by auction in Morocco like slaves or cattle” (*U* 12.1467–8; 12.1470–2). For Bloom persecution, which is still dangerously divisive, unites individuals by serving as a shared experience. Furthermore, this shared experience is not one that is restricted by national boundaries. Instead, his loose definition of race unites all individuals who have been or currently are being persecuted. This is important because of how inclusive it is; in theory, it includes all people who have been affected by the violence of any type of imperialism. Bloom is vague when declaring what “race” to which he belongs; he can be referring to the Irish situation or he can be calling attention to his persecution as a Jew in Dublin.⁵⁸ The persecution, whether it be along the lines of religion, race, or nationality, serves to unite these people in a way that the citizen and his desire to violently overthrow the English and purify Ireland cannot. In fact, the citizen

⁵⁸ According to Gifford, “Jews were not technically slaves in Morocco in 1904, but the Moslem majority did subject them to ‘compulsory service’; both men and women were compelled to do all servile tasks, even on the Sabbath and holy days, and these services could apparently be bought and sold in the Moslem community. Compulsory service was abolished in 1907” (364).

manages to insert a veiled anti-Semitic comment when he alludes to Zionism and asks Bloom if he is “talking about the new Jerusalem” (*U* 12.1473).⁵⁹ Instead of engaging in a productive, forward-thinking conversation about what it means to be a member of a nation and/or race, the citizen chooses to further illustrate his desire to ostracize Bloom and others like him. Consequently, the nation becomes fractured in a way that will be irreparable unless such poisonous views are dismantled and dismissed, precisely what Bloom does when he responds to the citizen’s anti-Semitic comment: “I’m talking about injustice” (*U* 12.1474). In this brief response, Bloom deftly rebukes the citizen’s racially charged remark by underscoring that the problem is people, like the citizen, who choose to formulate unjust opinions of their peers based on false assumptions and exhausted stereotypes. Those who are persecuted become nothing more than ideas that mark the past without consideration for the present or the future.

Apparently, for people like John Wyse who accept and promote the model of nationalism that the citizen espouses, the only way to fight injustice is to “Stand up to it then with force like men,” clearly connecting violence with masculinity (*U* 12.1475). This, to Bloom, however, is “no use, . . . Force, hatred, history, all that. That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is really life” (*U* 12.1481–3). “Love” is “the opposite of hatred” (*U* 12.1485). In this instance, Bloom mobilizes what Stephen gestures toward when he hides his mementos and re-maps Dublin. More specifically, he is able to reject violence, intolerance, and history while proposing a solution, “Universal love,” that promotes an

⁵⁹ Here Gifford clarifies the citizen’s idea: the new Jerusalem “Combines a reference to the ultimate Christian utopia (described in Revelation 21 and 22) with a reference to the Zionist movement and its dramatization of the Jewish desire for a ‘homeland’ in Jerusalem. In context, the Citizen’s question translates: ‘Are you advocating Zionism?’ and encodes an anti-Semitic slur” (364).

emotional unity (*U* 12.1489). This emotional connection brings the persecuted masses together. With this proposition, Bloom replaces Stephen as the individual who is able to assert his individuality by augmenting the masses and enabling this collective to move away from individuals and institutions that do nothing more than work to destroy humankind. The citizen's remark "A wolf in sheep's clothing . . . That's what he is. Virag from Hungary! Ahasuerus I call him. Cursed by God," then, reworks the story of the Wandering Jew (*U* 12.1666–7). If Bloom is indeed a false prophet, it is only because he refuses to adhere to the citizen's xenophobic ideology. As that which Bloom preaches—"Universal love"—intends to unify the masses, the Wandering Jew—the individual who, according to legend, taunted Jesus on the way to the Crucifixion and, as a result, was cursed to walk the earth until the Second Coming—becomes far more positive.⁶⁰ Instead of taunting the Savior, Bloom is taunting the individual who preaches violence and hatred. Bloom as false prophet is, in fact, wandering Ireland to preach love and acceptance. He has the potential to unite people, and this transforms the figure of the Wandering Jew into an individual who, like Stephen in *Portrait*, is able to assert his individuality by augmenting the masses. However, it is only when Bloom is able to communicate his message that he is able to add to the conversation about the direction that Ireland must take in order to negotiate an entrance into modernity as an autonomous nation.

With this in mind, the citizen's remarks "A new apostle to the gentiles," and "Saint Patrick would want to land again at Ballykinlar and convert us . . . after allowing things like that to contaminate our shores" can be understood in a way that empowers Bloom (*U* 12. 1489; 12.1671–2). In each instance Bloom manages to alter the history of

⁶⁰ See Gifford 368.

both Christianity and Ireland. First, if Bloom truly is “A new apostle to the gentiles,” he is, in fact, returning to the original principles of St. Paul. I Timothy 2:7–8, the verse in which this is discussed, states, “Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (*King James Bible*). St. Paul took it upon himself to preach to everyone, despite national or racial affiliation, which is a mission that Bloom advocates.⁶¹ The citizen’s derisive comment enhances Bloom’s character. By illustrating how Bloom resurrects the original teachings of the apostles and indicates that he has a clear understanding of the past, which permits him to move forward in a manner that is suited for modern Ireland. His desire to unify otherwise disparate people and groups allows him to rethink and redefine national boundaries. As such, the nation is no longer insular; instead, it begins to redefine the nature of community. If St. Patrick were to return it would indicate that the nation has moved beyond the xenophobic isolation that the citizen advocates. Furthermore, if the country has moved beyond this poisonous way of thinking, Bloom’s role as “the new Messiah for Ireland” has been fulfilled and his message has been successfully disseminated.

VI. Joyce’s Imaginary

Stephen’s “experiential maps” and rejection of the conventional understandings of Irish nationality, language, and religion, as well as Bloom’s suggestions of what constitutes a nation and defines race, all gesture towards an alternative understanding of community that foregrounds the necessity for the Irish to define the way in which they engage with modern Ireland for themselves. Furthermore, Joyce’s imaginary emphasizes

⁶¹ See Gifford 364.

the necessity to avoid reducing the nation to a homogeneous monolith. If a singular community stands in for the nation, then only a small group of individuals is represented, and situations, like those found in the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*, arise. Such conflation results in underrepresentation of multiple groups that all, regardless of social or economic status, play vital roles in the imagining and reimagining of the nation. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, if the tensions that are present among communities are not recognized, then the nuanced relationship that these groups of individuals create are not fully considered. Consequently, the resulting understanding of nation is one that does not accurately resemble its constituent parts and works to reinscribe the failed ideologies of the past.

Joyce’s imaginary is one that rejects the unconditional acceptance and recovery of outdated mythologies, constricting religion, and xenophobic nationalism. It promotes developing an experiential understanding of modern Dublin, however it is articulated, and ultimately calls for a new language by which modern Irish citizens can engage with their peers, environment, nation, and the globalizing world on their own terms. This call for a new language works on various registers. First, through exploring these ideas in Dublin, Joyce’s works and the resulting ideological conflicts illustrate Jameson’s claim that Dublin is a combination of the modern metropolis and the village. Secondly, Joyce’s call also recognizes the fact that, while the project of English imperialism has devastated the infrastructure of Dublin, and by extension Ireland, the Irish people must assume the Janus-like position, which both Stephen and Bloom occupy, in order to come to terms with their history and become accountable for the future of *their* nation. Essentially, the people must accept ownership of the nation by recognizing the various groups that

comprise it and develop a way to lead it into the future. This new language is one that accounts for the underdevelopment of the nation while suggesting a productive way in which the Irish can engage with modernity on their own terms.

If, according to Jameson, the masses “had become the very symbol of everything degraded about modern life,” then, through Stephen and Bloom, Joyce suggests that these very same masses possess the potential to develop an understanding of *their* natural world and become a people who have the ability to engage with the modern world on their own terms (Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* 144). Such purpose, then, enables the Irish people to assert the individuality of their own country. If modernism addresses the “separation, under capitalism . . . between the subject and the object,” where, in this case, the subject is representative of the people and the object signifies the nation, then Joyce’s imaginary reconnects the subject to the object (Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* 149). In other words, the people are reconnected to the nation, and this unification asserts that Ireland should be understood as an autonomous nation that contributes to modernity. Joyce’s work asserts Ireland’s independence and demonstrating that the country’s development, while intertwined with that of the rest of the United Kingdom, is not to be ignored and must be understood on its own terms. While Joyce’s project gestures towards a way in which the Irish people can regain control of their country, it is still haunted by both the sense of loss and alienation on which Jameson dwells. The fact, however, that his project suggests multiple ways—all of which are dependent on the formation of new communities—through which the people can combat the destruction beyond which Jameson cannot move, illustrates that while utopian visions often fail, the

importance of maintaining the vision of “the golden city which is to be, the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future” is critically important (*U* 15.1544–45).

Chapter 2. Roddy Doyle's "Dear Dirty (Modern) Dublin": The Working Class's Negotiation of Modernity

I. Doyle's City of Language

Roddy Doyle's Dublin, a vibrant, changing city of the twentieth century, is drastically different from that city as it stood at the turn of the twentieth century. Plagued by unemployment and affected by an ideological conflict between the older and younger generations, Doyle's Dublin focuses on a group of people that are often elided from the annals of Irish history—the working class who live in a fictional area of the north Dublin, Barrytown.⁶² Throughout both *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*, the first two installments of the *The Barrytown Trilogy*, Doyle gives voice to undereducated, unemployed Irish citizens who are forced to renegotiate their standing in and relationship with the city. As Denis Donoghue asserts, "Doyle doesn't deal in landscapes, cityscapes, backgrounds, or settings. His sole context is whatever is enforced by dialogue and a short communal memory" (McArdle qtd. in Cosgrove 231). Instead, Doyle's urban center is driven by conversation and dialect that is unique to northside Dublin and, may turn his work into a simple "record of just how certain people talk" (McArdle qtd. in Cosgrove 231).⁶³ When asked why he chose to depict Dublin in this manner, Doyle insists that he wanted to write the city that he hears on a daily basis and did so by removing both the voice of the author, the figure of the narrator, and by focusing on the

⁶² It is widely accepted that Doyle's Barrytown is a fictionalized representation of northside Dublin, primarily Kilbarrack. It should also be noted that this is where Doyle grew up and taught for 14 years before becoming a full-time writer. In his "Introduction" to *A Dublin Quartet* Fintan O'Toole addresses neighborhoods like Barrytown and argues that Dublin "now exists largely at its own extremes. ... the new suburbs have been voraciously eating up the surrounding countryside. New places have been born, places without history, without the accumulated notion of Irishness that sustained the State for seventy years. Sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll are more important in the new places than the old Irish totems of Land, Nationality and Catholicism" (1).

⁶³ For a sociolinguistic reading of Doyle's works see Persson, "Polishing the Working Class."

characters. Doyle's project aims to re-inscribe these subjects into mainstream discourse and also depict "another Ireland just as profoundly at odds with its own mythology; an Ireland of the suburbs which has really been absent from the pages of Irish fiction for too long" (O'Connor 140).

In using a dialect that is commonly attributed to north Dublin, Doyle demonstrates that "The metropolis constitutes a frame or theatre for activity. The buildings of the city, and its interior setting in particular, form casings for action in which, or on which, human subjects leave 'traces', signs of their passing, markers or clues to their mode of existence" (Gilloch 6). In Doyle's work the north Dublin dialect is the trace that the people leave and by using it he captures the culture, experience, and conditions of the working-class in Dublin. In addition, the dialect locates these individuals in such a manner that "Ireland seems more a *city-state* called 'Dublin' than a nation-state" (McCarthy 10; italics original).⁶⁴ Through focusing on this underrepresented group of individuals that "struggle for self-confidence . . . because none has a secure grip on their place in the new Irish economic and social order," Doyle re-imagines Dublin as a city that enables those who have been voiceless to speak of their lived experiences (McCarthy 10). Furthermore, this representation of the urban rejects the way that the Irish Tourist Board, Bord Failte, depicts Ireland:

The Ireland of the Irish Tourist Board is a glamourised, idealised, romanticised Ireland usually envisaged in pastoral and pre-industrial terms: as such it relies on non-urban imagery and ignores the raw

⁶⁴ In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson posits that shared language allowed individuals who were once separated to imagine themselves as a cohesive unit and write this group into history. While Anderson's argument emphasizes the rise of nationalism and my reading of Doyle does not, Anderson's idea, that a group of "outsiders" can, through language, imagine themselves as a unified community is wholly applicable to my argument (see Anderson 67–82). In addition, in *Orientalism* Edward Said also discusses the way in which language unifies people: "Language became less of a continuity between an outside power and the human speaker than an internal field created and accomplished by language users themselves" (136).

modernity of contemporary Ireland as that is experienced by the majority of the Irish population (who now live either in a city or in the sprawling suburbs that extend to conurbation into the surrounding countryside). In rejecting Bord Failte's Ireland, Doyle is rejecting and Ireland ideologically constructed in terms of traditional sentiment (an Ireland we might characterise as pastoral), and embracing the reality of Irish modernity. (Cosgrove 232)

Even in the late twentieth century and like former president and political activist Éamon de Valera, the Irish Tourist Board depicts the “real” Ireland as a rural country devoid of urbanity which fails to represent the majority of the population.⁶⁵ Therefore, by focusing on and giving a voice to the working-class and their neighborhoods, Doyle's novels write a history of places that have been ignored and in so doing, legitimates the knowledge, values, and desires of the working class.⁶⁶ As a result of using a specific North-Dublin dialect, Doyle recreates Dublin as a city that testifies to the working-class experience. However, in limiting engagement with those outside of the working class, Doyle's novels demonstrate the danger of only reflecting on one specific experience of modern Ireland. Despite giving voice to the working class and working to resist traditional Ireland, Doyle's novels erect borders and boundaries that create a hierarchy that divides Ireland. As a result, Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* and *The Snapper* emphasize the importance of considering multiple points of view when attempting to restructure an expansive city.

⁶⁵ In his “St. Patrick's Day Speech,” Éamon de Valera defines Ireland as “a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sound of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living in the life that God desires that man should live” (466). This speech, which is also known as the “Comely Maidens Dancing at the Crossroads”—a phrase that never appears in the address—speech clearly defines Ireland as a place that is God fearing, family oriented, and rural.

⁶⁶ In “Escape and Escapism: Representing Working-Class Women” Steph Lawler asserts that representations of the working class articulate that working class individuals “do not *know* the right things, they do not *value* the right things, they do not *want* the right things” (117; italics original). Denigrating the knowledge, values, and desires of the working class depicts them as an inferior group of people.

II. “Say it once, say it loud, I’m black an’ I’m proud”: The Commitments and Modern Ireland

At the moment when manager Jimmy Rabbitte, Jr. convinces “his” band, The Commitments, to play soul music he emphatically asserts “The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads. . . . An’ Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. The culchies have fuckin’ everythin’. An’ the northside Dubliners are the niggers o’ Dublin. ——Say it loud, I’m black an’ I’m proud” (C 13). With this statement Jimmy states that his people, working-class residents of north Dublin, and the Irish, in general, are an oppressed people that must come to terms with what it means to participate in Irish modernity. Jimmy is the individual to negotiate an entrance into modernity because, according to Outspan and Derek, two members of what will become The Commitments, he “knew what was new, what was new but wouldn’t be for long and what was going to be new. . . . Jimmy knew his music” (C 7). As a result, Jimmy becomes the *de facto* leader of the band, drives Doyle’s narrative and is the individual who formulates, or attempts to formulate, an effective entrance into modernity that speaks the true nature of the situation that he, his band, and other Irish individuals like him experience. Jimmy’s awareness of what is new and desire to innovate mirrors the project of modernism. More specifically, the desire to break from tradition through making things new is a driving factor in Jimmy’s creation of the band.⁶⁷ In putting the band together, Jimmy refashions each individual by giving them a defined purpose that reacts to the traditional values of their parents’ generation.

Jimmy’s knowledge, however, is not limited to music; in fact, he is also quite cognizant of what drives the market. For example, before presenting the idea of playing

⁶⁷ Here I am referring to Ezra Pound’s declaration, which is often cited as a rallying cry of the modernist project, “make it new.” Pound’s oft-cited declaration speaks to the project Jimmy hopes to launch. That is, Jimmy hopes to take something that has come before—soul music—and attempt to make it his own.

soul music to Outspan and Derek, Jimmy explains what is no longer viable in the music industry: “All tha’ mushy shite abou’ love an’ fields an’ meetin’ mots in supermarkets an’ McDonald’s is gone, ou’ the fuckin’ window. It’s dishonest . . . It’s bourgeois” (C 12). Interestingly, Jimmy links being bourgeois with being dishonest which indicates that the “mushy shite” does not speak to that which the members of the band, their peers, and their community live. Instead, Jimmy proposes two aspects of life the band, his band, will address with the music they choose to play, “Sex an’ politics” (C 12). First, when discussing the sexual aspect of the music, Jimmy emphatically states that the band will sing about “Real sex. Not mushy I’ll hold your hand till the end o’ time stuff. — Ridin’. Fuckin’. D’yeh know wha’ I mean” because “Rock an’ roll is all abou’ ridin’. That’s wha’ rock an’ roll means. Did yis know tha’? (They didn’t.) —Yeah, that’s wha’ the blackies in America used to call it. So the time has come to put the ridin’ back into rock an’ roll. Tongues, gooters, boxes, the works. The market’s huge” (C 12; 13). Jimmy indicates his desire for the band to play music that speaks to what he believes are the primal instincts of men and women. “Real sex” can be read as a manner by which the band can attempt to access the potentiality of the underprivileged masses and, by addressing it in their music, the band can attempt to redefine what rock and roll means to the Irish. If they are successful, The Commitments will present a music that truly speaks to the experience of the working-class. Jimmy’s understanding of what sex should be, however, is problematic because it is hypermasculine. To him sex is an act through which he and other males can assert their dominance. The sex-driven message that the band hopes to spread becomes one that alienates the female members of their audience. Instead of being inclusive and speaking to and for a specific experience of modern Dublin

and Ireland, the music recapitulates the divisive ideology that Jimmy and the band want to move beyond.

The second aspect of life that the band will address, “Real politics,” once again allows Jimmy to expound on his vision for the band and the way in which this vision actually speaks to the experiences that he, the band, the community, and other individuals like him share:

—Wha’ abou’ this politics?
 —Yeah, politics. —Not songs abou’ Fianna fuckin’ Fail or annythin’ like tha’. Real politics. (They weren’t with him.) —Where are yis from? (He answered the question himself.) —Dublin. (He asked another one.)
 —Wha’ part o’ Dublin? Barrytown. Wha’ class are yis? Workin’ class. Are yis proud of it? Yeah, yis are. (Then a practical question.) —Who buys the most records? The workin’ class. Are yis with me? (Not really.)
 —Your music should be abou’ where you’re from an’ the sort o’ people yeh come from. —Say it once, say it loud, I’m black an’ I’m proud. (C 13)

In his rejection of Fianna Fáil, Jimmy clearly foregrounds the fact that the band will not engage with the politics of the country.⁶⁸ In rejecting this party, and by extension the entire Irish political system, Jimmy effectively states that this system does not, in fact, represent the people who put them in power. Instead, Jimmy insists that the music should actually give voice to the place where the members of the band live and the people they represent. In his rejection of a political party that is locally organized and his insistence

⁶⁸ Fianna Fáil, which can be translated as “Soldiers of Destiny” or “Warriors of Fál”—where “Fál” is understood as a mythic name of Ireland—is the Republican Party that is, contrary to the situation in the United States, populist. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Celtic Mythology “Fál” is the “Name cited in the Dindshenchas for a ceremonial stone found at Tara from pre-Christian through medieval times. Although it is known in Irish as Lia Fáil, literally ‘Stone of Fál’ or, idiomatically, ‘Stone of Destiny’, that term may also denote several other stones. Rival traditions claim that (a) the Tuatha Dé Danann or (b) the Milesians brought Fál to Ireland. Narrow and as tall as a full-grown man, Fál was conventionally described as a ‘stone penis’. According to widely repeated tradition, Fál would roar or cry out under the feet of a legitimate king, or a man who aspired to kingship, who stepped upon it. A silent stone implied censure of the king who approached it. For this reason Fál became a learned and poetic synonym for Ireland and survives in several compounds, e.g. Inis Fáil [island of Fál]. The implicit sexual symbolism of Fál as a penis and Ireland as a woman has been the subject of widespread allusion, much of it covert. In 19th-century Irish oral tradition the stone was known as Bod Fhearghais [penis of Fergus], although which Fergus was not made clear” (MacKillop).

on actually giving voice to the working class, Jimmy acknowledges the fact that the Ireland that is presented publicly does not and cannot speak to or for his people. Instead, he takes it upon himself to attempt to find a way in which working-class Irish citizens can engage with and negotiate their place in modern Dublin. Yet, despite his desire to create an inclusive environment, Jimmy, once again, manages to undercut the band's purpose. The interpolated narrator, who emphasizes the other members' confusion, demonstrates that Jimmy's decisions are his and only his. Furthermore, the inclusion of this narratorial voice directly contradicts Doyle's claim that he aims to keep the narrator out of his novels in order to foreground the characters themselves. As a result of this narratorial intrusion, we see that Jimmy assumes a dictatorial role that removes the democracy from soul and the band. Like politics and the government, Jimmy has become the controlling force that he and his band hope to resist.

Jimmy's choice, to use soul music as a vehicle through which the band can spread their message, is confounding to both readers and the band because it is not, by any stretch of the imagination, an Irish form of expression. It is, in fact, a creation of the African-American culture of the 1950s–70s. However, by establishing a chain of equivalency, soul music can be understood as a positive influence on the band as well as a tool that will allow this group of individuals to engage with modern Dublin on their own terms. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe address the idea of the relationship between opposites. More specifically, in their discussion of "equivalence" they argue that objects, ideas, people, etc... that, at first, appear to be polar opposites, can and do share

foundational ideals. In order to explain their idea, Laclau and Mouffe discuss the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized:

In a colonized country, the presence of the dominant power is every day made evident through a variety of contents: differences of dress, of language, of skin colour, of customs. Since each of these contents is equivalent to the others in terms of their common differentiation from the colonized people, it loses its condition of differential *moment*, and acquires the floating character of *element*. Thus, equivalence creates a second meaning which, though parasitic on the first, subverts it: the differences cancel one other out insofar as they are used to express something identical underlying them all. (127; italics original)

In other words, aspects of the cultures of both the colonizer and colonized are different and this difference is noticed and internalized with each encounter. However, the difference that serves to separate these groups emphasizes that based on the commonality of being different, there is an identical element shared by these groups; the identical creates an equivalence between the elements and, more importantly, the separate groups.

Equivalences or chains of equivalence must be understood in terms of the object explored. In addition, how the object subverts or antagonizes itself determines the equivalent relationship. Equivalency is highly dependent on which antagonism, or the negative relations that become apparent when all positivity is annulled, is present.⁶⁹ As such, each chain of equivalence “may affect and penetrate, in a contradictory way, the identity of the subject itself” (131). These chains of equivalence and the antagonisms present in them emphasize the fact that limits of social relationships and identity are that

⁶⁹ According to Laclau and Mouffe, “the conditions of total equivalence . . . are [never] fully achieved” because all objective determinations can not be positively articulated (128). As a result, “this can only imply that through the equivalence something is expressed which the object is *not*” meaning that identity “cannot be represented in a direct manner—i.e., positively—that it can only be represented indirectly, through an equivalence between its differential moments” (128; italics original). The inability to define anything positively demonstrates “*that certain discursive forms, through equivalence, annul all positivity of the object and give a real existence to negativity as such*” and as a result, “the coexistence of its terms must be conceived not as an objective relation of frontiers, but as reciprocal subversion of their contents” (128–9; italics original). For more on antagonisms see pages 122–7.

which work to “[destroy] its [the social] ambition to constitute a full presence. Society never manages fully to be society because everything in it is penetrated by its limits, which prevent it from constituting itself as an objective reality” (127).

The impossibility of ever approaching a “fully sutured” society is that which describes Doyle’s texts (Laclau and Mouffe 129). In writing the urban working-class and emphasizing the manner by which this large group of individuals has been obscured from an understanding of Irishness, Doyle emphasizes the problematic relationship between Bord Failte’s Ireland and the ‘real’ Ireland. Bord Failte’s Ireland depicts a land inhabited by a homogeneous group of individuals who seem to be content with the lives that they lead. Doyle’s Ireland, however, presents a troubled country that is comprised of various groups that do not engage with one another; their society, unlike that which the tourist board depicts, is deeply fractured which forces groups of individuals, like *The Commitments*, to seek cultural opportunities for social and economic mobility elsewhere. That elsewhere is Black America of the 1950s and 70s as depicted by the musical renderings of soul.

The Dublin in the late 1970’s and 1980’s was no city of dreams. While its citizens did not face the same sorts of discrimination that the African American community faced and continues to face, individuals, like the members of *The Commitments*, faced high rates of unemployment due to a weak economy. When placing the advertisement in the *Hot Press*, Jimmy Jr. mandates “Rednecks and Southsiders need not apply,” which calls attention to the divide that is present in Dublin itself (C 15). It is this divide, established by the River Liffey, that teases out the “identical something,” which creates an equivalency between African-Americans of the 1950s through the 1970s

and *The Commitments*. The “southsiders,” those who come from the wealthy part of Dublin, are typically politically powerful, wealthy, artists, writers, diplomats, and journalists. Furthermore, highly reputable private schools, such as St. Columba’s College, St. Michael’s College, and St. Mary’s College, among others; both Trinity College and Univeristy College Dublin; and highly profitable companies reside on the southside of Dublin. In fact, according to Raymond Hickey, a new accent has developed that is known as “Dublin 4,” for the postal code of part of the southside, or “DORTspeak,” after the way in which these individuals pronounce DART (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) (74–5).

Conversely, the northside of Dublin is the historically lower-class district. According to Terence Brown, during the 1970s and 80s Ireland’s debt rose dramatically which forced many individuals into unemployment and poverty; furthermore, unemployment rose by 77% in 1979 to 1982 during the time that Doyle wrote *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*—in some areas it was close to 50%, a situation which resulted in an increased crime rate (326–8). While the southside boasts good private schools, universities, and businesses, the northside’s schools face drug problems, truancy, and discipline issues much like those of inner city schools in much of the Western world; it is home to Mountjoy Prison, and the loss of work in the Docklands virtually eliminated a major source of employment for many individuals. According to Niamh Moore, “From 1975–1984, employment at Dublin Port was reduced from 7,403 to 5,200. Traditionally low levels of educational attainment intensified the vulnerability of communities to the decline in manual employment” (140). As is quite evident, Irish men and women living on the northside of Dublin experienced a very different Ireland; like much of the African-American population of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, they were poor, lower-class, uneducated

individuals without much of a chance to escape the environment in which they lived.⁷⁰ Furthermore, like African-Americans, they were without a “voice”; their relationship with modern Ireland was defined by outsiders who had no actual experience of living and working in the conditions that they did. As a result, these individuals needed to explore ways in which they could define what it meant to be from the northside and communicate these findings to those who had previously defined it for them. This becomes the method through which Jimmy Jr. and The Commitments negotiate their relationship with modern Dublin and their entrance into modernity. Establishing a method through which the underprivileged can engage with modern Dublin and modernity establishes the chain of equivalence between these two disparate groups.

However, critics tend to dismiss Doyle’s use of soul music because they often overlook the possibilities that it provides for this group of twenty somethings in working class Dublin. For example, Lisa McGonigle argues, “The concept of ‘Dublin soul’ is systematically derided in such a fashion throughout the novel and these exchanges indicate what limited credence should be given to it,” a statement that focuses solely on the negative aspect of the music in the text (169). She continues to downplay the role that soul and the resulting racial comparisons plays when she discusses the band’s use of racially charged terms: “This conflation of ‘black’ and ‘soul’ indicates their suspicion that soul remains the demesne of ‘the niggers in America, the real soul fellas.’ They are—quite literally—a pale imitation in their attempt to appropriate it” (169). McGonigle ignores the fact that, while their initial project does fail, the band is able to negotiate a relationship with modern Dublin that speaks to and for their situations. In addition, in an

⁷⁰ For further discussion of connections between Ireland and Africa see *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas*.

otherwise brilliant article, Mary McGlynn asserts that “Soul cannot answer the question that Dublin youth put to it, cannot live up to the expectations that they place on it,” which fails to recognize the momentary freedom the music affords the band (“Why” 245). Both critics fail to recognize the latent potentiality behind soul music. This form of music enables The Commitments to address their situation as “forgotten” subjects in a manner that both gives them a voice and enables them to re-define Dublin as an urban space. In this way they hope to come to terms with their experiences of modern Dublin and Ireland from a position that speaks to and of their own experiences.⁷¹

While I cannot argue that soul music provides the means for The Commitments to escape their position in society—at the end of the novel Jimmy does introduce Mickah, Derek, and Outspan to The Byrds and suggests that the new band, “The Brassers,” will be a “Dublin country group”—I assert that in understanding the use of soul through Laclau and Mouffe’s idea of equivalency, the music and the group’s project are legitimated (*C* 138). More specifically, as Laclau and Mouffe suggest, the differences between the two groups—the Irish and African-Americans—eliminate one another to illustrate that they do share an identical element—the way that each of their societies are divided—that enables soul music the ability to provide an outlet for The Commitments. For the band,

⁷¹ In his discussion of Doyle’s turn to American popular culture, M. Keith Booker argues that the portraits of Dublin that are created in both the novel and film versions of *The Commitments* “can thus be read as a sort of mini-allegory of the cultural situation of modern Dublin as a whole, still trapped very much in the gravitational pull of the Catholic church, but with the former cultural, economic, and political dominance of the British Empire now gradually being replaced by its newer, bitter, and shinier successor, the global empire of multinational capitalism—especially as represented by the media power of American popular culture” (27–8). While outside the immediate scope of this project, Booker’s discussion of the neo-colonial presence of American popular culture further emphasizes the fact that despite the ever present desire to depict Ireland as an insular country, the country looks outward to define Irishness. While Booker centers his discussion of Doyle’s work on the neo-colonial presence of American popular culture, other critics also mention it in passing; see Cosgrove 235, McCarthy 33–35, McGlynn 236–37, and White 42–61.

soul music becomes the vehicle through which they are able to negotiate an entrance into late twentieth century modernity.

Doyle's use of soul music to address the conditions of 1980s working-class Irish men and women is not the first time a comparison was made between the two groups; the connection between the Irish and African-Americans can also be found starting in the late 18th century. In fact, "The *Northern Star*, the newspaper of the United Irishmen in Belfast, frequently referred to the condition of Ireland as 'slavery' and published poems such as 'The Negroe's Complaint'" (Mishkin 9).⁷² Daniel O'Connell, "The Liberator," extended the African American-Irish connection when he "suggested similarities between England and Ireland and the abolitionists' fight against the slave trade" and went so far to exclaim, "I want no American aid if it comes across the Atlantic stained in Negro blood" (Mishkin 10; O'Ferrall qtd. in Mishkin 10). In 1845, Frederick Douglass, who toured Ireland extensively, "drew strong parallels between" the Irish and African-Americans and published a letter in *The Liberator* wherein he compared the Irish condition to his former condition: "I see much here to remind me of my former condition, and I confess I should be ashamed to lift my voice against American slavery, but I know the cause of humanity is one the world over. He who really and truly feels for the American slave cannot steel his heart to the woes of others" (Bornstein qtd. in Mishkin 11).⁷³ Finally, Martin Delany felt that, like black Americans, the Irish were a "nation within a nation," indicating the similarity in the divides found in both the United States

⁷² The text of this poem, which appeared in 1792, is as follows:

Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted pow'rs,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours! (Thuente qtd. in Mishkin 9)

⁷³ For a first-hand account of Douglass's tour of Ireland see "Frederick Douglass in Ireland."

and Ireland (qtd. in Mishkin 11). These examples, taken from sources that predate The Civil War, clearly illustrate that the powerful connection between African-Americans, both slaves and free men and women, can be and was made.

The connections between the two groups were not dropped after the Civil War. In fact, artists of The Harlem Renaissance looked to the Irish Renaissance for inspiration and tactics. For example, Alain Locke's introduction to *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* where he states "In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for grouping expression and self-determination which are playing a creative part in the world to-day. Without pretense to their political significance, Harlem has the same rôle to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland" (7). For Locke, one of "the most frequent commentators of the Harlem and Irish Renaissances," the "urban bases, their use of folk culture, and the responses of their audiences" created a strong connection between the two movements; they were, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, the "identical something" that formed the foundation for a chain of equivalency (Mishkin 17). Additionally, in the preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, James Weldon Johnson writes that African-American poets need to mimic Irish poets and move to less restrictive forms:

What the colored poet in the United States needs to do is something like what Synge did for the Irish; he needs to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without, such as the mere mutilation of English spelling and pronunciation. He needs a form that is freer and larger than dialect, but which will still hold the racial flavor; a form expressing the imagery, the idioms, the peculiar turns of thought, and the distinctive humor and pathos, too, of the Negro, but which will also be capable of voicing the deepest and highest emotions and aspirations, and allow of the widest range of subjects and the widest scope of treatment. (xl–xli)

Johnson's desire for African-American poets to utilize elements that are found within the culture mimics Synge's trip to the Aran Islands where Synge found the "true" representation of what it meant to be Irish. The use of "local" elements enables a culture to be represented universally by cultural elements that are determined by that group; as a result, this representation is one that voices the true lived experience of the people within that culture.

Thinkers of the Harlem Renaissance also found a strong political connection to the Irish. More specifically, during the Irish War of Independence, Claude McKay, Marcus Garvey, and W. E. B. Du Bois compared the political situation in Ireland to the Black experience. For example, at the 1920 United Negro Improvement Association, Garvey "began his keynote address by reading a telegram he was sending [...] to Eamon de Valera" about the ongoing war; Garvey stated: "We believe Ireland should be free even as Africa shall be free for the Negroes of the world. Keep up the fight for a free Ireland" (Mishkin 19; Hill qtd. in Mishkin 19). Similarly, in 1920 W. E. B. Du Bois writes "England has sinned against dependent and backward people to an unbelievable extent" and openly supported independence for both Ireland and England's African colonies with the hope that the "upstriving and embittered darker races of the whole earth" would seek to end England's tyrannical rule (Weinberg qtd. in Mishkin 19). For writers and thinkers of The Harlem Renaissance the manner by which the Irish effectively established that they were, indeed, independent from England served as model for the creation of a method by which African-Americans could establish their own unique form

of cultural representation. The results allowed African-Americans to assert their cultural autonomy and negotiate their relationship with the outside world on their own terms.⁷⁴

Although the end of the Harlem Renaissance is found somewhere in the early to mid-1930s, the African-American community continued to seek methods to establish its relationship with the rest of America on the community's own terms. Born out of the Black Power Movement, soul music, a decidedly urban art form, was yet another method by which the Black community sought to define itself in the manner that it chose. When discussing the aims of the Black Power Movement, Stokely Carmichael explains that the goal was to gain "full participation in the decision-making process affecting the lives of black people" (qtd. in Maultsby 52). Soul musicians, who communicated the ideology of the Black Power Movement and promoted "the black pride or self-awareness concept," effectively "captured the new spirit, attitudes, values and convictions of blacks that later altered the social, political and economic structures of American society" (Maultsby 51). As a result of its associations with the Black Power Movement, "the term 'soul' can best be defined as black nationalism" (Maultsby 54).

That soul becomes synonymous with black nationalism is certainly important. When understood in this manner soul, "As a concept advocated the re-ordering of attitudes and values. As a symbol, it encouraged 'the re-evaluation and re-definition of black identity, experience, behavior and culture' by black for blacks" (Maultsby 54).⁷⁵ The musicians were able to directly address the social and economic issues that plagued black communities and preached that "life is not to be accepted as it comes, hardship is

⁷⁴ For further discussions on this topic see Bornstein both "Afro-Celtic Connections" and *Material Modernism* 140–66, Gallagher, McGlynn, "Why" 236–9, Mishkin "How Black Sees Green and Red," and Taylor 291–2.

⁷⁵ Here Maultsby is drawing on Michael Haralambos's work *Right on From Blues to Soul in Black America*; see Haralambos 130.

not merely to be born but life is to be made worth living. Lessons are learned from unfortunate experiences which may either patch up existing failure, or give a better chance of success at a future date” (Haralambos qtd. in Maultsby 55). Soul music, which was created by blacks for blacks, and the fact that the white media accepted the term ‘soul’ (which was also coined by blacks) illustrates that the music, its performers, and the message were, in fact, methods by which the black community was able to negotiate an entrance into modern America on their own terms.⁷⁶

For African-Americans soul music served to empower the people through unification and establish a brotherhood that would, as Johannes Reidel asserts, “provide a positive self-image for the large majority of black persons who find themselves still tightly locked behind the walls of the urban ghetto. Soul helps to free the black urban ghetto dweller from guilt about his apparent failure to find escape from economic and social oppression” (52). This form of music, or at least the core message, is precisely what Jimmy Jr., The Commitments, the people of Barrytown, and, by extension, the Irish people need (52). Reidel’s argument establishes the importance of soul in enabling the dwellers of the “urban ghetto” to escape the dreary circumstances—a combination of the results of both economic and racial oppression—in which they found themselves; through soul, the African-American community was able to unify and speak out against these circumstances. The people of Barrytown, however, do not share this sense of unity; instead, they attempt to adhere to normative societal standards that continue to oppress them. For Jimmy and his peers, the formation of The Commitments is one way through which they are able to establish an “alternative community,” become independent, and

⁷⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the way in which the term ‘soul’ gained acceptance on a national scale see Maultsby 52–54. For more on the evolution of soul see Doggett, Haralambos, Reidel, and Werner.

identify common ground in their experiences of modern Dublin (Cliff 33). In order to establish this community, one of misfits and outcasts, Jimmy draws a direct comparison between the Irish and African-Americans by focusing on racial oppression. While both Mary McGlynn and Dermot McCarthy have observed that Jimmy's interest in the term "nigger" is class based, one that establishes that these individuals and those whom they represent are independent from the "popular" notion of Irishness, I argue that Jimmy's appropriation of the term goes further and establishes an "alternative community" that moves beyond class.⁷⁷ The Commitments resist the problematic formulation whereby the nation *is* "the central model of social and political relations" in which "community and the nation" are conflated and as a result, "fail to recognize different kinds of community and acknowledge only its total presence or total absence, they obscure the paradoxical nature of community (Cliff 33). The model of community that Doyle's text puts forth, instead, recognizes this paradoxical nature and emphasizes the fact that community is "a web of overlapping and often incompatible relationships" and "is necessarily composed of rather than simply threatened by disagreement and difference" (Cliff 33).

Despite suggesting ways to imagine alternative communities and because of Jimmy's desire to project a hypermasculine sense of self, *The Commitments* fails to create such a community because of its problematic negotiation of gender identity. As a result, the band fails to recognize the importance of gender as it constructs its message and ostracizes a portion of its audience. When discussing the inclusion of female back-up vocalists—the trio that becomes The Commitmentettes—Jimmy and his peers define women as nothing more than objects for sexual consumption:

—I've some backin' vocalists lined up.

⁷⁷ See McGlynn 234–5 and McCarthy 30–1.

—Who?
 —Young ones. —Rapid!
 —Are they foxy ladies, Jimmy? Joey the Lips asked.
 They all stared at him
 —Fuckin’ sure they are, said Jimmy.

...
 —Imelda.
 —Wha’ one’s she? Hang on ————Oh Jaysis, her! Fuckin’ great.
 —You know her, said Derek. —Yeh fuckin’ do. Small with lovely
 tits. Yeh know. Black hair, long. Over her eyes.
 —Her!
 —She’s fuckin’ gorgeous, said Derek. —Wha’ age is she?
 —Eighteen.
 ...
 —Is she anny good at the oul’ singin’?
 —I haven’t a clue, said Jimmy. (C 29–30)

For Jimmy and the band the women’s abilities are of no concern. Instead, all that matters is the fact that they are “foxy,” have “great tits,” and are “gorgeous.” In addition to being defined by their sexuality, the name of the back-up vocalists, The Commitmentettes, intimate that they are a diminutive part of the band. Instead of having their own identity within The Commitments—like Quiet Elegance, The Temptations’s back-up band, for example—their name infantilizes them and places them in a position of subservience.

Jimmy’s gender violence segments the band while also contradicting his desired ends for The Commitments. Instead of creating an inclusive culture, Jimmy’s message and band espouse what Ronan McDonald calls “the atavistic pressures of ‘the tribe’” (236). As McDonald states, “A society of competing nationalisms will reflexively dwell on the construction of ‘identity’ and self-conscious identity is rarely far from a performance of one sort or another” (231). This performance, is based in a “gender identity” where “violent masculinity” is “so intimate with notions of tribal identity as to be inseparable” (McDonald 246). For McDonald, performing the tribe becomes an atavistic extension of the fantasy of manhood. Though Jimmy’s band does not directly

engage with nationalism, it becomes a tribe in which he and his male peers must perform masculinity in a way that negates the masculinity of traditional Ireland. His concern with the markers of this traditional masculinity lead to the creation and performance of a hypermasculinity that alienates a major part of The Commitments and a portion of the band's audience. Once again, Jimmy's desire to be different and do something new results in a re-articulation of the ideologies he finds oppressive.

In addition to acknowledging the division of Dublin, Jimmy's advertisement in the *Hot Press* where he declares "Rednecks and southsiders need not apply" indicates that there are various groups that make up the general population of the city, while also emphasizing exactly which group—the working-class—requires consideration (C 15). According to Gerry Smith, Jimmy's statement establishes an "embargo on 'rednecks and southsiders' has a comic resonance within the social culture of late twentieth-century Dublin, but it's also indicative of the way in which local music-makers tend to cluster around particular geographical and socio-cultural practices," emphasizing the functional aspects of social formation within music (39 n.6). Ideally, The Commitments will be a vehicle through which the working-class can articulate their position in modern Dublin and Ireland.

Thus identified as members of Dublin's working class, The Commitments define who they are for themselves. In addition, the formation of a band "provides formative experiences—namely, self-realization through creative endeavor—by and large unavailable elsewhere in society" a fact that further illustrates the power behind the community that is The Commitments (Smyth 36). More specifically, when discussing

the reason for forming a band with Derek and Outspan, Jimmy's one-sided exchange elaborates on the power of the band:

- Yis want to be different, isn't tha' it? Yis want to do somethin' with yourselves, isn't tha' it?
 —Sort of, said Outspan.
 —Yis don't want to end up like (he nodded his head back) —these tossers here [the pub, presumably Hikers]. Amn't I righ'?"
 —Yis want to get up there an' shout I'm Outspan fuckin' Foster. He looked at Derek.
 —An' I'm Derek fuckin' Scully, an' I'm not a tosser. Isn't tha' righ'?" That's why yis're doin' it. Amn't I righ'?"
 —I s'pose yeh are, said Outspan.
 —Fuckin' sure I am. (C 11)

The Commitments will allow its members to be different, to move beyond the dated, depressing way of life that the “tossers” experience. The band will allow its members to articulate a point of view that is decidedly different from that of the past—one that positions them and allows them to contribute to the present, and must be accomplished through a cultural form of the American masses. Their deviation from this mythical past enables Doyle to, as Mary McGlynn asserts, move beyond Catholic/Protestant formulations and focus on the issue of class (“Why” 241). In fact, the only instance in which a priest is overtly mentioned is when James wonders how Jimmy was able to book the hall for the band's first gig. Jimmy replies that he had to speak to “the singin' priest” of “the folk mass” which according to Outspan is “fuckin' desprate” (C 70). In addition to the mocking of Father Donnelly's mass, Outspan wonders whether or not Donnelly tried to sodomize Jimmy: “Did he brown yeh, Jimmy? Outspan asked. —No. He just ran his fingers through me curly fellas” (C 70). This good natured derision calls to attention the fact that for the band and others of their generation the Catholic Church and those in its employ are no longer sacred. Much like the party politics that Jimmy derides

earlier in the novel, he will either completely ignore the Church or discuss it in an unflattering way. In his discussion of religion and politics in *The Commitments*, Brian Donnelly adds “no one utters a single word of Irish, the country’s ‘first official language’, and the political turmoil in the six counties of Ulster that had dominated Irish consciousness for a generation is relegated to a humorous footnote in the formation of the [sic] Commitments” (20). Instead, Donnelly states, the novel “portray[s] many of the significant social and cultural mores and conventions of late twentieth-century Ireland, a society in which most of the traditional authorities and historic models have begun to cede to the influences of mass culture and life” (20).⁷⁸ The community that *The Commitments* forms and the novel promotes enables the members of the band, their audience, and their neighborhood to project a new Ireland where “The institutions and discourses that traditionally dominated sexual and political behaviour, Catholicism, and the Catholic Church, and nationalism and the historical parties, are irrelevant to the characters and generation Doyle represents in the novel” (McCarthy 30).

By rejecting the Church, party politics, and the older generation the members of *The Commitments* are able to establish and assert their individuality within this new Ireland. More specifically, when on stage the members of the band become different, they are “not ordin’y up there. He’s [Joey “The Lips” Fagan] special” and since “soul is dignity” each member of the band “becomes a personality” that projects an image of difference (C 41; 42). James becomes “James The Soul Surgeon Clifford,” Derek

⁷⁸ The specific quote to which Donnelly here refers is found when Joey discusses the reasons why he decided to return to Ireland: “The Lord told me to come home. Ed Wichell, a Baptist reverend on Lenox Avenue in Harlem, told me. But the Lord told him to tell me. He said he was watching something on TV about the feuding Brothers in Northern Ireland and the Lord told the Reverend Ed that the Irish Brothers had no soul, that they needed some soul. And pretty fucking quick! Ed told me to go back to Ireland and blow some soul into the Irish Brothers.. The Brothers wouldn’t be shooting the asses off each other if they had soul. So said Ed” (C 27).

transforms into “Derek The Meatman Scully,” Deco is now known as “Declan Blanketman Cuffe,” Billy becomes “Billy The Animal Mooney,” Dean converts to “Dean Good Times Fay,” Outspan becomes “L. Terence Foster,” Jimmy is “James Anthony Rabbitte,” and Bernie, Ismelda, and Natalie become “Sonya, Sofia, an’ Tanya, The Commitmentettes” (C 40–4). In addition to adopting stage names which signify alternate personalities, the band will also wear “Monkey suits” while on stage (C 39). Jimmy’s initial explanation, “Yis have to look good, . . . —Neat. —Dignified,” is met with much disdain (C 39); Outspan exclaims “What’s fuckin’ dignified abou’ dressin’ up like a jaysis penguin?,” a reaction which is supported by other members of the band (C 39). Joey, however, explains Jimmy’s point further by explaining the importance of dignity:

—Brothers, Sisters, said Joey the Lips. —We know that soul is sex.
 And soul is revolution, yes? So now soul is —Dignity.
 —I don’t understand tha’, said Dean.
 —Soul is lifting yourself up, soul is dusting yourself off, soul is —
 —What’s he fuckin’ on abou’?
 —Just this, Brother. —Soul is dignity. —Dignity, soul. Dignity
 is respect. —Self respect. —Dignity is pride. Dignity, confidence.
 Dignity, assertion. (Joey The Lips’ upstretched index finger moved in
 time to his argument. They were glued to it.) —Dignity, integrity.
 Dignity, elegance. —Dignity, style.
 The finger stopped.
 —Brothers and Sisters. —Dignity, dress. —Dress suits. (40)

When read alongside each other these two scenes point to the fact that the band enables its members to become something more than what they were before and escape, even if it is for a brief moment, the conditions in which they find themselves. Furthermore, wearing the suits establishes the band as a community that is able to “form and reform,” while keeping the structuring message in mind, according to the needs of themselves and their audience (Smyth 32). However, as Mary McGlynn argues, these scenes call attention to, what she sees as, Jimmy’s shortcomings as a band manager:

While Jimmy espouses and appears to believe in collectivism and an egalitarian social organization, he only knows how to organize his group in a conventional capitalist structure. Moreover, the suits themselves are an emblem of a social step up to the band—wearing them improves the Commitments’ at the same time as it kowtows to the stereotypes responsible for their second-class citizenship. (“Why” 239)

While McGlynn’s assertion is accurate in that the suits do represent the upper classes, she overlooks the fact that in donning the suits the band forms a community, which, as Dermot McCarthy emphasizes, is familial, and is able to speak to their people on their own terms (24). So, “The Commitments’ struggle is variable according to the individual, but one can see common value and cause. Each reaches for recognition, for opportunity, ultimately for a sense of the possibility of transformations” and it is this possibility of transformation that serves to unite the members of the band behind a common cause (Tew 189). The band as family forms a group that simultaneously provides direction for its members that they can not receive from any other place and, despite failing, serves as the framework for a collective to attempt to negotiate a productive relationship with modern Dublin and Ireland.

This group does not overlook those relationships that are counterproductive to their goals; instead, it allows the band to confront specific counterproductive relationships and being a productive dialogue that engages with certain disagreements and differences that would otherwise be ignored. Furthermore, the community that the band creates mimics that which the band hears when Jimmy plays the band James Brown’s “Sex Machine”:

Jimmy let the needle down and sat on the back of his legs between the speakers.

—I’m ready to get up and do my thang, said James Brown.

A chorus of men from the same part of the world as James went:

—YEAH.

—I want to, James continued, —to get into it, you know. (—YEAH, said the lads in the studio with him.) —Like a, like a sex machine, man (—YEAH YEAH, GO AHEAD.) —movin', doin' it, you know. (—YEAH.) —Can I count it all? (—YEAH YEAH YEAH, went the lads.) —One Two Three Four. (*C 20; italics mine*)

The “chorus of men from the same part of the world as James” and the call and response nature of the song illustrates the power of the collective. It marks James Brown as a man with a specific cause which is supported by many others. In the case of Brown, the cause—“freeing the black urban ghetto dweller from guilt about his apparent failure to find escape from economic and social oppression”—is strengthened by the chorus and begins a conversation amongst people of similar circumstances that is led and defined by one of their own (Reidel 52). James Brown becomes a member of the multitude whose importance is not marked by capitalistic success; instead, Brown’s importance is derived from the fact that he is the voice of the crowd. The significance of the individual is located in the impact that that individual has on and for the multitude.

The Commitments strive to recreate the chorus and develop an audience in Barrytown with which they share common interests. The band will become the voice of their people; their performances will accurately speak to the problems of Barrytown and the working-class while also providing an escape from these very same conditions. As a result, they will “bring the music to the people . . . —We go to them. We go to their community centre. That’s soul” (*C 69*). In bringing the music to the people, the band strives to serve as the group that enlightens the working-class by presenting both a viable escape from their oppression as well as a way to “speak back” to the institutions that are detrimental to the development and progress of the working-class. However, the problematic articulation of the chorus as a “chorus of men” further demonstrates the

failure of the band to give voice to the experience of the entire working class. Because they hope to emulate a song that is hypermasculine and that allows only men to speak, The Commitments's music and message silences females. As a result, the message of inclusivity and dignity only speaks to the men in the band and audience; the women remain voiceless and their experience of modern Dublin and Ireland will continue to be overlooked.

The Commitment's first gig at "Barrytown Square Garden," the local community center, is the site where the band transforms American Soul music into Soul that speaks to their Irish experience (C 69). Instead of simply covering James Brown's "Night Train," they alter it in such a fashion that it composes a form of music to which their audience can relate and creates an experiential representation of Dublin that traces what it means to be a member of the disadvantaged working-class. The Commitments's version of "Night Train" moves through the United States and Dublin in order to discuss shared experiences. The song begins with the same American cities as Brown's version but quickly diverges into American cities and states that have a strong Irish connection:

—MIAMI FLORIDA —
 ATLANTA GEORGIA —
 RALEIGH NORTH CAROLINA —
 WASHIN'TON D.C. —
 He went off the tracks for a second.
 —SOMEWHERE THE FUCK IN WEST VIRGINIA —
 BALTIMORE MARYLAND —
 PHILADELP — EYE — AY —
 NEW YORK CITY —
 HEADIN' HOME —
 BOSTON MASSACHU — MASSATUST — YEH KNOW
 YOURSELF —
 AN' DON'T FORGET NEW ORLEANS THE HOME O' THE
 BLUES —
 OH YEAH —
 THE NIGH' TRAIN —

THE NIGH' TRAIN ——
 COME ON NOW —
 NIGH' TRAIN ——
 CARRIES ME HOME —— (C 91-2)

Immediately after Deco sings “CARRIES ME HOME” he begins to recount places that are familiar to all, not familiar names from America that few have visited:

Dublin Soul was about to be born. . . .
 Deco growled: — STARTIN' OFF IN CONOLLY ——
 . . .
 Deco was travelling north, by DART.
 —MOVIN' ON OU' TO KILLESTER ——
 . . .
 —HARMONSTOWN RAHENY ——
 . . .
 —AN' DON'T FORGET KILBARRACK — THE HOME O' THE
 BLUES—
 Dublin Soul had been delivered.
 —HOWTH JUNCTION BAYSIDE ——
 THEN ON OU' TO SUTTON WHERE THE RICH FOLKS LIVE
 . . .
 —EASY TO BONK YOUR FARE ——
 . . .
 —NIGH' TRAIN ——
 AN ALSATIAN IN EVERY CARRIAGE ——
 . . .
 LOADS O' SECURITY GUARDS ——
 . . .
 LAYIN' INTO YOUR MOT AT THE BACK ——
 . . .
 GETTIN' SLAGGED BY YOUR MATES ——
 . . .
 GETTIN' CHIPS FROM THE CHINESE CHIPPER ——
 . . .
 OH NIGH' TRAIN ——
 CARRIES ME HOME — (C 92-3)

Deco's route, as the narrator emphasizes, “travel[s] north, by DART” which “stretches from Howth to Bray and crosses through both the richest and the poorest enclaves of Dublin” (Piroux 53). However, “it has not been successful in bridging Dublin's class divide” as “Most Southside DART users have never ventured beyond Tara Street station

into Dublin's less attractive suburbs. Killiney's quaint Victorian station . . . is a world away from the concrete mass of Kilbarrack" (Piroux 53; Mulcahy qtd. in Piroux 53). Kilbarrack, it should be noted, is the actual neighborhood on which the fictional Barrytown is modeled, and labeling it "the home o' the blues" locates Kilbarrack as a space of "cultural creolization" (Piroux 54). Defining Kilbarrack/Barrytown as a hybrid space allows Doyle to challenge national ideologies that demand sectarian identification. As a result, The Commitments and the working-class community they establish acknowledge the problems behind binary identification systems. In creating a multicultural space, Kilbarrack/Barrytown becomes a community that rejects singular identification. Instead, its inhabitants can identify as "both and"; they are no longer only members of the working class or poor which expands their future possibilities. For example, James Clifford, the pianist, can be both James Clifford the medical student and James "The Soul Surgeon" Clifford. Being able to operate on multiple registers enables James, his peers, and the band's audience to resist definition as only inhabitants of Barrytown. Through demonstrating the limitations of preventing individuals to identify as multiple things, Doyle illustrates that binary identification systems do nothing more than re-inscribe immobile boundaries and borders which prevent personal and communal exploration and growth. While their community is geared towards those who are in the same situation as themselves, they do not emit an "us-versus-them" attitude; instead, they embrace those with similar experiences and provide them with the tools to enter into a relationship with the other communities that surround them.

Therefore by altering James Brown's "Night Train," the band calls attention to the complexity of the community from which they come and, by extension, the complexity of

both Dublin and Ireland. By changing the lyrics and calling attention to northside Dublin, The Commitments articulate an experience that emphasizes shared, collective experiences. Each example that Deco explores is an event of which each audience member is intimately aware; these are not experiences that have no cultural foundation. The Commitments's version of "Night Train" captures and gives voice to the lived experience of their audience. The experiential map the band creates privileges the working-class experience and as a result, redefines a widely shared Irish experience. The way that the band maps Dublin illustrates that this way of life is no longer located in the countryside or in the past; instead, it is found in the day-to-day experiences in an urban environment. The mobilization of soul music becomes the tool through which The Commitments and their working-class peers are able to give voice to their lived experience of modern Dublin and Ireland and as a result, resist the nationalist ideological "forgery" of the ruling-classes (Hobsbawm and Ranger 7).

In addition to rejecting the ideologies that have been imposed on them for so long, The Commitments's decision to play soul promotes self-activism, the community, and the ability to be an individual while also augmenting the whole. Consider, for example, Joey's explanation of soul: "Soul is the people's music. Ordinary people making music for ordinary people. —Simple music. Any Brother can play it. The Motown sound, it's simple. . . . Soul is democratic, Jimmy. Anyone with a bin lid can play it. —It's the people's music" (C 107). During the band's first gig, "the people's music" functions accordingly; more specifically, after two boys "invade the stage" one of them sings which results in "More of them climb[ing] up on the stage and became a little choir around the mike-stand" (C 93). In this moment, the boy who sings inspires those around him to join

him on stage and form their own chorus; a chorus of individuals who share experiences and are relegated to the margins of modern Ireland. The Commitments permit them to have a voice of their own even if only momentarily. This voice becomes one that does empower a collective and enables them to move beyond their current conditions.

Furthermore, the fact that this group is given access to this empowerment by way of a non-Irish cultural form illustrates that the country is no longer insular; instead, the people can come to terms with their place in Irish society while using and altering foreign forms of cultural production. The collective that the band forms, however, is again limited by their gender exclusion. The text makes it clear that “two *boys*” get up on stage with the band (C 93; italics mine). As a result, the choir that forms is a community of men. This community that sings becomes “the chorus from the same part of the world” and replaces The Commitmentettes. Once again, the only female presence in the novel is silenced and the band speaks to and for the working-class male experience of modern Dublin and Ireland.

Finally, the fact that through their music, the band is able to reach both the younger generation and the older one, presumably that of their parents, speaks to the fact that “Soul is community” (C 115). For instance, the band is able to successfully play for both mods and ex-mods. The “original” mods, which is short for modernist, was a subculture that, according to Dick Hebdige, had a relationship with “immigrant communities that had been established in Britain’s working-class areas” (*Subculture* 52). This group of individuals “invented a style which enabled them to negotiate smoothly between school, work and leisure, and which concealed as much as it stated” by “Quietly disrupting the orderly sequence which leads from signifier to signified, the mods

undermined the conventional meaning of ‘collar, suit and tie’, pushing neatness to absurdity” (Hebdige, *Subculture* 52).⁷⁹ In 1980s Dublin this movement remains recognizable. Some of the audience members are classified as “mods” and, more importantly, The Commitments adapt aspects of the mod culture to fit their goals.⁸⁰ Their suits permit them to be at once neat and subversive by presenting a message to the working-class that will enable its members to escape, even if it is only for a short period of time, the conditions that restrict their upward mobility. Re-mobilizing aspects of the mod subculture allows The Commitments to bridge a generational gap, which in turn expands the community. Their community becomes one that is cognizant of the past but seeks out alternative routes into the future, which consider and speak directly to their situation in modern Ireland.

While Jimmy’s original vision—The Commitments and soul—fail, the project that is set forth in the novel cannot be considered a complete failure. Instead, it presents the idea that “the individual needs the support and nurturing that the group provides, but there comes a time when the identity the group provides becomes limiting. . . . It is not that the identity that comes from belonging to the group is limited in itself, but that it is different from another identity which the individual begins to sense is possible and which he or she is willing to risk realising” (McCarthy 41). In other words, the band provides the foundation for its individuals to successfully negotiate their identities within modern Dublin. The Commitments and the space that they create presents the idea of transformation to the members and their audience. Furthermore, by presenting soul

⁷⁹ Also see Hebdige “The Meaning of Mod,” Cohen, Laing, Frith and Home, McRobbie and Garber, and Hamblett and Deverson.

⁸⁰ Frequently, when The Commitments are performing Jimmy describes the audience as “mods,” “little mods,” “little modettes,” “grown-up mods,” or “ex-mods” which demonstrates the prevalence of mod culture in Dublin. For specific references see pages 88, 91, 95, and 106.

music as “the subaltern culture of American blacks” and American culture as a force that is clearly more powerful than “Catholicism as a cultural force in Ireland,” Doyle’s text and the band offer alternative ways for the Irish to engage with modern Dublin and modern Ireland as well as the globalizing world (Booker 30; 29). The reliance on American popular culture—the band that is formed at the end of the novel, “The Brassers,” samples The Byrds and will play “Dublin country”—illustrates that engaging with modernity through a reliance on Irish history and mythology has not and will never provide a viable route into modernity for the Irish (*C* 139). Instead, the people can and should turn to outside influences and appropriate foreign forms of cultural production. *The Commitments* illustrates that Ireland is a country that must, through whatever means possible, define its relationship with the modern, global world on its own terms. Despite failing, *The Commitments* present one way of beginning an Irish relationship with the modern world and it is the potential behind their “mission” that must be acknowledged.

III. “Better gas”: Laughter, Pregnancy, and Community in *The Snapper*

After learning that Sharon—the daughter of his best friend, Jimmy Sr.—declares that Sharon is a “modern girl” (*S* 205). Paddy, another of Jimmy Sr.’s friends, responds “Oh good fuck” which both dismisses Bimbo’s optimism and the idea that a woman can be modern. This brief exchange foregrounds the issue—a woman’s role in modern Dublin—at stake in Roddy Doyle’s *The Snapper*. *The Snapper*, the second installment of Roddy Doyle’s *The Barrytown Trilogy* shifts its focus from Jimmy Rabbitte, Jr. and the public sphere to that of Jimmy’s father and sister, Jimmy Sr. and Sharon, and the effects of her out-of-wedlock pregnancy on the Rabbitte family. Shifting focus from the public to the private allows Doyle to explore the dynamic relationships of a family; Sharon’s

situation highlights the way in which the “modern woman” is forced to negotiate her position in modern Ireland while being mindful of a generation, exemplified by Paddy and his comment, that continually seeks to define a woman through her position in the family. Sharon’s story centers around a fuzzy recollection of a drunken encounter, that can be considered rape, with George Burgess, and the resulting pregnancy. *The Snapper* both recounts Sharon and the Rabbitte family’s struggle as they come to terms with the unplanned pregnancy and documents how society comes to define both the pregnant woman and her family. The Rabbittes’ fight to disavow the religious, vitriolic traditionalism of Ireland’s past functions in two different ways: First, their resistance becomes a foundation on which a modern, progressive Ireland with an eye towards the future can be built. Second, the ultimate failure of their resistance illustrates that little progress has been made concerning the role of women in the construction of modern Ireland

While critics have continually focused on the class issues in *The Snapper* and have come to rather bleak conclusions, I argue that Sharon’s laughter allows her to assert her individuality and confront the public by subverting, even if momentarily, normative familial and social structures. More specifically, the baby-naming scene at the end of *The Snapper*, in which she names her new daughter Georgina and laughs so hard she cries, presents laughter in a way that restructures power dynamics within the family and community. Sharon’s pregnancy and her family are social and cultural ruptures that emphasize the feasibility of non-normative family structures which both allow women to exist outside the nuclear family and also foster a reevaluation and redefinition of masculinity. Although Doyle’s *The Snapper* marks a break from the past, because

Sharon and the Rabbitte family do not fully separate from normative structures and definitions of the nuclear family, the novel also emphasizes that more progress must be made in order to effectively navigate modern Ireland.

Georgina Rabbitte's birth scene, the one that closes the novel with Sharon's laughter, highlights the way in which laughter can be quite subversive. In a discussion of the importance of laughter in the postcolonial context, Achille Mbembe argues that the "possibility of assuming multiple identities" enables the colonial body to resist control through laughter because "by laughing it [the body] drains officialdom of meaning" (128; 129).⁸¹ Laughter becomes subversive in that it permits the "postcolonized" subject to "engage in baroque practices [which are] fundamentally ambiguous, fluid, and modifiable even where there are clear, written precise rules" (Mbembe 129). It allows the subjects to contest power while appearing to abide by it. As a result, such subversive action forces those in power to exist in a state of flux; if the status of those in power can be and is redefined by such a seemingly trivial action, then they do not, contrary to their beliefs, exist in a space of uncontested authority. Instead, their subjects assume the ability to define the position and the power that such a position holds. When understood in the

⁸¹ Mbembe's argument addresses the way in which a colonial subject can resist state control and foregrounds these interactions as they occur during official parades: "Yet it is precisely this possibility of assuming multiple identities that accounts for the fact that the body that dances, dresses in the party uniform, fills the roads, 'assembles *en masse*' to applaud the passing presidential procession in a ritual of confirmation, is willing to dramatize its subordination through such small tokens of fealty, and at the same time, instead of keeping silent in the face of obvious official lies and the effrontery of elites, this body breaks into laughter. And, by laughing, it drains officialdom of meaning and sometimes obliges it to function while empty and powerless" (Mbembe 128–9; italics original). Despite focusing on an African postcolonial context and how subjects are able to resist state power, Mbembe's articulation of how the body is able to render, through laughter, an outside force impotent is applicable to Sharon's situation. Instead of reacting to state power, Sharon must resist the chauvinistic perception of modern Dublin and modern Ireland. For Mbembe, laughter allows the subject to appear to be a loyal subject while in reality he or she is not; for Sharon, laughter enables her to attempt to resist both her father's influence and Barrytown's ideological position.

manner Sharon's laughter becomes an action that allows her to scoff at "Barrytown's sense of humour," her encounter with George Burgess, and question Irish masculinity in a manner that forces a break with the mythic past (*S* 268). When Sharon's laughter is understood in this manner she is able to stage personal acts of resistance against three controlling forces that are, in her experience institutionalized. The institutions are: "Barrytown's sense of humour"; her encounter with George Burgess; and Irish masculinity (*S* 268). In doing so, Sharon's defiance articulates a way to break with traditional Ireland and suggests what an accurate iteration of modern Ireland should accept. However, her subversion is destined to remain a personal act of resistance because it never "obliges it [state power] to function while empty and powerless" (Mbembe 129). Indeed, *The Snapper* never ostracizes George Burgess for his actions and by the end of the novel Jimmy Sr. remains as the head of his family. As a result, and much like Jimmy Jr.'s failure in *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* demonstrates how ideologies must shift in modern Ireland but does not present a viable method for changing these same ideologies.

While Sharon's laughter at her new daughter's name ends the novel in a subversive manner, there is another scene in which Sharon laughs that frames the use of laughter throughout the entire text by illustrating how laughter empowers Sharon. After she tells her small group of friends about her pregnancy, Sharon returns home and

Sharon laughed —
 Soon everyone would know. Good. She could nearly hear them.
 —Sharon Rabbitte's pregnant, did yeh hear?
 —Your one, Sharon Rabbitte's up the pole.
 —Sharon Rabbitte's havin' a baby.
 —I don't believe yeh!
 —Jaysis.
 —Jesus! Are yeh serious?

—Who's she havin' it for?
 —I don't know.
 —She won't say.
 —She doesn't know.
 —She can't remember.
 —Oh God, poor Sharon.
 —That's shockin'.
 —Mm.
 —Dirty bitch.
 —Poor Sharon.
 —The slut.
 —I don't believe her.
 —The stupid bitch.
 —She had tha' comin'.
 —Serves her righ'.
 —Poor Sharon.
 —Let's see her gettin' into those jeans now.
 Sharon giggled.
 Fuck them. Fuck all of them. She didn't care. The girls had been great. (*S* 206–7)

By laughing at what everyone in Barrytown would say, Sharon demonstrates that her laughter allows her to subvert societal reactions to her pregnancy. Laughter enables her to dismiss these reactions which, in turn, articulates how Sharon is able to resist definition. By becoming undefinable, Sharon questions normative social reactions to what traditional Ireland understands as a non-normative pregnancy. When discussing this scene, Mary McGlynn argues that Sharon's humor both frees her and represses her because it means that the public becomes part of her life and determines the success of the pregnancy; she explains, "Only by submitting to public involvement in her private life, via a simultaneously liberating and repressive humor, is Sharon permitted to carry her child successfully to term" (*Narratives* 99). McGlynn's contention, that Sharon's humor is liberating because it allows her to face Barrytown, is accurate; however, she overlooks the fact that this "liberating and repressive humor" provides Sharon the opportunity to potentially escape the constraints of the traditional beliefs of society and

also questions and forces a re-evaluation of Irish masculinity. When understood in this manner, Sharon's refrain "Fuck them. Fuck all of them. She didn't care" becomes an outright rejection of the onlooking eyes of her community and peers. Through dismissing all attempts to affix meaning through naming, Sharon subverts the community's power to define her. As a result, she rejects victimization and her actions and interactions with the community and her father question and redefine what it means to be an individual in modern Irish society regardless of gender.

None of this is to read Sharon Rabbitte, as Caramine White does, as some sort of "heroine" for the way in which she works through the pregnancy and deals with the community (64).⁸² In fact, as other critics have acknowledged, Sharon is antagonistic and her ability to question normative family structures and gender definitions is brought to the forefront through her interactions with her father, Jimmy Rabbitte Sr. These interactions, mostly dominated by Jimmy Sr.'s narrative voice, emphasize how Sharon breaks "the symbol of nation as family" by moving beyond the "particular social and cultural space" in which they have been placed (Wills 54). As a result, Sharon forces her father to move away from "stereotyped notions of manhood and himself" and reevaluate his position in this new Ireland (O'Toole, "Working-Class" 39). For example, immediately after Sharon informs the family that she is pregnant, Jimmy Sr. cannot comprehend the fact that Sharon knows that she is pregnant:

—You're absolutely sure now? Positive?
 —Yeah, I am. I done —
 —Did, said Veronica.
 —I did the test.
 —The test? said Jimmy Sr. —Oh. —Did yeh go in by yourself?
 —Yeah, said Sharon.

⁸² For similar arguments against Caramine White see McCarthy 75–6 and McGlynn, *Narratives* 106–108.

—Did yeh? Fair play to yeh, said Jimmy Sr. —I'd never've thought o' tha'.

Sharon and Veronica looked at each other, and grinned quickly.
(S 146)

Because his understanding of the role of Irish women, Jimmy Sr. does not even consider the fact that Sharon can and does handle the beginning of the pregnancy alone. The sly grin that Sharon and her mother, Veronica, share further demonstrates how narrowly conceived Jimmy Sr.'s attitude towards women is. His inability to place any faith in a woman's ability to know and understand her body emphasizes Jimmy Sr.'s desire to remain in control. His "old fashioned" approach to pregnancy and family life expands when he wonders whether or not the father will marry Sharon:

—Will he marry you? Jimmy Sr asked her.

—No. I don't think so.

—The louser. That's cheatin', tha' is.

—It's not a game! said Veronica.

—I know, I know tha', Veronica. But it's his fault as much as Sharon's. Whoever he is. —It was his flute tha'— (S 149)

Again, Jimmy Sr. fails to accept the fact that Sharon can and will handle this without the father. According to Jimmy, and his generation's traditions, pregnancy results in marriage and anything else is "cheatin'." Despite being scolded for turning an important event into a game, Jimmy does not seem to genuinely back off of this position at home; only when he is at the local pub, Hikers, with his friends does he seem to acknowledge the faulty logic behind marriages that are the result of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. When Bimbo, his best friend, wonders if Sharon will be getting married Jimmy Sr. responds: "Why should she? They've more cop-on these days. Would you get married if you were tha' age again these days?" (S 203). Jimmy Sr.'s reluctant acceptance of the fact that Sharon will not be married closely mirrors the fact that in 1986, four years prior

to the publication of *The Snapper*, and again in 1996 there were divorce referenda introduced in Parliament.⁸³ Dermot McCarthy deftly states that Jimmy Sr.'s position is one that accounts for "the social reality of unhappy marriages based on unplanned pregnancies and social coercion" (54). Bimbo's response "I'd say I would, yeah" establishes that Sharon's decision is not supported by all; there is and will continue to be opposition to the destruction of the nuclear family. While Jimmy Sr. seems to be rather accepting of this change to the concept of family, his desire to "win or lose" remains problematic because such jocularly is not borne out of a desire to be funny or have fun; instead, it is the result of Sharon's situation unsettling "Jimmy Sr's sense of who and what he is" (McCarthy 56).

Sharon's pregnancy forces Jimmy Sr. to reexamine himself and his role as father. The fact that Jimmy Sr. and not Sharon becomes the focal point for a large portion of the novel calls attention to the fact that masculinity is being questioned and, as a result, emphasizes the fact that Doyle's Ireland is one in transition.⁸⁴ Sharon's relationship with Jimmy Sr. and his reaction to certain situations both call attention to the fact that he is an absent father. For example, when discussing the rather lackluster manners of the children, Jimmy Sr. refuses to be held responsible; he states: "That's the sort o' stuff the should be teachin' them in school. Not Irish or —or German. Shuttin' jacks doors an' sayin' Hello an' tha' sort o' thing. Manners" (S 163). At this moment, Jimmy Sr. renounces his role as father by indicting both Irish culture and society's inability to teach

⁸³ For Doyle's attitude about the divorce referendum see White 38–9.

⁸⁴ The fact that Jimmy Sr. takes control of the narrative could also demonstrate that Doyle is more comfortable writing and exploring male points of view. While this may be true when he wrote *The Snapper*, Doyle continues to explore how the role of the female in modern Ireland in the third novel in *The Barrytown Trilogy*, *The Van*. In addition, both *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* and *Paula Spencer: A Novel* are presented from the point of view of Paula Spencer, a battered woman.

his children to behave in a “civilized” manner. Because of Jimmy Sr.’s abdication, his children, specifically Sharon, “protest against a colourful but self-divided father’s inability to offer any clear lead at all” (Kiberd 385). Instead of “launch[ing] another generation into a further hopeless cycle,” Jimmy Sr.’s inability to assert his fatherly authority results in children who become rebels (Kiberd 391). The rebellion that Sharon and the other Rabbitte children fuel is one that aims to frame an alternative engagement with modern Dublin and modern Ireland by asserting that their understanding of and way of operating in modern Irish culture is more effective than that of their forefathers.

Though we are only given the story of pregnant Sharon, Jimmy Sr.’s inability to be a father at this time only serves to emphasize the lack of parental guidance that Sharon has had throughout her life. As a result, she has no one to rely on in her time of need; instead, she is forced to rebel and become an independent woman who on her own comes to terms with her pregnancy and the bodily changes that she experiences. Instead of discussing her pregnancy with her parents, Sharon “bought a book in Easons and read about the first fourteen weeks of pregnancy and waited for the changes to happen” (*S* 156). In fact, “She ploughed through her book, about three pages a night. It was hard going and frightening. There was a lot more to being pregnant than she thought. And there was so much that could go wrong” (*S* 157). However, not even the pregnancy book solves all of her problems, as she admits when lying in bed: “What she really felt, she decided later in bed, was confused. There was so much. And she wouldn’t have really known that if she hadn’t bought the bleedin’ book. But she wanted to know. She wanted to know exactly what was going to happen, what was happening even now” (*S* 160). Sharon’s lack of parental guidance is an indictment of the older generation’s inability to

alter their way of life in a manner that accommodates the Ireland in which their children and grandchildren are coming of age. As a result, the children are without meaningful guidance and must devise their own methods to manage their changing city and country. This unwillingness to change and the lack of leadership creates an ideological chasm between generations which further divides an already economically and politically separated country.

The lack of support is not only a critique of parents; indeed, the criticism extends to Barrytown proper. Outside of her family Sharon does not have any friends with whom she can share her story; she states, “She’d often read in magazines and she’d seen it on television where it said that women friends were closer than men, but Sharon didn’t think they were. Not the girls she knew. —Anyway, if she couldn’t tell Jackie the whole lot —and she couldn’t —then she couldn’t tell anyone” (*S* 183). The lack of close personal relationships outside of her family exemplifies Barrytown’s inability to adapt to change and provide for someone in need. Sharon is left with nothing more than her sense of humor to cope with her pregnancy. In addition to failing to provide an adequate support system, the community again falls short as illustrated when Sharon is unable to define the encounter which resulted in her pregnancy. After a night out with her friends Sharon was “really drunk, absolutely paralytic” when George Burgess approaches her on the sidewalk:

She couldn’t move really. Then there was a hand on her shoulder. — Alrigh’, Sharon? he’d said. Then it was blank and then they were kissing rough —she wasn’t really: her mouth was just open —and then blank again and that was it really. She couldn’t remember much more. She knew they’d done it —or just he’d done it —standing up because that was the next bit she remembered; leaning back against the car, staring at the car beside it, her back and arse wet through from the wet on the door and the window and she was wet from him too. She was very cold. The wet

was colder. He was gone. It was like waking up. She didn't know if it had happened. She wanted to be at home. At home in bed. Her knickers were gone. And she was all wet and cold there. She wanted to get into bed. She went straight home. She staggered a lot, even off the path. She wanted to sleep. Backwards. To earlier. (*S* 185)

Sharon does not know exactly what to call the encounter. In fact, “She’d wondered a few times if what had happened could be called rape. She didn’t know” (*S* 185). Instead of actively defining what happens to her, Sharon denies and/or refuses to believe what she remembers. Her memory of the encounter is “like a few photographs” and her desire to sleep “backwards” is an attempt to deal with the rape in the only manner she is provided—by denying it ever happened (*S* 184). Such “muted sense of violation suggests just how much culture sculpts personal ideals, as well as pointing to her community’s accountability for her situation” (McGlynn, *Narratives* 109). In this instance, Sharon cannot escape the limitations of the Ireland that she is working to overcome; instead, the culture of the community traps her by not allowing her to come to terms with her present situation. Indeed, she is forced to revise history by creating a Spanish-sailor father figure for her child.

Sharon’s inability to completely extricate herself from the Ireland of the past complicates her development of an alternative engagement with modern Ireland because it forces her to devise a method by which she can raise her child that will still be constrained by outdated ideologies. Naming her child Georgina while laughing is another act of personal rebellion that demonstrates the flawed communal ideology that allows individuals like Burgess to rape without consequence. Instead of being named, ostracized, and forced to acknowledge his responsibility, Burgess is permitted to continually interact with and remain a member of Barrytown. Sharon’s revisionist

history, then, “presents a new sensibility, new values” which are able to move beyond both the failure of family and community and create a new self that points to the issues with a community that adheres to outdated standards (McCarthy 64).

Doyle’s own position regarding Sharon’s encounter with Burgess complicates Doyle’s desire to depict modern Ireland as a progressive country. In an interview with Caramine White Doyle further explains the scene between Sharon and George Burgess:

When I was writing the book, I didn’t want to encroach too much. I wanted it to be left up to the reader. Legally, in Ireland, it is not a rape, although I believe that in some states in the States it is a rape. I wouldn’t personally consider it a rape. I do believe that he behaved very wrongly in taking advantage of a drunk woman. (150–1)

His unwillingness to consider the encounter a rape amplifies the fact that his own position conflicts with the idea that *The Snapper* describes a changing Ireland. Doyle’s choice, to leave interpretation up to the reader, makes him an accessory to Burgess’s act and demonstrates that, despite all of Doyle’s progressive beliefs, he does nothing to dismantle the patriarchy that controlled and continues to control Irish life. Much like Jimmy’s ability to undermine the message and mission of *The Commitments*, Doyle’s comment on the scene undermines and deconstructs his aspiration to write into existence a progressive, modern Dublin and Ireland.

Sharon’s reflections on Barrytown call additional attention to the lack of support that she receives which begins at home with her inept father. Jimmy Sr. lacks all control in the house, and if, according to Declan Kiberd, “Patriarchy is, rather, the tyranny wrought by weak men, the protective shell which guards and nurtures their weakness,” Jimmy Sr. becomes a stereotypical portrait of an inadequate father (391). However, he does not recognize how inept he is; instead, he constantly strives to re-gain control of his

home and family. For example, in the scene which Jimmy Sr. has an argument with his absentee son, Leslie, who ends up storming out of the house and slamming the door. Jimmy Sr., once again, turns his parenting into a game: “Jimmy Sr. couldn’t leave it just like that. He’d lost, in front of Darren, the twins, Sharon ,them all. He was the head of the fuckin’ house!” (S 186). Here Jimmy Sr. is not doing what normative ideology would have him do; he is not leading. Instead, he mimics the postcolonial subject who seeks to “pacif[y] the people” and is “incapable of actually opening up their future” (Fanon 114). Through this pacification, Jimmy Sr. illustrates that he “has no comprehensive programme” and “desires not so much to lead as to occupy the position of leader”; as a result, Jimmy Sr. “can do little more than repeat the tale of his own apotheosis. History, under such a dispensation, ceases to be progressive, becoming instead an endless repetition of familiar crises, with no hope of resolution. The fight becomes more important than the thing fought for, and ‘history’ is deemed history only if it exactly repeats itself” (Kiberd 392; 393). In other words, Jimmy Sr.’s parenting, or lack thereof, provides no viable future for his children. Instead, continuing the fight is what becomes important and as a result, Jimmy Sr. cannot and does not lead his family or control his house.

i. “She’s a modern girl”: Interrogating Irish Masculinity

Lacking control at home, Jimmy Sr. turns to the pub, Hikers, that he and his friends frequent to recover some semblance of power. However, it is in this very space, one that he thinks is safe, that Jimmy Sr.’s masculinity is thoroughly questioned. Article 41 of the Irish Constitution, which was ratified in 1937, “recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society” and guarantees its protection

(Irish Const. art. 41, sec. 1, cl. 1). Article 41 continues and elaborates on a woman's role in the home:

¹In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. ²The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (Irish Const. art. 41, sec. 2, cl. 1–2)

Women are not to work outside the home; instead, they are to stay home to ensure the stability of the family. If women are not to contribute to the financial stability of the home, then the men are to provide for their families and ensure that the unit as a whole is prosperous and has a promising future. Furthermore, until 1995 divorce was illegal in Ireland. As a result, “family” indicates marriage; there was no place for single parent families in Ireland.⁸⁵ However, when discussing Sharon's pregnancy in *Hikers* with his friends, Jimmy Sr. actually begins the discussion of the state of Irish masculinity. By asserting that Sharon does not need to get married because she is too young and has “her whole life ahead of her,” Jimmy indicates that the nuclear family is no longer that which holds the nation together (*S* 205). Furthermore, when Bimbo declares that Sharon is a “modern girl” his “attitude,” as Dermot McCarthy states, “represents an unreflective use of modernity and modernisation as, in a sense, both a new moral language and a metaphor of explanation to present this perennial situation in a non-‘traditional’ way, and in a way that condones it” (McCarthy 76).

When they condone Sharon's “modernity,” the men effectively question their role as heads of the household. More specifically, as soon as Sharon's pregnancy becomes a topic in the pub, Jimmy Sr. and his friends make it impossible to ever return her

⁸⁵ The divorce referendum was approved on November 24, 1995 and signed into law on June 17, 1996. The amendment to the Constitution can also be found in Article 41.

“condition” back into the private sphere. Sharon’s pregnancy constantly questions masculinity by asserting that it is no longer an authentic representation of the Irish state. David Lloyd argues that the need for authenticity is the foundation for “nationalism’s consistent policing of female sexuality by the ideological and legal confinement of women to the domestic sphere” (109). The pregnancy and the fact that it destroys the normative family debunks the nationalistic belief that women belong in the home and cannot participate in any form of economic exchange. Sharon’s pregnancy indicts the manifestation of masculinity that, up until this point, has been acceptable. More specifically, Sharon and her pregnancy imply that both the traditional definition of masculinity and nation have failed.

Sharon, however, does not stop questioning masculinity with her father and his friends. In fact, through direct confrontation, she also questions the masculinity of both George Burgess and the younger generation. After she learns that Burgess had been telling everyone that he is, the one responsible for her pregnancy, Sharon confronts him. Upon arriving at his house, Sharon admits that “she was terrified” and only calms down because “He looked worried alright. And angry and afraid. And a bit lost” (*S* 222). She derives her power from the fact that “She knew what she was going to say: he didn’t. She wasn’t disgusted looking at him now. She just couldn’t believe she’d ever let him near her” (*S* 222). Her confidence and his lack of confidence stem from the fact that Sharon has taken control of Burgess in the one place where he should be in complete control: his house. Sharon’s command over Burgess extends itself into the realm of language as soon as the two exchange niceties:

—Wha’ do yeh think you’re up to, yeh little bitch, he hissed.
 —Wha’ d’yeh think YOU’RE up to, yeh little bastard?

He didn't hiss now. . . .

—You said I was a ride. Didn't yeh?

George Burgess hated that. He hated hearing women using the language he used. He just didn't think it was right. It sounded dirty. As well as that, he knew he'd been snared. But he wasn't done yet. (*S* 223; italics original)

In both instances, Sharon moves in on spaces that were controlled by Burgess, and as a result of these invasions unsettles traditional gender divisions. Furthermore, by dictating the circumstances of this and subsequent encounters, her invasion is not temporary; instead, her ability to maintain control insinuates that these historically male registers are no longer safe havens for men. Sharon's actions suggest that women can now speak to men on their own terms in masculine spaces. Furthermore, as Doyle's works records the urban through language, the linguistic dominance that Sharon exhibits marks the cultural and generational shift within Ireland. More specifically, if women are able to now use the language that once controlled them to control men, then they are able to subvert, even if only momentarily, the masculine hierarchy that defines traditional Ireland.

Quite contrary to her non-violent confrontations with Burgess, Sharon physically assaults younger boys that jeer at her in the streets. Her physical assault on masculinity is the result of an initial encounter that is, again, registered verbally. After getting off of the bus a group of boys jeer Sharon by asking "How's Mister Burgess?" and calling her a "ride" (*S* 258).⁸⁶ Sharon, however, does not stop; instead she continues and

was shaking and kind of upset when she got home and upstairs. She didn't know why really. Men and boys had been shouting things after her since she was thirteen and fourteen. She'd never liked it much, especially when she was very young, but she'd looked on it as a sort of a stupid compliment.

⁸⁶ In *The Commitments*, Jimmy uses the same language when he discusses the role of sex in music. Using "ride" reinforces the masculine conception that sex is a way to assert dominance because the term implies that the male is in control and as a result, the female becomes an object present for the satisfaction of her male partner.

Tonight was different thought. Being called a ride wasn't any sort of a compliment anymore. (*S* 259)

While she was never comfortable with being called a “ride,” such discomfort emphasizes that Sharon will no longer accept being sexually objectified. In fact, the next time the same boy from the same group of kids mocks Sharon, she reacts and stands her ground. After grabbing the boy Sharon rips his sweatshirt, “slap[s] him across the head,” and emphatically declares, “If you ever call me annythin’ again I’ll fuckin’ kill yeh, d’yeh hear me” (*S* 263). She, however, does not stop there and continues to physically assault the boy:

He said nothing. His mates were at the corner, watching. Sharon looked down quickly to see if there was room. Then she lifted her leg and kneed him.

—There, she said.

She’d never done it before. It was easy. She’d do it again.

For a while the boy forgot about his ripped hoodie and his ma.

Sharon looked back, to make sure that he was still alive.

He was. His mates were around him, in stitches. (*S* 263)

This assault is nothing less than an assault on the young boy’s masculinity, a public castration that both silences and humiliates the boy. Furthermore, Sharon’s knee turns the boy’s symbol of power, his genitalia, into a weakness. Her realization that “It was easy” and that “She’d do it again” indicates that men and masculinity will no longer have total power over her because she is now capable of violently resisting future attempts of control.

While Sharon’s realization and plan for future actions is in and of itself monumental, the message that she sends to the younger generation marks a generational and ideological shift that emphasizes the way in which Ireland is changing. Her actions demonstrate to the boy and his friends that harassing young women is not acceptable and

these same women are capable of and will stand up for themselves. Sharon proves, they will fight back, violently if need be, to both assert their dominance and prevent future encounters that mimic the one between Sharon and Burgess. In modern Ireland, the masculine sphere is no longer impenetrable and women are no longer de Valera's "happy maidens" or the Constitution's homemakers.

However, much like *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* also suggests that while there are signs of progress, all is not well. Jimmy Sr.'s attitude towards Sharon's pregnancy calls attention to the reluctance of the older generation, despite all other claims, to accept these social changes and, by extension, the new Ireland. For example, after Jimmy Sr. comes to terms with the fact that Sharon is pregnant, he goes to the library and checks out *Everywoman* because of his "Curiosity" (S 299). Initially, his curiosity appears to be productive since he becomes aware of the complicated nature of pregnancy. In fact, while at the Hikers, Jimmy Sr. lets his friends know that pregnancy "is a fuckin' miracle" (S 305). The miracle that he has come to "understand" results in a change that allows him to think that he is "a new man" (S 320). When discussing Veronica's pregnancies with Sharon, Jimmy Sr. even goes so far as to state that "Times have changed" and these changes are "much better" because "the husbands are there [the delivery room] with the women" and "can hold her hand an' help her an' encourage her . . . an' see his child bein' born" (S 327).

These realizations are cathartic for Jimmy Sr. because he is able to recognize the mistakes he made in the past. He acknowledges his absence for the birth of all of his children: "When your mammy was havin' Jimmy I was in work. An' when she was havin' you I was in me mother's. When she had Leslie I was inside town, in Conways,

yeh know, with the lads. The Hikers wasn't built then. For Darren, I was—I can't remember. The twins, I was in the Hikers" (S 327). Jimmy Sr.'s recognition of his past transgressions is his attempt to create a narrative that would allow him to re-present himself as something new. Hannah Arendt addresses such desire in another context: "The principle explanation consists in getting the story told—somehow, anyhow—in order to discover how it begins . . . The basic assumption is that the telling of the tale will itself yield good counsel. This second look at his own history can transform a man from a creature trapped in his own past to one who is freed of it" (qtd. in Kiberd 387). Jimmy Sr.'s catharsis lets him believe that he will be able to revise his history to such an extent that his past mistakes will no longer haunt him. In fact, he offers, rather hesitantly to stay in the delivery room with Sharon: "Sharon, I'll—Only if yeh want now—I wouldn't mind stayin' with you when—you're havin' it," an offer which Sharon quickly refuses (S 328).

Jimmy Sr.'s hesitant offer and Sharon's quick refusal points to the larger problem with Jimmy Sr.'s extreme interest in Sharon's pregnancy. More specifically, the fact that "male characters are absorbed into what had traditionally been a feminine world yet lack the power of the female characters" presents a problem because the men have no viable outlet for their actions (McGlynn, *Narratives* 103). As a result, Jimmy Sr. attempts to take over Sharon's pregnancy and becomes, as Fintan O'Toole argues, "a pregnant man" ("Working-Class" 39).⁸⁷ For example, Jimmy wonders about Sharon, if she is in pain or if she has cramps, inquires whether or not Sharon's hormones are "actin' up," and wants to make sure that she is not depressed (S 306). Furthermore, on the way to the hospital,

⁸⁷ In an interview with Caramine White Doyle declares that Jimmy Sr. "would have given birth to the baby if at all humanly possible" (154).

Jimmy tells Sharon exactly what she needs to do as if he has experienced childbirth: “Here, Sharon. Look it; here’s me watch. Yeh can time the contractions so you’ll be able to tell them when we get there. They’ll be impressed. —Oh, God help yeh. Sit back, Sharon, good girl. Take deep breaths, good girl. Good deep breaths. That’s wha’ I always do, wha’” (S 338). Jimmy Sr.’s concern can be characterized as positive.

However, much like Jimmy Sr. is not a “new man,” this is yet another ploy to attempt to regain control of his household by “avoid[ing] and control[ing] the reality of Sharon’s pregnancy. His involvement in the pregnancy can be read as a bulwark against threats to the patriarchy and as an effort to render typically female space his own” (McGlynn, *Narratives* 104). Jimmy Sr.’s reaction to Sharon’s pregnancy becomes an attempt to redefine masculinity in a way that accounts for his, as well as that of others like him, economic status while refuting the larger social shifts that are taking place. His success would ensure that “Irish paternalism” would replace the “colonial invader” and as a result, safeguard male control of the home and family (McGlynn, *Narratives* 111).

Sharon, however, does not appreciate Jimmy Sr.’s interventions because she recognizes that they are nothing more than a feeble attempt to take control of the pregnancy and, by extension, the household. In fact, “She was getting really tired of her da . . . He was becoming a right pain in the neck . . . It was her pregnancy and he could fuck off and stay out of it” (S 303) Nevertheless, aside from her refusing his company in the delivery room, Sharon does not stand up to her father. In fact, Veronica is the only one who ever addresses Jimmy Sr.’s over-zealous interest in the pregnancy when she sarcastically states “We don’t want you bursting your waters all over the furniture, isn’t that right, Jimmy dear? They’re new covers” (S 326). Jimmy Sr.’s statement, “We’re

some family alright,'” emphasizes the fact that the outdated ideals of the old Ireland, those that Sharon works against, still have traction and allow him to retain some semblance of power over his family (*S* 337).

Ending *The Snapper* with Sharon’s laughter demonstrates that her act of resistance is both personal and ongoing. The failure of Sharon’s act of resistance to translate into the larger social and cultural spheres is exemplified in Jimmy Sr.’s ability to maintain some control of his family and home. The fact that after checking out *Everywoman*, Jimmy Sr.’s voice and actions are those that dominate the text points to the larger issue that is inherent when a younger generation confronts the ideals of an older generation and articulates a more productive way of engaging with current social, political, economic issues. More specifically, Jimmy Sr.’s reluctance to fully accept Sharon’s destruction of the normative family illustrates that the social change necessary for the Irish to engage with modernity on their own terms is neither fully accepted nor complete. However, much like *The Commitments*, *The Snapper* does indicate that there have been minimal societal and cultural changes. Indeed, Sharon’s subversive laughter has begun the conversation between the two generations and also suggests ways in which Doyle’s modern Dublin and modern Ireland can come to terms with its past in order to create a productive future. Furthermore, Sharon’s willingness to accept her pregnancy and deal with it without the father present acknowledges Doyle’s desire to imagine the Ireland in which his generation came of age and the one in which subsequent generations will come of age. This will allow the Irish to dictate their own future in the same way that Sharon, through the act of naming her daughter Georgina, is able to subvert the patriarchy of the old Ireland.

IV. Doyle's Generational Divides

In both *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*, Roddy Doyle presents a verbal account of an increasingly urbanized country undergoing drastic social changes. As a result of these changes, the country and its people must negotiate an entrance into and a meaningful way to engage with the modernity they experience. Aside from the latent potential that Doyle emphasizes in both novels, the message remains quite bleak because of the generational divide that haunts the nation. In *The Generation of 1914*, Robert Wohl discusses the importance of cultural transmission between generations:

In ordinary times, younger generations must adjust to the way of their elders; in times of rapid change, elders were more open to the wisdom of youth. If there were no generations, there would be no way for new knowledge—that is, the knowledge that comes from fresh experience—to be transmitted and to be assimilated by older age-groups; and at the same time, if it were not for the existence of intermediary generations, cultural transmission could never be accomplished without conflict. (77)

Doyle's Ireland confronts the problematic cultural transmission that Wohl describes in that there is no intermediary generation to mediate the exchange of ideas. Furthermore, the country is in a time of "rapid change" yet the older generation is not willing to accept the "wisdom of [the] youth." Doyle's Ireland lacks a strong intermediary generation which means that there is no way to effectively transmit cultural transformations between generations. As a result, the intellectual gap between generations is made larger: "An old generation with antiquated ideas may be followed by a young generation with infantile ideas, if the intermediary generation that should correct the old or educate the new is missing or quantitatively weak" (Gramsci qtd. in Kiberd 394). Without a strong intermediary generation, a gap between generations develops. This gap constructs borders and boundaries that further divides a people, city, and nation.

Doyle's work presents the idea that modern Ireland has no true leadership because the history of traditional Ireland is not wholly compatible with the goals of the modern generations. No longer indebted to the colonial past, the younger generations seek to engage with the world on their own terms. However, in Doyle's formulation this younger generation lacks a cultural tradition that speaks to their actual experience of modern Ireland. This is problematic because without having a foundational understanding that speaks to their experience of Ireland, the younger generation cannot effectively organize to counter the ideological positions of the older generation.

Both *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*, however, begin the work of establishing a foundation by emphasizing that “*real* meaning is found in social life” and this social life exists outside of institutions, like the Church, that came to dominate Irish life (McCarthy 81; italics original). Additionally, Doyle's verbal depiction of Irish city life is an extension of this project in that it seeks to give voice to the everyday experiences of previously silenced citizens. This enables figures like Jimmy Jr. and Sharon to speak back to the establishment and develop their ideas so that they are able to communicate them to the younger generation which will then be able to organize and fully engage with modernity with their own terms that are derived from their lived experience. Roddy Doyle's project is not intended to present an answer to how the Irish are to develop a method through which they can engage with modernity on their own terms; instead, his work articulates methods that will help establish a cultural tradition that speaks to his and subsequent generations' experiences of modern Ireland. The power of Doyle's work is located in the potentiality to which it points. More specifically, by briefly empowering the younger generations, Roddy Doyle illustrates their ability to,

despite a lack of organization, speak back to traditional Ireland and give an authentic voice to the experiences of the modern Irish subject.

Chapter 3. Dismantling History: Rebuilding and Reimagining Belfast and Northern Ireland in the Fiction of Robert McLiam Wilson

In *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (2012), David Harvey asserts, “The right to the city is, therefore, far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change and reinvent the city more after our hearts’ desire” (4). This reinvention is “a collective rather than an individual right, since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization” (4). The city becomes a space in which individuals can reimagine themselves and their relations to the social, cultural, and political institutions of their society. Moreover, it is a space in which individuals can and do unite to establish collectives that can react to these very same institutions. Through uniting and re-imagining the city in a manner that aligns itself with their experiences and goals, individuals and collectives are able to resist institutional control by breaking down immobile borders and boundaries.

For Robert McLiam Wilson, reimagining Belfast allows him to question the complex, sectarian history of both Belfast and Northern Ireland. In so doing, he imagines an alternative method of engaging with modernity that comes to terms with the divisive history of Northern Ireland and establishes a foundation for the people of Northern Ireland to move beyond the binaristic, sectarian thinking which has dictated their lives and divided their city and country. McLiam Wilson’s first novel, *Ripley Bogle*, addresses the situation in Northern Ireland from the point of view of the eponymous narrator, a homeless vagrant who presents his “autobiographical” tale as he wanders and haunts the streets of London. Bogle’s story begins with his conception and is “bound and tangled in

the misread history and events of the family” (Jeffers 134). For Ripley, family is history because familial history provides a foundation on which one can develop an understanding of self. As his understanding of himself and of his role as subject in multiple nations is formed through his family history, Ripley’s lack of knowledge and misreading of history enables McLiam Wilson to critique the exclusive histories of Northern Ireland. Through Ripley, McLiam Wilson suggests that without an understanding of history that is grounded in fact, Northern Ireland will continuously re-create the sectarian politics that have torn and, in some cases, continue to tear the nation apart.

McLiam Wilson’s *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland like no Other* continues his critique of Northern Ireland but does so in a time when there was, according to Laura Pelaschiar, a “redemption and rediscovery of the Northern capital and its spirit” (117). Presenting Belfast through the stories of best friends Jake Jackson, a Catholic, and Chuckie Lurgan, a Protestant, McLiam Wilson queers the romance-across-the-divide form and demonstrates that normative relationships will neither sustain an effective critique of Belfast nor transform the city in a way that promotes a viable alternative to the vitriolic ideological positions that divide the city and nation.⁸⁸

As Joyce and Doyle do in Dublin and Southern Ireland, McLiam Wilson confronts what it means to be a modern subject in Belfast and Northern Ireland.⁸⁹ However, because it is nearly impossible to escape the sectarian politics that divide

⁸⁸ See Cleary, *Literature, Partition, and the Nation-State*, for other presentations and a more detailed discussion of romances-across-the-divide.

⁸⁹ Here I call the southern 26 counties of Ireland “Southern Ireland” because of the fact that while Roddy Doyle has always written in a country known as The Republic of Ireland, James Joyce never did. In Joyce’s time Ireland was at first a part of the United Kingdom, then the Irish Free States, and finally Éire or Ireland. The Republic of Ireland Act was adopted by the Oireachtas and became official on April 18, 1949 but was adopted by the Oireachtas in 1948 (Bartlett 476–84).

Belfast and Northern Ireland, the city and country from which he writes is far more divided than the Republic of Ireland. His work of reimagining Belfast as a space in which points of contention should be the basis for cross-community conversation, therefore, “signal[s] the transformation of the city from the dark origin of the region’s problems to a location where multiplicity of voice and identity could at last be actuated and celebrated in politically instructive ways” (Longley 90). In so doing, McLiam Wilson posits Belfast as a space in which the multiple voices and subject positions pose a threat to “the monologic desire of cultural nationalism” (Lloyd 54).⁹⁰ In re-creating Belfast as a site that can contain multiple voices, McLiam Wilson humanizes the landscape of the city and articulates a city that includes those who were and still are marginalized by sectarian ideologies.⁹¹ Such a reimagining positions McLiam Wilson’s work as “a scathing attack on the calcified and disabling discourses of identity foisted onto young Irish people by their forebears, living and dead” and intimates that for citizens of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and England espousing a singular world view will only serve to re-create the conditions in which the Troubles flourished (Smyth 132).⁹² The fiction of Robert McLiam Wilson does not evade the challenges of The Troubles and retreat into sheltered areas of experience; instead, it confronts that which has divided Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland and articulates

⁹⁰ Lloyd further contends that Cork, Dublin, and Belfast “represent in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, as already for several centuries in the case of Dublin, sites of cultural hybridization as well as centers of imperial authority and capital domination” (58).

⁹¹ For a further discussion see Reimer.

⁹² In *The Contemporary Irish Novel* Linden Peach asserts that because of Joyce’s influence upon Virginia Woolf “it is not as natural and inevitable in Ireland and Northern Ireland as in England to think in terms of a ‘singular realism’”. In both Ireland and Northern Ireland, the concept of a single authoritative world view has inevitably seemed hollow” (5). For Peach, the historical, political, and social conditions within both Ireland and Northern Ireland establish complex relationships that establish a singular world view being both unfeasible and culturally toxic.

methods by which citizens of these nations can establish the foundation for mutual understanding.

Despite these various positive readings of McLiam Wilson's fictional representations of Northern Ireland, critics tend to over-emphasize the "postmodern promise" of his fiction.⁹³ For these critics the postmodern allows McLiam Wilson to all but ignore the history of Northern Ireland and Belfast. This, for them, is positive because it removes the need to grapple with the complex history of the country and city in order to imagine an alternative future. Consider, for example, Laura Pelaschiar's description of McLiam Wilson's work and the way in which it marks the gradual shift that has occurred in Belfast:

Initially portrayed as home to alienation, confusion and violence in the more conservative and pessimistic depictions of the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties, in the nineteen nineties Belfast has gradually become a new, fertile urban location, no longer a place from which escape is necessary, but rather a laboratory for opportunities, a postmodern place depicted as the only space where it is possible to build and articulate a (post)national conscience, the only location for any possible encyclopedic, multivoiced and multi-ethnic development of Northern society. (117; italics mine)

McLiam Wilson's work, in fact, demonstrates Belfast's shift from an isolated, divided city to one that is ripe with possibilities for articulating alternative, positive futures.

Ripley Bogle presents Belfast as a place that is uninhabitable; Ripley has to leave the city and country in order to attempt to make something of his life. Even with Ripley's departure, the city and its politics continue to haunt his life. In contrast, *Eureka Street's* Jake Jackson is in love with the city and desires to effect positive change. However, this is not to say that the city is a postmodern space or that McLiam Wilson's novels are

⁹³ Matt McGuire has, in fact, titled his article after the promise that he finds in McLiam Wilson's work. See "The Postmodern Promise of Robert McLiam Wilson's Fiction."

postmodern novels. Because McLiam Wilson works are thoroughly invested in thinking through history and engaging with the literary past, he cannot be read as a distinctly postmodern author. Rather, his works and the multi-faceted cities that they depict are more accurately understood as modernist works that are concerned with revising, breaking down, and reacting to the history, both literary and otherwise, that has come to define Belfast and Northern Ireland. Robert McLiam Wilson's Belfast and his work mark new beginnings—that are, indeed, multiple—for the city, the country, and the people that attempt to establish the uniqueness of both modern Belfast and the modernity with which its citizens engage.

According to Fredric Jameson the postmodern is “an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically” (ix). Such thinking “either ‘expresses’ some deeper irrepressible historical impulse ... or effectively ‘represses’ and diverts it” (ix). Moreover, Jameson stresses the “depthlessness” of the postmodern (6). According to Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, the postmodern allows “the possibility of deconstructing the perennial categories of Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist; exposing the difference and *différance* within identity; exploring new horizons of identity altogether” (19; italics original). Because of its ability to dismiss history, Kennedy-Andrews continues, “The postmodern presents the writer with exciting opportunities for re-mapping identity, re-writing the past, re-centering cultural difference, re-shaping the very notion of ‘national’ destiny” (24). Robert McLiam Wilson, however, is not interested in ahistorically re-mapping identity, re-writing the past, re-centering cultural difference, or re-shaping the very notion of ‘national’ destiny; instead, he is concerned with coming to terms with Northern Ireland's history and its war-torn past.

More specifically, his works do not espouse the postmodern idea that “any observation about the present can be mobilized in their very search for the present itself” because, for McLiam Wilson, without an understanding of the past, the present becomes a void (Jameson xii).

McLiam Wilson’s work acknowledges that The Troubles brought about a lack of historical understanding. As a result, his novels insist that one cannot think historically in the postmodern sense because any articulation of the present will be one that is based, not on a historical understanding, but on concerns that are only applicable to the current moment. Thinking through the present without a historical understanding will only create a gulf that further separates an individual, a group of individuals, a city, or a country from the ability to come to terms with their history and productively engage with the present and the future. Rather by insisting on the need to think through the present with a firm grasp on history, McLiam Wilson acknowledges the lost generations of the North—the generations that were divided according to religious dogmas and political ideologies—and insists on articulating the unique Northern Irish experience of modernity that positions the understanding of difference and disagreement as an integral role in the modern city and nation.

Instead of reading McLiam Wilson’s fragmented narratives as misunderstandings of history and his depictions of Belfast and London as postmodern palimpsests, I argue that these narrative starts and re-starts speak to Gertrude Stein’s idea of “beginning again and again” (29). Stein’s desire to capture the shifting consciousness of modern individuals and her general disillusionment with World War One and its aftermath relates

to McLiam Wilson's problems with Belfast and Northern Ireland.⁹⁴ McLiam Wilson's disenchantment with the violence that has come to define Belfast and Northern Ireland drives him to articulate the consciousness of the modern citizen in both the city and country. As a result, he re-presents modern Belfast and modern Northern Ireland as a city and country that should not be defined by The Troubles because they both have the potential to move beyond them. In "beginning again and again" Stein finds that there is a "groping for a continuous present" whereby the reader is never given access to an end; he or she is forced to remain in the present and each iteration of that present is slightly different (32).⁹⁵ Stein's techniques are decidedly modernist for the way in which they transform language by reacting to the linguistic past in order to come to terms with the present and create a new future. Robert McLiam Wilson, however, does not alter language; instead, his novels begin again and again and force his readers to evaluate Belfast, London, and the political, social, and cultural positions in Northern Ireland in order to reimagine the city and come to terms with the sectarian past of the North. McLiam Wilson's modernity relies on the power of imagination to begin again and again in order to "unknow" Northern Ireland's past and typical iterations of its present. More specifically, through coming to "unknow" Belfast and Northern Ireland's divisive ideologies, McLiam Wilson's fiction upsets contemporary articulations of the nation and suggests that the only way to accurately represent both the city and country is through accepting all historical positions. With this historical foundation an individual will then

⁹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Stein's modernism see Goody, especially pages 27–56.

⁹⁵ In her discussion of "beginning again and again" Stein points to her novel *Three Lives* and *Melanctha*. She asserts that these works were reaching for a continuous present but, instead, presented a prolonged present. According to Stein, the articulation of a continuous present to which she refers is seen in *The Making of Americans*.

be able to re-imagine Belfast and Northern Ireland in a way that speaks to and for modern experience.

I. Truth, Lies, Politics and Love: *Ripley Bogle's* Dualistic Narrative and the Problem of Northern Irish Politics

Published in 1989, Robert McLiam Wilson's first novel, *Ripley Bogle*, predates the cultural and ideological shift that transformed Belfast from an isolated city to one that was full of opportunities to imagine alternative ways of engaging with the city, country, and larger world. Ripley Bogle, a homeless wanderer in London, born in Belfast to an Irish prostitute mother and "*the man who paid the halfpenny or whatever it cost in 1963 to shut my old mother,*" is an intelligent, good looking young man (*RB* 237; italics original). His narrative is concerned with drawing the reader in and obtaining his or her approval; in fact, after disclosing his "three little porkies" he admits: "I wanted you to like me of course. Yes, I rather believe that was very important" (*RB* 316; 317). The narrative presents itself in such a manner that the reader's validation will relocate Ripley from the margins of life in the United Kingdom to the center. Because Ripley has neither family nor country to rely on and because of his presence as a homeless wanderer, he is without any form of identification in a city and nation that demand it. He is a liminal figure who haunts the margins of his city and his country. His story, however, establishes who he is and how he identifies in the world. For Ripley, the readers' validation gives credence to his history and allows him to be defined as part of something. While he will remain homeless, he will do so with the knowledge that "Ripley Irish British Bogle" has a history that is recognized. With this foundation he will have the ability to choose to come to terms with his present situation and will be able to forge a more productive future.

For Ripley, the idea of history is foundational because he only knows half of his personal history and is searching for a way to replace what is missing. The uncertainty of his father's history is problematic because it results in Ripley questioning half of his personal history. The only familial ties he is certain of are his Irish mother's and as a result, Ripley is exposed to a biased understanding of Northern Irish history. Because a large percentage of his mother's relatives were arrested on Internment Night, Ripley frequently visits Long Kesh Prison and is exposed to Republican ideology.⁹⁶ The visits give Ripley a unilateral understanding of the political situation in Northern Ireland and presents him with a skewed understanding of history. In addition, his exposure his mother's family also introduces him to the importance of names and naming in Northern Ireland. When detailing his visits to Long Kesh he is sure to account for the prison's other name: "I loved visiting time in Long Kesh. (Or the Maze to you Brits. Names are important in Ulster, like Derry/Londonderry names show your creed. They're an oath, a cry of allegiance. Aspirate you aitches in the wrong place in Belfast and you end up with a rope around your neck)" (*RB* 42). Like Long Kesh/the Maze, Ripley's last name—Bogle—provides no stability. As a result, he only has half of the knowledge he needs to develop an understanding of his personal history. His narrative is an attempt to establish a personal history with other individuals so that he will be able to engage with the present and future in a more productive way.

⁹⁶ In 1971 the Provisional IRA went on the offensive and killed a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and three Scottish soldiers. As a result, the British Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner decided that internment was the only way to solve the violence in Northern Ireland. On August 9, 1971, in what became known as Internment Night, the British army rolled out "Operation Demetrius" and "within twenty-four hours over 342 suspects (all republican) had been arrested. Widespread violence followed leading to seventeen deaths within forty-eight hours, the burning of more than 150 houses, and the displacement of over 7,000 people, almost entirely Catholic" (Bartlett 512–3).

However much Ripley Bogle desires his reader to understand his way of life, he undermines his credibility by admitting, at the end of the novel no less, to three lies. These lies reveal Ripley as an unreliable narrator who, rather than foregrounding an understandable iteration of the effects of The Troubles, appears to be more concerned with outward appearance and acceptance. Ripley's lies function in manners that allow McLiam Wilson to question the versions of history that have divided Northern Ireland. Revealed at the end of the novel, the lies serve to question any form of teleological reading that privileges endings. By subverting the ending of his own story, Ripley Bogle demonstrates that the "history" that is presented in his "autobiography" is uncertain. Without an understanding of history one does not possess the tools to productively engage with his or her surroundings. The knowledge or, at the very least, an accurate understanding of the forces that produced such physical, cultural, political, and social spaces is necessary in order to re-present a city or country in a fashion that is representative of lived experience. Ripley's lies demonstrate how damaging a flawed historical understanding can be; the lies force the reader to constantly reevaluate the narrative and leave him or her questioning the veracity of the story.⁹⁷ As a result of destroying his own credibility, Ripley also demonstrates the importance of questioning history; the lies encourage his readers to become more critical of his story. By insisting on a reevaluation of his narrative, Ripley also destabilizes any understanding that his readers think they have and points to the constant turmoil in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and the problem with a homogenous, totalizing history when trying to understand a divided nation (Kirkland, *Literature and Culture* 46–8).

⁹⁷ See Jeffers 132–40 for a discussion of the way in which the narrative forces the reader to evaluate the distance he or she has from the text.

Upon reflecting on the reason that he told the lies, Ripley states “Lies are the coup de grâce essential to modern life” (*RB* 317). For Ripley, the lies that he tells serve to function as a device to pacify individuals; more specifically, they quell the disorientating effects of shock that one might experience if he or she is told the truth. While masking the shock of the truth, Ripley’s lies, which reveal that he is not the pitiful young man he appears to be, also traumatize the reader by calling the narrative into question. Similar to the competing histories of Northern Ireland, the lies in Ripley’s story demonstrate the danger of fully trusting one story. Ripley’s lies involve Northern Irish politics, abortion, and romance. The first lie that he reveals concerns his friend Maurice, who gets involved with the IRA and, instead of being protected, is turned in by Ripley. The second involves his relationship with Protestant Deirdre Curran, the pregnancy of which Ripley is a part, and the ensuing abortion that Ripley performs. The final one deals with a romance with the posh Laura from Cambridge who, contrary to what Ripley states, barely knows he exists and detests him.

For Ripley, the lies present an opportunity for an imaginative escape from the quagmire that is Northern Ireland. In attempting to flee the tumultuousness of Northern Ireland, Ripley’s fabrications call attention to the problems of the North but also create an element of doubt in his story that is problematic for the reader. However, the narrative uncertainty does not, as Jennifer Jeffers argues, imply that the entire narrative is a fabrication (139). Elke D’hoker acknowledges that Ripley’s fabricated life “draw[s] attention to the narrator and the way in which he or she tells, distorts, or conceals his or her tale,” but fails to account for the way that Ripley’s narrative questions history (“Unreliable Ripley” 464). While the story does, as D’hoker argues, call attention to

Ripley's rhetorical strategies, it also demonstrates the malleability of history. Instead of focusing on the effects that the lies have on Ripley and his narrative, I argue that Ripley's lies emphasize the problematic acceptance of a singular history. His narrative calls for constant reevaluation and suggests that historical understandings are never complete. Instead, such an understanding should be an ongoing process in which stability is problematic because it creates a dogma that allows people, places, and ideologies to become static.

Ripley's first lie and the true story, which details his relationship with Maurice Kelly, directly question the two communities of Northern Ireland. According to Ripley's first account, "Maurice Kelly was the eldest son of a prosperous academic family from the relative splendor of the Malone Road," a description which points to the disparity between different neighborhoods within Belfast (*RB* 99). For Ripley, however, the class divide does not matter much. Instead, Ripley dwells on Maurice's Catholicism: "Maurice was a major Catholic. He was practically papal. The tenets of the Holy Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church played a starring role in the formation of his moral code, a code which was rigorous in the extreme. He was ineluctably, irrefragably Irish" (*RB* 100). Here Ripley establishes that Maurice's faith dictates the demanding way through which he interacts with the world. Furthermore, Ripley equates Maurice's life choice to being Irish; he effectively casts Irishness as a state of being that is dictated by faith and makes rigorous moral demands of the individual.

Maurice's Irishness, however, does not stop with religion. Indeed, Ripley continues to describe Maurice and, by extension Irishness, through Maurice's politics in relation to faith: "Mixed with this Catholic business were his witless politics. Maurice

was a passionate Nationalist and Republican. He was capable of the most bewildering stupidity and barbarism in his support of Catholic Celtism, just like all his badbastard compatriots. The Catholic Church and Irish Nationalism. Lovely. Subjects indivisible in nature and import” (*RB* 100). For Ripley, religion is problematically and inextricably tied to “witless politics” that do not better the people who adhere to them. Maurice’s “Catholic Celtism” renders him a stupid barbarian whose destiny, because of these beliefs, will lead to death. In denigrating Maurice’s beliefs and politics in the way that he does and refusing to attempt to understand this point of view, Ripley “remains blind to the violence of his own voice” (D’hoker, “Hybrid Identities” 29). Consequently, Ripley becomes the same “badbastard” that he critiques. In becoming a “badbastard,” Ripley demonstrates the danger of failing to come to terms with an aspect of history with which he does not agree. Through Ripley, McLiam Wilson suggests that ignoring or dismissing history on account of personal disagreement is an act of violence that is akin to the violence carried out by sectarian groups. The violence in the act of dismissing history perpetuates the ideologies that have divided and continue to divide Northern Ireland.

However, according to Ripley these beliefs and subject positions are no fault of the individuals. Instead, they are a result of the political and social climate of Belfast and Ireland. In order to exonerate both Maurice and himself from blame, Ripley states “What you must remember is that our particular generation of Irish folk were born into all that crap” and wonders “What chance did we ever have?” (*RB* 100; 101). The violence in which both of them take part stems from the sectarian division of Belfast and the partitioning of Ireland. Essentially, by exonerating both Maurice and himself, Ripley accepts that he and Maurice are victims of the Northern Irish system. However, Ripley is

quick to point out the reason for the difference between them is ideological; Maurice followed and Ripley refused to follow. At this moment in the text, this difference effectively frees him from any guilt for Maurice's death:

There you have it. That was the Ireland of our birth and growth. It affected us differently. All that Gaelic, nationalist, Celtic superiority bollockspeak. Because he had known nothing else, Maurice saw it as his birthright and treasured its insanity as his own. Because I had known nothing else, I disclaimed blame and didn't want to know. I began to memorise the ferry timetables for Holyhead, Stranraer and Liverpool. It was somebody else's crime and thus somebody else's problem. My answer would be my exit. This used to drive Maurice potty, I'm glad to say. (*RB* 101)

Again, the problem is Ireland and the way in which it raised its young people.

Furthermore, by insinuating that adhering to the "Gaelic, nationalist, Celtic superiority bollockspeak" was a choice, Ripley blames Maurice for his own death. In addition, when Ripley states "They killed him, I knew they would in the end but what could I do? I was young, a boy. I had problems of my own. It wasn't my fault. There was nothing I could do" he continues to shirk any possible association with this incident (*RB* 102). The fact that Ripley plans to leave Belfast and escape the virulent social and cultural climate effectively "kills" Ripley's ability to effect change in Belfast. While problematic and divisive, Maurice's cause does attempt to resist what he and those of his ideological ilk saw as detrimental to the betterment of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. For McLiam Wilson fleeing Belfast is more problematic than espousing a vitriolic ideology. Like Ripley's act of dismissing Maurice's "Catholic Celtism," Ripley's flight is an act of violence because it eliminates the possibility of ever coming to understand the circumstances that have created the conditions in Northern Ireland.

Instead of freeing Ripley from blame, fleeing the country makes him more guilty and as violent as those he is trying to escape.

Almost 200 pages after Ripley claims “It wasn’t my fault. There was nothing I could do,” we discover that he “was not exactly expansive in [his] account of the events surrounding the death of Maurice” (*RB* 102; 295). In fact, the entire story about Maurice, except that he was killed is a lie; there was, indeed, something that Ripley could have done. Ripley explains that Maurice had joined the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and was prepared to kill “soldiers, policemen, prison officers, the UDR, etc.” because “They were legitimate targets” who were not invited to Ireland (*RB* 296). As a result of a splintering in the IRA, Maurice becomes wanted and has Ripley help hide him. However, a group of men find Ripley, hold a gun to his head, force him to tell them where Maurice is, and to help them lure Maurice out of hiding in order to kill him. After Maurice’s death, Ripley admits “This heap of slime and carcass tickled my guilt. It was fitting really. He was my friend, his death was my fault and now his corpse would be my private nightmare” (*RB* 311). Seeing Maurice being shot and having to watch him die gravely affects Ripley; it leaves him guilt-ridden and continues to haunt him. The fact that Ripley refuses to engage with his friend’s ideology results in a nightmare from which he will never escape. Ripley’s nightmare further emphasizes McLiam Wilson’s call for active engagement with Northern Irish history. If an individual will not engage with this history, then, like Ripley, he or she will be forever haunted by his or her inaction.

Ripley’s “private nightmare” is the aspect of Maurice’s story that haunts him most; but the true story about Maurice introduces other points that demonstrates Ripley’s inability to face the problems of Northern Ireland. After being chastised by Ripley for

joining the IRA, Maurice engages Ripley in a debate about the English presence that articulates the political positions that each young man holds:

‘There is a military presence in Ireland that doesn't belong here. The Brits aren't Irish, the Unionists aren't Irish, not properly. What does that make them?’ he asked.

‘Fucking lucky,’ I replied, rather neatly, I thought.

‘Yeah, that's funny. That's very fucking funny. It makes them invaders.’ (*RB* 296)

This conversation emphasizes the view that many Republicans—particularly those who are in the IRA—hold. More specifically, it is divisive; by positing that the English are a military presence, it leaves no room for peaceful compromise. The reaction to the “invaders” will be one that includes destruction and death and will continue to divide Belfast and Ireland. Furthermore, Maurice’s position narrowly defines what it means to be Irish and as a result, limits possibilities for overcoming the past. Instead, much like the citizen, Maurice is content with continuing to espouse vitriolic ideals that will only separate the country further. Instead of attempting to think through ways that could begin reconciliation, Ripley turns to sarcasm and comedy to dismiss what he believes is ridiculous. While Maurice’s ideology is not acceptable, it does engage with Irish history. Ripley’s response, however, fails to acknowledge any history; in fact, because the humor defines the Irish through what they lack, it inscribes an element of power to the British and Unionists. Ripley’s sarcasm provides an escape from divisive history and politics through denigrating others. His unwillingness to engage in meaningful debate is an act of violence because it signals a lack of understanding. As a result, Ripley’s position is as dangerous as Maurice’s.

Ripley’s apathy and Maurice’s zealous adherence to politics in Ireland call attention to driving political issues of the North. More specifically, and as Joe Cleary

discusses at length, partition in Ireland was a decision that limited minorities' rights to self-determination. In ensuring that Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom Unionists "insisted on rights to self-determination for themselves that they refused to extend to others, and that their self-determination was secured in ways that effectively consolidated the colonially inherited domination of one group over another" (*Literature* 39). The way in which political ideologies—whether they be Republicanism or Unionism—trap the characters in Ripley Bogle demonstrates the way in which partition continues to affect individual development. For Maurice, his adherence to Republicanism is something into which he was born. Ripley's apathy represents a third position but, like the two that he critiques, also limits self-determination in that it does not permit those who disagree with him to pursue their own interests. In turning his back on Belfast and Ireland, Ripley effectively sanctions the divide between the two communities, an action which is itself an act of violence.

Presenting the tumultuous politics of Belfast through Ripley's story about Maurice—both the lie and the truth—allows McLiam Wilson to demonstrate the danger behind adhering to the idea of two communities, the danger of turning away from the problems, and the danger of relying on a singular account of history. Although he is not killed, Ripley does not take action, wastes away in England, and becomes an individual that does nothing more than haunt the pages of his own narrative. In *Ripley Bogle*, McLiam Wilson provides three ways of thinking through the Troubles; one can subscribe to Republicanism, be a Unionist, or, like Ripley, be completely apathetic and flee the nation. In so doing, McLiam Wilson establishes that when considering the historical importance of the right to self-determination the partitioning of Ireland illustrates the way

that Unionists reinscribed the colonial domination of one group over another. The politics behind the Act of Partition limited rights of Northern nationalists by viewing them “as actual or incipient enemies to the new ‘Protestant State’ and were subjected in ensuing decades to various kinds of legal, economic and political discrimination to reduce whatever power remained to them” (Cleary, *Literature* 39). As a result, these individuals were marginalized in such a way that their histories became sordid stories of what not to do in Northern Ireland. Through Ripley’s problematic political apathy, McLiam Wilson extends the power of limiting the right to self-determination to Belfast and Northern Ireland. The city and country do not offer any opportunities for self-determination for those who do not subscribe to either of the dominant ideologies. While already restrictive, Belfast and Northern Ireland become places in which Ripley cannot develop as an individual and from which he must flee.

i. Abortion and Disdain: Ripley’s Women

While Ripley’s first-admitted lie involves Irish politics and The Troubles, his other lies address his association with two women. The first relationship that he discusses is with Deirdre Curran, a Protestant girl from Belfast, and the abortion that she has. The second is his infatuation with Laura Markham, a wealthy English girl whom he meets while at Cambridge. In each instance, Ripley’s inability to maintain a productive partnership calls attention to the failure of love-across-the-divide relationships.

Ripley’s relationship with Deirdre Curran is an iteration of a Catholic-Protestant relationship that can bridge the divide between the two communities. However, despite Maurice’s warnings, Ripley’s mother’s disapproval, and Uncle Joe’s threats the proposed romance becomes a satirical embodiment of such affairs. In fact, Ripley himself states

“All that love-across the barricade stuff only ever worked in screenplays and pop songs. In real life I’d soon be graced with a head hole that was, strictly speaking, surplus to my cranial requirements (probably donated by a staunch member of my extended family)” (RB 103; italics original). Reacting to Ripley’s liaison, Ripley’s mother *“said that Deirdre was a Protestant (i.e. a heathen, a pagan, a Godless one), and though she was a nice enough girl, she was still a Protestant and thus she’d have to go”* (RB 103; italics original). Despite the warnings, Ripley, whose *“heart was full of righteous indignation,”* continues to see Deirdre and as a result, his mother *“asked my interesting Uncle Joe to try and talk some sense into me”* and he *“threatened to blow my knees off if I didn’t do what my mummy wanted me to do”* (RB 103; italics original). Because of the disapproval and threats, Ripley:

lit out ... I buggered off sharpish. I hit the road, Jack. I faded, as they say. I bade farewell to that family of mine. I didn't have anywhere else to go or any money and that kind of thing but I wasn't breaking my heart, believe me! Family is family, true; but on the other hand, I was fond of my knees and keen on keeping them. (RB 103–4; italics original)

Ripley’s relationship with Deirdre brings about the loss of another aspect of his life that usually provides stability. More specifically, in addition to being without a nation, Ripley is now without a family and home and becomes a nationless wanderer who haunts both home and homeland.

While Ripley’s flight from family and home are a result of the beginning of his relationship with Deirdre, family and home are not the central part of his lie. In fact, these aspects of this lie do not appear to bother Ripley as much as the initial revelation of Deirdre’s pregnancy. According to Ripley, “The Deirdre Dilemma” is the “worst of bad times” (RB 142). What actually troubles Ripley is the fact that, according to her father,

Deirdre had a miscarriage as “the result of a botched backstreet abortion” (*RB* 146). Complicating things, Ripley initially claims that he is not the father of the child because out of “youthful respect for her [Deirdre’s] virginity,” he did not sleep with her (*RB* 146). In fact, earlier in the novel Ripley insists he was physically unable to have sex with Deirdre. Ripley is further alienated from life in Belfast because no one tells Deirdre’s parents that he is not the baby’s father.

However, any sympathy for Ripley is lost once he tells the truth about Deirdre’s miscarriage. More specifically, he reveals that he was the father of the baby and that “the very abortion itself was carried out by none other than yours perfidiously” (*RB* 313). In fact, the abortion itself was messy as “Abortion was illegal in Ulster and we couldn’t nip down the nearest NHS health garage and have the little rascal whipped out” (*RB* 313).⁹⁸

Ripley has to perform a do-it-yourself abortion which he casually describes:

I wasn't one for knitting needles and since I was doing an art A level I actually stuck an artist's brush up her twat. Long-handled, soft-haired variety. Rowney's finest. I rooted around for about fifteen minutes – shoving, poking, plunging, cranking. Medicine was easy. A matter of simple physics. Human salvage” (*RB* 313).

Predictably, the abortion goes wrong and Deirdre is traumatized. At this point, Ripley begins to try to explain away his mistake by blaming Deirdre for being “vague about dates and estimated duration” (*RB* 313). Consequently, his “temporal calculations” are off and in reality, Deirdre was more than five months pregnant (*RB* 314). His blame does not stop with this one incident; indeed, when discussing the abortion, he claims that “it

⁹⁸ Despite declaring that all British women have the right to abortion under the National Health Service, the Abortion Act of 1967 did not extend governmental funding to Northern Ireland. In fact, abortion remains illegal in Northern Ireland and, as McLiam Wilson addresses in an interview, is taboo: “It’s a bizarre country and it’s shown so clearly by the fact that while the South and the North are separate national entities, abortion remains illegal in both (almost uniquely in Europe), what does that say about us?” (qtd. in Magennis 95–6).

must have been a lot easier for her since she wasn't even Catholic; Protestants have abortions all the time, practically every day. It was no sweat for them. No it was definitely me that was doing the suffering" (*RB* 313). Instead of attempting to understand the way that Deirdre might feel, Ripley focuses on his own emotions. In describing his own pain, Ripley attempts to overshadow the fact that the back-alley abortion turns Deirdre into "some form of madwoman in the attic" who enjoys inflicting pain (Magennis 97).

Deirdre's abortion addresses problematic romantic relationships between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland and demonstrates the importance of being able to interrogate one's personal history. Unlike Sharon Rabbitte, neither Ripley nor Deirdre want to have the child because Belfast and Northern Ireland cannot accommodate a mixed-religion baby. The city and country are inhospitable to such a child because its presence will highlight the futility of the sectarian ideologies that have divided and continue to divide the city and country. Furthermore, the two accounts of the baby's conception demonstrate the importance of having a concrete history as a foundation for future development. If born, the child's history will be comprised of Ripley's confused past, Ripley's two accounts of the child's father, and Deirdre's past. The child's uncertain history fails to provide the support needed to successfully engage with modern Belfast and modern Northern Ireland. While not supporting the abortion, McLiam Wilson demonstrates how integral being able to confront one's history is; without this possibility an individual will be forever stuck in the past.

Deirdre's abortion is not Ripley's only lie concerning a woman and a relationship that has the potential to bridge the divide. While at Cambridge, Ripley falls in love with

Laura Markham, a posh English girl for whom Ripley “had it big and bad and sad” (*RB* 209). Ripley initially tells us that Laura painted a picture of him that was on display in a gallery and that Laura has a boyfriend, Greg, who, like her, is wealthy and looks down on Ripley. The climax of Ripley’s relationship with Laura comes at the Trinity Ball when Greg tells Ripley that they “don’t want you [Ripley] here” because he does not belong (*RB* 260). Ripley, the “Bogman,” attempts to leave but is not allowed; Greg and his friends wanted to start a fight (*RB* 260). Despite wanting to “kick the shit out of them,” Ripley does not since that is not what Laura wants (*RB* 261). Instead, he “just walked away” coming “to the conclusion that there was no way in which I could glitter romantically so I cut my losses and shimmied the hell out of there before the three stooges changed their minds” (*RB* 261). As a result of his passiveness, Laura finds him and kisses him; they sleep together and begin a summer-long relationship.

Ripley contends that, because of his success with Laura, he had “made it” because she “was one of the daughters of the world. One of those people who life seems to have blessed in a shockingly arbitrary manner. She was good to me. My little dalliance with the good amongst us. For a time, for a very short time, she made me a little like her. She dragged me halfway up to meet her” (*RB* 267; 272). However, like his stories about Maurice and Deirdre, Ripley admits that he made up the majority of the story after the Trinity Ball. Instead of walking away from Greg and his friends, Ripley confronts them and “They beat the living shit out of [him];” he spends “the night in Casualty waiting to get my bashed-up old body looked at,” not “enigmatically waiting for morning” and sleeping with Laura (*RB* 315). Instead, “Laura grew to loathe [him] ... [Ripley] just pissed her off in a multitude of less intimate, less enjoyable ways” (*RB* 315).

In the cases of both Deirdre and Laura, McLiam Wilson demonstrates the problematic construction of romances-across-the-divide when each party's ideological understanding differs. The resulting relationship becomes multifaceted because it functions in different ways for each party. In *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State*, Cleary suggests that the Northern Irish version of the romance-across-the-divide is one that, in order to succeed, must "take seriously the relationship between sectarian conflict and the existing state order" (113). However, and as is often the case, the Northern Irish romances only succeed when the romance and politics are kept separate. The failure of these romances, according to Cleary, is an "imaginative failure" that marks

an unwillingness or inability to imagine a transformed social order where the embrace of the lovers might be consummated. This imaginative failure is ultimately symptomatic of a corresponding faltering of political will: one that refuses to confront the fact that resolution to the sectarian conflict would require not just a modification of attitude on the part of the communities involved but substantive transformation of the existing structures of state power in the region as well. (*Literature* 115)

While Ripley's romances do, indeed, adhere to Cleary's argument, they move beyond the sectarian ideologies by introducing an individual who is politically disaffected. Instead of seeking to bridge the divide, Ripley simply falls in love with both Deirdre and Laura. It is his mother and extended family that take offense to the fact that Deirdre is a Protestant. Ripley's political disaffection allows him to think beyond the two communities of Northern Ireland, but it also destines his relationships for failure. In order for his relationships to succeed, Ripley must actively try to modify the attitudes of those around him and be invested in transforming state power. He, however, is interested in neither of these courses of action because he is more concerned with fleeing the country to preserve his well-being. Political apathy is not understood as a viable political

position and as a result, Ripley becomes a political exile who cannot integrate back into Northern Ireland. Through the relationships, McLiam Wilson critiques the poisonous exclusivity of Northern Irish ideology.

Furthermore, the multiple stories, both truths and lies, that create the relationships call attention to the problematic construction of a foundation for future development that relies on a singular history. The lie about Deirdre depicts Ripley as a noble young man while the truth turns him into a monster who is devoid of feelings. Likewise, the lie about Laura creates a positive image of Ripley as a good-looking, cultured college student while the truth reveals him to be annoying and invisible. If any one of the four Ripley's that are created were to be taken as the whole truth, then all parts of the narrative that did not align with that particular Ripley would be deconstructed. In other words, not one of the singular histories accurately articulate who Ripley Bogle is. However, when read together the lost young man who is search for a past and who yearns for acceptance becomes visible. Thus, McLiam Wilson illustrates that in order to come to terms with Northern Ireland's past one must synthesize the dogmatic singular histories that divide both Belfast and Northern Ireland.

When taken together, Ripley's lies ultimately force the reader to question the veracity of the novel. According to one reader, Ripley's confession is the moment in which "the fictional bond between reader and narrator is shattered beyond repair" (D'hoker, "Unreliable" 468). However, Ripley's confession also demonstrates that a history can be written and revised in order to serve specific ends. For example, Ripley's original story is designed to attain acceptance from his reader; all he wants is for his readers to like him. He then revises the story because of his guilt and does, to an extent,

feel bad for his readers. If he wants those who are encountering his story to like him, then he must admit that he has falsified information. When considered alongside other “larger-than-life” narrators, this remorse is unique to Ripley.⁹⁹ The significance of Ripley’s reasons for lying speaks to his lack of personal history. In a moment where Ripley reflects on his troubles he declares that not knowing who his father is is at the root of his issues: “*I think many of my personal problems stem from the fact that I never knew who my father was. My real father that is . . . Surprisingly, I was largely untroubled by any filial calculations until I went to Cambridge. Then someone asked me if I ever wondered about it. Promptly, I began to wonder about it*” (RB 237; italics original). Without a father, Ripley is partially unaware of his own history. What he does know about his family is partially true and partially a construct of his or his mother’s mind. Admitting to lying about large portions of his narrative attempts to rectify the lies that he has been told about his family history. His confession hopes to forge a relationship with his audience that will create a history for Ripley. Furthermore, confronting the lies he has told allows Ripley to address the lie that is his history. Ripley hopes that the stories he has told will permit him to engage with the modern world in a more productive manner.

Ripley Bogle attempts to recreate himself by revealing the truth behind his lies.

Ripley’s revelations, however, do more than attempt to correct the narrative that he has

⁹⁹ For example, Henry Smart, the protagonist of Roddy Doyle’s *The Last Roundup Trilogy*, creates what amounts to a tall-tale surrounding his life. He manages to rise from nothing, become a major player in The Easter Rising, a large part of the IRA, a body guard for Louis Armstrong, and then part of John Wayne’s wild west and Hollywood. However ludicrous the story surrounding his current circumstances, Smart never tells the reader that he may have stretched the truth. As a result, Henry Smart becomes a folk hero who is created through false history. In promoting such false history, his story becomes one that works against the project of modernization for which Henry Smart works tirelessly. More specifically, it creates a historical gap that provides a faulty foundation for the establishment of a modern, Irish Free State.

already told. In articulating two different versions of the same story—pre- and post-lies—*Ripley Bogle* effectively calls attention to the problematic construction of a story, or a nation that is based on two competing histories. For Ripley’s readers the understanding of the novel post-lie is undercut by what comes before. As a result, readers cannot accurately place Ripley or his story; in fact, Ripley’s confession forces readers to question what he claims to be truth, even after he admits to lying. Such uncertainty creates a historical gap that points to the futility of attempting to work through the present without a clearly articulated understanding of the past.

However, the narrative lie suggests a method through which individuals can navigate the history of a divided nation. By presenting two stories, McLiam Wilson’s *Ripley Bogle* demonstrates the importance of understanding multiple histories through synthesis. When taken as a whole, the novel defines Ripley as an irresponsible, sometimes monstrous, vagrant who is a product of a city and nation that demands identification as “either-or.” Those who cannot identify in this way are marginalized because they counteract the divisive ideologies and histories that define this city and nation. In presenting a narrative that is multiple stories, McLiam Wilson calls attention to the problematic understanding of history and insists that in order to articulate a truly Irish modernity, the people and their nations must come to terms with their history, just as Ripley does when he admits his guilt and revises his story, and not simply look past it as if it is an anomalous period of time that will not haunt the present and future.

II. “Clear eyes” and Imagination: *Eureka Street*’s New Belfast

Unlike *Ripley Bogle*, which takes place in the midst of The Troubles, Robert McLiam Wilson’s *Eureka Street: A Novel of Ireland Like no Other* occurs immediately

following the paramilitary ceasefire of 1994.¹⁰⁰ In addition, *Eureka Street* does not follow the same position regarding relationships that *Ripley Bogle* does. Instead, it opens with “All stories are love stories,” insisting that romance in Northern Ireland is, indeed, possible (1). Furthermore, this beginning points to the romantic inclinations of Jake Jackson, the apolitical, Catholic narrator whose most important relationship is the one that he has with his city, Belfast. In fact, when he was younger, Jake’s love affair with his city and country led him to hope that there would be a fundamental transformation within Ireland that would spell out a better future:

I had often hoped that the future would be different. That from out of the dark mists of Ireland’s past and present a new breed would arise. The New Irish. When all the old creeds and permutations in people would be contradicted. We would see the Loyalist Catholic. The liberal Protestant. The honest politician. The intelligent poet. But, as I sat and listened to my workmates, I decided I wasn’t going to hold my hand in my arse waiting for any Utopia. (*ES* 164)

The political, social, and cultural climate within Belfast, as demonstrated by the bigotry of Jake’s workmates, forces Jake to accept that his New Irish have yet to be born because Belfast is currently unable to see beyond the two communities that have defined the city and nation.

Jake’s disillusionment, however, neither precludes the birth of the New Irish nor indicates that Jake does not believe that it can happen. Indeed, he only states that he “wasn’t going to hold [his] hand in [his] arse waiting for any Utopia.” *Eureka Street* is to be a political novel that engages with and critiques mid-1990s Belfast and is about a disillusioned character who is attempting to assert his right to the city; he does so by

¹⁰⁰ On December 15, 1993 the British and Irish governments signed the Downing Street Declarative with the hopes of urging Republicans to end violent attacks. The IRA, however, did not immediately agree. On August 31, 1994 they announced that from midnight “there will be a complete cessation of military operations. All our units have been instructed accordingly” (*English* 285). For a brief overview of the ceasefire and surrounding events see Dixon and O’Kane 63–93.

demonstrating the importance of imagination to present a version of Belfast that speaks to the modern experience of its inhabitants. Like *Ripley Bogle*, *Eureka Street* articulates an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of Belfast without dwelling on the conventions of the “Troubles thriller,” and “trades received notions of a grim, quarantined, and inscrutable city for a Belfast that is a vital cosmopolitan, and, in fact, ordinary part of Europe and modernity. More importantly, by promoting a series of profoundly ordinary moments, *Eureka Street* delineates and celebrates a reconstituted urban imaginary” (Reimer 90–1). However, I argue, that despite being positive, McLiam Wilson’s Belfast is not as celebratory as Reimer asserts. While Reimer’s assessment of the novel accurately addresses McLiam Wilson’s project, it fails to note that the experience of Belfast in *Eureka Street* is unique to Jake Jackson. Jake’s perspective of the city often dismisses points-of-view with which he does not agree which, in turn, creates a city that is as dismissive as the one he is trying to deconstruct. Jake’s aspirations to re-see Belfast can be violently exclusive; the Republicans and Unionists Jake loathes are and will remain a part of *his* city. In *Eureka Street*, Robert McLiam Wilson details *one* way that Belfast and Northern Ireland can be reimagined and, through Jake, demonstrates the potential of the people when they assert their right to the city. Through both the physical and imaginative wanderings, the “urban imaginary” that Jake creates is one that is able to both define how to relate to the outside world and defy the destructiveness of the sectarian divide.

Jake, however, does not and cannot fail to mention problems that he sees within the city and its people. In a conversation that he has with his Protestant best friend Chuckie, Chuckie’s American girlfriend Max, and Jake’s Republican date Aoirghe, Jake

delineates the main political issues that he encounters in the city. After exchanging pleasantries, Aoirghe establishes that Jake is from West Belfast—which, according to Jake is “TV new talk” because “Nobody in Belfast says West Belfast” (*ES* 94)—and goes on to say that she “was sure that [he was] a Protestant” (*ES* 95). She continues, “I don’t know. You just don’t seem very Catholic. You don’t seem very West Belfast,” to which Jake replies, “I’m sorry but I haven’t heard anybody talk crap like that for years. Not very Catholic, Jesus! I’m tired of all that bullshit” (*ES* 95). In this initial exchange, Jake both calls attention to the fact that there are different ways to identify neighborhoods in Belfast as well as the reductive nature of attempting to identify someone through their religious affiliation. For Jake, Northern Ireland has become a place that one may love but also a place that restricts identification or affiliation; the nation determines how an individual may identify. As a result, Jake becomes an exile at home who does not have a country and does not consider himself part of any nation.

What Jake reacts to, and what McLiam Wilson catalogues, is the division that has created a mythology of Belfast and Northern Ireland that euthanizes an individual’s will to pursue a future. For Jake, the root of this problem is in the political arena because “Politics are basically antibiotic. i.e, an agent capable of killing or injuring living organisms. I have a big problem with that” (*ES* 96). The political partition of Ireland—that which resulted in the establishment of a country wherein Protestants, and only Protestants, were able to pursue a liberal self-determination—created the circumstances of religious, political, social, cultural binaries by which individuals identified. As a result, divisive political identification defines a Belfast and Northern Ireland which, for Jake, are not the true Belfast or the true Northern Ireland. His unwillingness to consider

himself Irish, in fact he “doesn’t consider himself at all,” establishes an oppositional identity that aims to distance itself from preconceived understandings of Northern Ireland and Belfast (*ES* 98). Jake’s oppositional identity reflects his belief that the citizens of Northern Ireland neither understand the politics behind their differences nor recognize the fact that they are more alike than different:

The tragedy was that Northern Ireland (Scottish) Protestants thought themselves like the British. Northern Ireland (Irish) Catholics thought themselves like Eireans (proper Irish). The comedy was that any once-strong difference had long melted away and they resembled no one now as much as they resembled each other. The world saw this and mostly wondered, but round these parts folk were blind. (*ES* 163)

For Jake, Northern Ireland consists of various people who are, above all, from Northern Ireland. The differences that they perceive are political positions that have been presented and repeated for the better part of a century. Such repetition serves to inculcate the differences that divide the country.

Furthermore, Jake recognizes that Northern Ireland is a nation that is on its own. More specifically, when debating politics Chuckie attempts to be a peacemaker by discussing the United Kingdom, Jake points out that “Great Britain and the UK are separate entities. We aren’t invited to either one of those parties” (*ES* 96). Essentially, those who want to be able to identify as something other than Northern Irish are left to their own devices; no entity that involves England lays claim to the nation. As a result, Jake constructs a Belfast that is defined from within. Instead of identifying as part of England or the larger United Kingdom, Jake demonstrates that the citizens of Belfast and Northern Ireland must seek ways to identify as citizens of this city and nation. These people will then be able to illustrate that the violence that became synonymous with Belfast and Northern Ireland are a minuscule part of who they are. Through Jake,

McLiam Wilson deftly criticizes the established notion of Belfast by integrating misconceptions about the city into a larger picture. The violence and divisiveness are no longer Belfast; instead, the city becomes a container wherein these negatives are a small part of the city. McLiam Wilson's representation of Belfast becomes an iteration of the city that is defined by those who experience it rather than by outsiders who are not immersed in its culture.

Jake's conception of Belfast is one that focuses on re-seeing the city as a space determined by the lives, not the politics, of those who inhabit the space. As a result, he effectively communicates that modern Belfast is a place whose modernity is determined by those who actually live the modern urban experience. Consider, for example, Jake's Belfast as he sees it from the top of the Europa Hotel:

But I loved this roof. It was the only good thing about working there. Failure always has some upside. The hotel was one of the tallest buildings in this flat, flat town and I could see all Belfast from up there. I could see the City Hospital like a biscuit box with orange trim. I could see the bruised, carious Falls. I could see the breezeblock rubble and trubble of Rathcooke, fat and ominous in the thinned distance. I could even see the Holy Land. I could see all the police stations, I could see all the Army forts, I could see all the helicopters. But, from up there, the streets smelled sweet and Belfast was made of cardboard in the mild and cooling air. (*ES* 160)

A menial construction job—what Jake considers to be failure—places him on the top of what “was once the most bombed hotel in Europe” which, in turn, enables him to re-see Belfast as a cardboard city (*ES* 101). Imagining Belfast as being made out of cardboard intimates two things about Jake's re-construction of the city: First, being made out of cardboard means that Jake can re-build Belfast in any way he sees fit. This gives him the ability to imagine a countless number of alternative Belfasts. Second, despite allowing Jake's imagination to freely construct the city, a cardboard city is not a stable city. As a

result, the city that Jake constructs will be susceptible to the same forces that currently divide Belfast. However, Jake attempts to unify Belfast by seeing areas of the city that are stigmatized and divided by The Troubles; he mentions the Protestant Rathcooke immediately after he notices the Catholic Falls. Furthermore, each of these neighborhoods is in ruins; Rathcooke is nothing more than rubble and the Falls are decaying. However, Jake describes them as if they are alive—“bruised” and “carious” and “fat and ominous,” respectively—which intimates that, despite the current condition of the city, they have the ability to be re-constructed. Finally, from atop this hotel Jake is able to upset the power of the state by reducing tools of surveillance to objects that can be observed themselves. The police, soldiers, and helicopters can no longer fully control the citizens of Belfast; instead, they become a small part of the experience of the city.

Jake’s ability to re-see and suggest a way to recreate Belfast foregrounds the importance of being able to see clearly. Indeed, throughout the novel Jake constantly comments on the eyes of others, his ability to see through windows, and the need to clean the windows of his car, “the Wreck.” When reflecting on the power of seeing, Jake addresses the ability of eyes to bear witness to and give testimony in the city:

As your eye roams the city (as your eyes must, as our eyes, those democratic unideological things, always will, giving witness, testimony), you see that there is indeed a division in the people here. Some call it religion, some call it politics. But the most reliable, the most ubiquitous division is money. Money is the division you can always put your money on. (*ES* 214)

Here Jake asserts that without a bias, the eyes see the essence of Belfast. When he observes the city without bias, a division does, indeed, surface. This division, however, is not determined by religion or politics. In fact, by stating that “some call it religion, some call it politics” Jake disempowers divisions that may be caused by both and, in so

doing, destabilizes the version of Belfast that is defined by these ideologies. Instead of relying on either religion or politics, Jake asserts that “the most ubiquitous division is money,” a statement which serves to liken Belfast to other cities of the western world in which economic disparity is the foundation of division. As a result, Belfast’s divide can be placed into conversation with the divides of places that seem to have moved beyond sectarian issues. McLiam Wilson’s Belfast becomes a city that can enter into dialogue with cities like Dublin, London, Paris, New York, and Los Angeles by addressing shared issues on its own terms.

Being able to engage with Belfast in this manner, however, requires an individual to understand all of the complex interactions that create the modern city. Such an understanding can only come from looking upon the city from multiple perspectives. For example, Jake’s early reflections on Poetry Street, his neighborhood, what he calls “bourgeois Belfast,” as he sees it through various windows in his house (*ES* 13):

From my downstairs window, Belfast looked like Oxford or Cheltenham. The houses, the streets and the people were plump with disposable income.

From my upstairs window, however, I could see the West; the famous, hushed West. That’s where I’d been born: West Belfast, the bold, the true, the extremely rough. I used to send Sarah’s visitors up there. There were plenty of those local details up West. (*ES* 13)

At this moment, McLiam Wilson once again calls attention to the importance of changing one’s perspective of his or her environment. When Jake looks at his neighborhood from ground level he sees a space that is similar to wealthy neighborhoods in England. However, when he observes the neighborhood from above, he sees what outsiders perceive as Belfast—“burnt-out cars” and “foot patrols” (*ES* 13). In his discussion of Jake’s move to Poetry Street, Linden Peach argues that living on Poetry Street forces

Jake to confront the new which “breaks the past and present continuum that he had taken for granted in West Belfast” (26). Peach’s articulation of the power of Jake’s relocation illustrates the importance of defying teleology when trying to reimagine an already well-defined space. However, without the ability to observe from multiple points of view, like Jake does in his apartment, one will only be able to recreate the city from the ground. While still resisting teleology, the new city will be constructed linearly. The ability to articulate Belfast in a way that is multi-perspectival while resisting teleology enables an individual like Jake to reject immobile borders and boundaries with an understanding of history that curtails the possibility of repeating the past. Jake’s Belfast is one that is constructed in four dimensions; it is able to move beyond sectarian ideologies and histories by demonstrating that they are only a small part of the lived experience of modern Belfast.

This multi-perspectival understanding of Belfast enables McLiam Wilson through Jake to disrupt any singular presentation of the city. It is no longer either “leafier and more prosperous than you might imagine” or simply filled with “burnt-out cars” and “foot patrols”; instead, it is a combination of the two. Viewing the city both from ground level and from above allows Jake to defamiliarize Belfast and to depict it as a multifaceted space that cannot be easily categorized. Such a presentation suggests that the stereotypical representation of modern Belfast is categorically wrong; rather, Belfast and its inhabitants are far more complex and intriguing. While the city bears reminders of the past, Jake’s vision of Belfast demonstrates that, when an individual attempts to understand the city from multiple perspectives, the city can be refashioned in a way that accounts for history but does not dwell on it. Through re-situating the “foot patrols” and

“burnt-out cars” as small parts of Belfast’s being, Jake and by extension McLiam Wilson emphasizes that any version of modern Belfast must acknowledge but should not dwell on the turbulent past.¹⁰¹ As a result, these markers of a moment in Belfast’s history do not dictate the experiences in and of the modern city; instead, they become tools that facilitate a historical understanding that will allow citizens to come to terms with a history they would rather forget.

Jake’s tiered observations of Belfast do, indeed, emphasize the importance of being able to see clearly and engage with the city from different perspectives on its own terms. While productive, this initial foray into Belfast does not sufficiently engage with the city because Jake never actually leaves his apartment.. Consequently, Jake takes to the streets in his car “the Wreck,” “a hugely shitty vehicle” with “incredibly clean windows” (*ES* 16). These windows which “gleamed” were surrounded by “Rusty bodywork” that is “covered in three-year-old filth” but he “cleaned [the windows] every day so that [he] could see [his] city when [he] drove” (*ES* 16). While Jake’s observations allow him to defy sectarian politics from afar, the Wreck enables him to actively resist the sectarian divide by actively deconstructing borders and boundaries. As a result, Jake is able to create a distance between “old” Belfast and his new, modern version of the city.¹⁰²

For Jake, touring Belfast in the Wreck gives him more freedom than if he were on foot because his car gives him an amount of movement that walking does not. This movement permits him to actively defy immobile borders and boundaries because it

¹⁰¹ For another reading that considers the role of history in *Eureka Street* see Tigges 185–93.

¹⁰² In his discussion of *Eureka Street*, Eric Reimer argues that Jake’s friendship with Chuckie also facilitates “ground-level defiance of sectarian geographies” but does not fully account for the role that the Wreck plays in Jake’s resistance (95).

allows him to resist identification by eliminating any opportunity to reveal that he is from West Belfast and enables him to move beyond the past of the city by seeing the potential of Belfast and its citizens. In other words, because he never has to talk to anyone he never runs the risk of betraying his Catholicism. Furthermore, the observational distance that the Wreck affords, allows Jake to overlook any ideological bias that the individuals he watches may have. By capturing people as they act in Belfast and how Belfast accommodates the people, Jake's tours of modern Belfast highlight the symbiotic relationship that citizen and city share. Jake's on-the-ground engagement is what allows him to develop nuanced understandings of modern Belfast; because of his car and the clean windows, Jake is able to establish an intimate relationship with the city, the experiences of its people, and ultimately tell the story of this city that has been long ignored.

Jake's story, which details modern Belfast from the perspective of a native, nearly becomes invisible because of a bomb that explodes in a sandwich shop on Fountain Street.¹⁰³ More specifically, McLiam Wilson's foray into the typical Troubles thriller serves to emphasize the effect of violence on Belfast and its inhabitants. However, unlike other Troubles thrillers, McLiam Wilson does not emphasize the gore of the violence; instead, he is more concerned with the personal narratives that have ended far too soon:

They all had stories. But they weren't short stories. They shouldn't have been short stories. They should each have been novels, profound, delightful novels, eight hundred pages or more. And not just the lives of the victims but the lives they touched, the networks of friendship and intimacy and relation that tied them to those they loved and who loved

¹⁰³ According to Patrick Hicks, the Fountain Street bombing "is almost certainly drawn from the Abercorn Restaurant bombing which occurred on Saturday 4 March 1972, and resulted in four deaths and 130 injuries. As a matter of further interest, Castle Lane (where the Abercorn was located) is contiguous off [sic] Fountain Street, which means that the location of this fictional bombing is deliberate. McLiam Wilson wants us to think of the Abercorn" (141).

them, those they knew and who knew them. What great complexity.
What richness. (*ES* 231)

By emphasizing the stories that these individuals could have told and focusing on the networks that they created, McLiam Wilson defamiliarizes the violence of the Troubles by foregrounding the networks of affiliation that these individuals created and could have continued to create.¹⁰⁴

When detailing the Crawford family, the narrator reflects on the fact that eight-year-old Natalie Crawford's story ends too soon; if it were not for Fountain Street her story "would have grown, used a larger cast, involved more scenes and events" (*ES* 224). Likewise, her twelve-year-old sister Liz, "who was already in love with a boy from Carryduff," and their Mother, Margaret are both killed prematurely (*ES* 224). In the descriptions of each girl, the narrator highlights how, if they were allowed to grow up, they would have created other relationships (Liz already had) and had the potential to contribute to the futures of Belfast and Northern Ireland. The description of how these three women die is gruesome and graphic—"a blown apart drinks fridge showered its hot metal on their soft, unresisting flesh"—but its presence foregrounds the casualties of the bomb (*ES* 224). The explosion is not the centerpiece of the novel or even this chapter; the lives lost are. McLiam Wilson's narrator further defamiliarizes the violence by reflection on the survivors. In the case of the Crawford family, the narrator discusses the husband and father, Robert Crawford. Instead of attempting to understand why the bomb was placed where it was, the narrative is more concerned with the way that the Crawford's family story is "Robbed . . . of much of its dynastic heft" and how the sole survivor reacts (*ES* 224). In addition to destroying Natalie, Liz, and Margaret's

¹⁰⁴ For a listing of the Fountain Street dead see pages 230–1.

established networks of affiliation and preventing others from ever being formed, the bomb also dismantles the networks that Robert has established. Because of his grief, “Robert’s story became uncommercial. He lost his job. He lost his friends. He drank—to remember not to forget—and it just rained in his heart for the rest of his life” (*ES* 225). Robert’s reaction underscores the fact that motives for random acts of violence need not be understood; instead, if one focuses on what is really lost—lives and stories—then the people become the primary concern and the violence secondary. These stories have ended because “The traffic of history and politics had bottlenecked. An individual or individuals had decided that reaction was necessary. Some stories had been shortened. Some stories had been ended. A confident editorial decision had been taken” (*ES* 231). The turmoil of Northern Ireland has reduced life and death to an editorial decision made by a small group of people who concern themselves with violence and not people.

Despite the negativity that surrounds bombs and bombing, McLiam Wilson familiarizes bombs when Jake states, “Bombs were like dropped plates, kicked cats or hasty words. They were error. They were disarrangement and mess. They were also – and this was important – knowledge. When you heard that dry splash, that animal thud of bomb, distant or close, you knew something” (*ES* 15). He acquaints people with bombs and their explosions by humanizing them: “It wasn’t the bombs that were scary. It was the bombed. Public death was a special mortality. Bombs mauled and possessed their dead. Blast removed people’s shoes like a solicitous relative, it opened men’s shirts pruriently; women’s skirts rode up their bloody thighs from the force of the lecherous blast” (*ES* 15). Instead of being nothing more than instruments of destruction, which they are, bombs become both concerned and sexually perverse. Through likening bombs to

people that take advantage of others, McLiam Wilson reclassifies bombs from unknowable devices of mass destruction to people or feelings with which most everyone is familiar. While not as easily discarded as a “solicitous relative,” a lustful desire, or a lecherous individual, a bomb that is reimagined as a device that is akin to sexual deviance intimates that the bomb can be overcome through acts of resistance.

In spite of creating a “battlefield” out of Belfast, these now familiar tools of mass destruction can be defeated by the human imagination. According to Jake, “The human route to sympathy or empathy is a clumsy one but it’s all we’ve got. To understand the consequences of our actions we must exercise our imagination” (*ES* 62). Imagination becomes a multifaceted tool that allows Jake and his audience to come to terms with their personal histories while also considering how these histories have impacted other individual’s lives.¹⁰⁵ For both McLiam Wilson and Jake, the power of imagination becomes an aspect of life that allows individuals to see the world from others’ points-of-view, a situation which in turn, should make killing nearly impossible. With this in mind, imagination acts in a third manner in the novel; that is, it creates a collective that has the potential to move beyond sectarian—both religious and political—divides. For Jake, it is the power of the imagination that has the ability to unite the people of Belfast. If “cities are the meeting places of stories” and “the men and women there are narratives” which are “endlessly complex and intriguing,” then the human imagination becomes the tool through which we, as outsiders, can create and interpret these stories (*ES* 215).

Furthermore, as these narratives are a version of Belfast that is a direct result of the

¹⁰⁵ In her article “The Language of Violence in Robert McLiam Wilson’s *Eureka Street*,” Danine Farquharson argues that the use of imagination is McLiam Wilson’s primary tool that “evoke[s] a response in the realm of actions” by “helping Jake to find an empathetic route to ethical behavior” (73). While her reading of the novel is astute, her focus on the both the novel and Jake’s ethical drive overlooks other creative avenues that Jake and McLiam Wilson find productive.

experiences that natives have of and in the city, the Irish are able to re-create modern Belfast through the eyes of the Irish themselves. McLiam Wilson's emphasis on the power of imagination alters the ways that non-Irish readers interact with Irish representations of Belfast. If the articulations of modern Belfast are produced by those who actually experience this space, then the way that the non-Irish reader imagines Belfast transforms from a bomb-ridden city to a space that is full of possibilities for change. Both the Irish narratives and the ones the non-Irish create through this interaction will more accurately represent modern Belfast and the way that its inhabitants interact with their immediate surrounds and the rest of the world.

After the Fountain Street bombing, Jake returns to the Wreck to explore the city, observe its people, and capture the essence of modern Belfast. This post-bomb sojourn further demonstrates that, despite the recent violence, the city is no longer restricted by divisive sectarian ideologies. When driving the Wreck around the city after the Fountain Street incident, Jake reflects on the fact that he has "never seen the city so empty, so muted. The streets went unwalked, bars were people-free, and multi-screen cinemas played to four or five people a night" (*ES* 283). The bomb results in a general fear that the turbulent seventies had returned. For Belfast and its inhabitants, the memory of the past haunts their present; it forces them indoors and divorces them from their built environment. This, for Jake, is the danger of history. More specifically, if the people of Belfast do not move beyond the past they will remain separated from their lived experiences of modern Belfast. Jake resists falling prey to history by humanizing and "listening" to what the city has to say:

It was like the seventies: a time when rubble scars marked the city like a good set of fingerprints. But as I drove street to street, I felt sorry for

Belfast. It had a guilty, sheepish air, as though it knew it had blundered again, made its name sound dark in the world's mouth again. It was uniquely endearing to me and it chose to look its prettiest in recompense. In the unusual evening heat, I wound down my window and drove slow. The evening was light, fragrant, the air was clear. Look at all my good points, the city seemed to say. (*ES* 283–4)

As Jake tours Belfast, he sees the city responding to its history; however, this response is in no way nostalgic. Instead, the reminder of the past results in a general feeling of sorrow for Belfast, which is apologizing for the recent explosion. In order to continue the apology Belfast hopes that those who are passing through, like Jake, are able to continue to still see all of the good that it has to offer. Jake's account of post-Fountain Street Belfast underscores the fact that the city does not want the past to return. The city is not nostalgic for The Troubles and the time when its name "sound[ed] dark in the world's mouth." Instead, Belfast foregrounds its good points and apologizes for the incident and for failing to protect its citizens so that the city and its people can move past The Troubles. By focusing on all that is good in the city, Jake illustrates that the city, itself, has come to terms with and not disregarded its history, so that it can offer its citizens a more productive future.

It is the good, the positive parts of Belfast on which Jake's journeys dwell. In fact, the positive aspects of Belfast force Jake to reflect on his political apathy and what is, at times, intense dislike for the place of his birth:

For all my big talk, this was still a city I loved. Me and the Wreck, we sometimes toured this metropolis in a little haze of directionless benevolence. Sometimes we just drove around late at night, the old car and I, and just watched happily; listening to Heaven 17 songs, looking at all the people and wondering if they knew how multiple and beautiful they were. It never mattered what happened. (*ES* 284)

Jake's car and its clean windows enable him to see beyond the typical narratives that define Belfast. Furthermore, such nighttime sojourns emphasize the fact that when an individual engages with a space on its own terms, he or she is able to think without an ideological bias. As a result, the individual disrupts standard narratives by relying on involuntary actions and memories. The city becomes a space of multiple—not dual—existences, each of which is in its own right “beautiful.”

Through engaging with the city involuntarily and accessing his involuntary memories, Jake constructs Belfast in a way that thinks beyond the city as a “battlefield” in which “The place-names of the city and country had taken on the resonance and hard beauty of all history's slaughter venues” (*ES* 14). For Jake, Belfast, a city in which “past tenses are hazardous” becomes a place that “is thick with its living citizens. Its earth is richly sown with its many dead. The city is a repository of narratives, of stories. Present tense, past tense or future. The city is a novel” (*ES* 215). Despite being marked by its dead, Jake reimagines Belfast as a site that can now accept the past tense; history is nothing more than history. As a result, Belfast, like “all cities . . . is always present tense and all the streets are Poetry Streets” which indicates that Jake's newly-imagined city able to move beyond the ideological positions that have slowed any positive development (*ES* 217). In fact, when understood in this manner the transformed city “begins to absorb narrative like a sponge, like a paper absorbs ink. The past and the present is written there. The citizenry cannot fail to write there. Their testimony is involuntary and complete” (*ES* 216). Instead of being a site where individual narratives are rejected and erased, when imagined in this matter, the city becomes a space in which everyone can write. The history of the city is a story of the people who have lived and continue to live.

Dualistic ideological positions are erased by multiple understandings of these very same positions. As a result, what appears to be a simple binaristic divide changes into something far more complex and the “outsiders” who believe they understand Belfast are rendered ignorant. Essentially, Jake’s re-articulation of Belfast emphasizes the importance of understanding the city and its people on their own terms instead of through terms defined by the mass media and monumental history. Defining the city as a novel enables McLiam Wilson to emphasize the impact of the people on the city. Like his descriptions of the Fountain Street bombing, McLiam Wilson’s Belfast demonstrates that Belfast is not defined by the sectarian divide or the ideologies of The Troubles. Instead, in describing the city as a novel, as a work of art, McLiam Wilson asserts that the city is created, marked, and continuously reimagined by the people that call it home.

Reimagining Belfast as a repository of narratives foregrounds the importance of an individual’s imagination in articulating the vast number of experiences of modern Belfast. By asserting that Belfast is not defined by a singular argument and is, instead, best understood as a space of competing yet harmonious narratives, McLiam Wilson demonstrates that there is no one narrative that coherently depicts Northern Ireland. In addition, McLiam Wilson’s depiction of Belfast forces readers to engage with an alternate, non-standard version of Northern Ireland and Belfast. Belfast, or “the land where they wrote things on the walls,” transforms into a space whereby these inscriptions become “part of an urban diary” that speaks to and about the lived experience in Belfast (*ES* 64; Farquharson 75).

When understood in this manner, McLiam Wilson’s Belfast calls his readers’ attention to the habits, thoughts, and feelings of Northern Irish culture in order to

effectively detach these very same readers from a typical understanding of Northern Ireland. Of particular interest to Jake is how the painting and writing on walls, which chronicles an outdated way of life, still define the city. When reflecting on these walls, the unnamed narrator states: “Under street-lamps by all the city’s walls, writing gleams: IRA, INLA/ UVF, UFF, OTG. The city keeps its walls like a diary. In this staccato shorthand, the walls tell of histories and hatreds, shrivelled and bleached with age. *Qui a terre a guerre* [he who has land has war], the walls say” (ES 212; italics original). This account of the city illustrates how the walls display what Belfast once was. They articulate the fact that in Belfast “he who has land has war.” However, because the writing is “shrivelled and bleached with age” and the inscriptions are said to be like an entry in a diary the narrator establishes that this part of Belfast is something that has happened and is now firmly in the past. As a result, any understanding Belfast as a city that is defined by the writing on the walls is categorically wrong.

The unnamed narrator’s reflections on the walls of Belfast demonstrate that typical graffiti results in a habitual definition of Belfast that is not accurate. McLiam Wilson attempts to destabilize such definitions through re-appropriating the purpose of graffiti and the walls on which it goes. Three letters—“OTG”—cause mass confusion and force “the communities to consider their own cultural distinctions” (Hicks 139). Furthermore, these letters, which confuse both Catholic and Protestant alike, call attention to the way in which the ideologies that divide Northern Ireland have blinded its citizens to the problematic construction of the two communities. However, within the confusion, the individual who goes around painting these letters positions the group he represents as one that seeks to erase all of the other sectarian groups:

As we drove up West, Roche told me that he had seen the OTG man again. He had noticed something else this time. Every time the man wrote on walls he would write some kind of sentence before and after the legend OTG then he would simply paint over everything but those three letters. Every time I'd seen OTG written in the city it had been preceded and followed by bands of paint, the first band slightly shorter than the second. I'd thought it was merely a decorative conceit. (*ES* 299)

The man effectively places the other sectarian groups, which are represented by other graffiti, under erasure. The existence of each of these groups and the meaning behind their particular graffiti—the “IRA, INLA, UVF, UFF, UDA, IPLO, FTP (Fuck the Pope), FTQ (Fuck the Queen), and once (hilariously) FTNP (Fuck the Next Pope)”—are marginalized by an enigmatic group (*ES* 22).

Whatever problems the OTG man creates, he successfully unifies Northern Ireland through confusion. When reflecting on OTG and its meaning Jake asserts that the value in the letters is found in their meaninglessness:

You want to know what OTG means?

Almost everything.

That was the point. All the other letters written on our walls were dark minority stuff. The world's grand, lazy majority will never be arsed writing anything anywhere and, anyway, they wouldn't know what to write. They would change their permissive, clement, heterogeneous minds half-way through.

That's why OTG was written for them. It could mean anything they wanted. It did mean anything they wanted. Order the Gammon. Octogenarians Tote Guns. Openly Titular Gesture. One True God. (*ES* 395)

Because these three letters are unknown and possibly unknowable, they force the citizens of Belfast and Northern Ireland to once again take notice of the walls in their city.

Instead of walking past another inscription that reads IRA, INLA, UVF, or UFF, individuals stop and ponder the meaning of OTG. Crab, one of Jake's Protestant work associates, stops the work van to point out “the smeared, scribbled pebbledash wall”

because he wants to know “who the fuck those OTG cunts are” (ES 66). In addition, the Secretary of State also makes a statement on OTG and admits that there is “no definite information about who this new group might be or what the letters OTG even stand for” (ES 147). In both instances, the mysterious OTG creates confusion because it is unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity causes concern because OTG might be a new sectarian group that has plans to terrorize Belfast. For these people, the lack of knowledge threatens their ability to control the city. In positing that these were written for those in power who can never make up their minds, Jake demonstrates the fact that the mission of these individuals is whatever carries the potential for their own success; they do not concern themselves with the health of the city or the individuals within that city. Furthermore, these letters drew people’s attention back to the city; they force them to look at walls that they had previously ignored, to, essentially, re-see Belfast for themselves. The city, as David Harvey asserts, can be reimagined and this time it is a project that aims to unite all individuals regardless of religious, political, or social allegiances.

Unlike *Ripley Bogle*, Robert McLiam Wilson’s *Eureka Street* reconsiders Belfast by emphasizing the inherent potential of the city and its people. Through an emphasis on the power of imagination in *Eureka Street*, McLiam Wilson is able to account for what is lacking in *Ripley Bogle*. While Ripley’s lies are imaginative, they fail to suggest ways to recreate Belfast and Northern Ireland; instead, they imagine ways to redefine Ripley outside of the city and country. In *Eureka Street*, McLiam Wilson calls attention to the inherent lack of imagination in sectarian violence and the consequential stereotypes that mask the true nature of a space and the people that inhabit it. Through positioning

Belfast and, by extension, Northern Ireland as, what Linden Peach calls an “in-between space” *Eureka Street* effectively gives voice to a reality that is also ‘in-between’ (37). More specifically, McLiam Wilson’s desire to capture modern Belfast on its own terms results in an outright rejection of violence in order to examine the multiple narratives that make up the city.¹⁰⁶ As a result, McLiam Wilson constructs ways for individuals to defy stereotypes and deconstruct preconceived notions of Belfast. Belfast evolves into an urban metropolis wherein violence and politics are but a small part. Indeed, by the end of the novel McLiam Wilson’s Belfast can accommodate relationships that cross political, religious, national, and sexual boundaries: Jake, our anti-political narrator, is with the Republican Aoirghe; Rajinder, a Muslim, is paired up with Rachel, a Jew; Luke Findlater, an Englishman, is dating a Catholic working-class waitress; the socialist Slat is engaged to Wincey, a right-winged, middle-aged Protestant; Chuckie’s American girlfriend, Max, is pregnant; and, Chuckie’s mother, Peggy, is now with Caroline, her long-time friend and neighbor.

In each relationship, McLiam Wilson’s alternative Belfast enables citizens and his audience to see beyond binaristic boundaries and accept alternate forms of love. As a result, the modern city and nation, as well as McLiam Wilson’s alternative modernity, suggest that in order to come to terms with the history that haunts the North and move beyond the phantasmagoric past, one must look upon the place with “clear eyes.” His articulations of modern Belfast and Northern Ireland engage with history and politics and designate late twentieth-century Belfast as a space in which the differences of the two communities create points where conversation can begin. *Eureka Street*, while not

¹⁰⁶ After his release from Long Kesh Prison, former IRA Volunteer Anthony McIntyre has systematically denounced the use of violence to come to terms with partition in Ireland. See thepensivequill.am.

actually solving any issues of the North, presents a place in which the two communities that have come to define Northern Ireland are merely two of many communities that create what is known as Northern Ireland. This, in turn, empowers the people of all groups to imagine how their “stories” help construct the city and country in which they live.

Epilogue: Glenn Patterson’s *Fat Lad* and Northern Ireland’s “Two Communities”

Glenn Patterson’s *Fat Lad* (1992) addresses the idea of community and its potential to transform a landscape through the perspective of Drew Linden, a Belfast native who has recently returned home to work at a bookshop.¹⁰⁷ Amidst the violence of the Troubles and through contained acts of violence—a father’s systematic abuse of his son—Patterson demonstrates the need for communication and understanding of difference to overcome a turbulent past. Furthermore, in forcing Drew, his father, and sister, Ellen, to come to terms with the past, Patterson, like Joyce, Doyle, and McLiam Wilson, demonstrates the importance of understanding one’s history in order to be productive in the present and create the possibility for a future that does not repeat the past. Unlike Joyce, Doyle, and McLiam Wilson, Patterson’s work creates a context that highlights the potential of all people, not just a specific segment of society, and as a result, offers a way in which Irish men and women can engage with the modern in a way that speaks to their lived experiences.

Choosing to explore the potentiality of communities through the way in which a family comes to terms with its past foregrounds the fact that despite being in contact with one another, families, like communities, share imagined points of connection. Often, as is the case with the Linden family, these points of connection are nothing more than myths that come to be far more destructive than constructive. Consequently, Patterson’s family-as-community presents a form of community that I call, to borrow from Brian

¹⁰⁷ The title *Fat Lad* is an anagram of the six counties—Fermanagh, Antrim, Tyrone, Londonderry, Armagh, and Down—of Northern Ireland. Despite seeking to bridge the differences between the “two communities” in Northern Ireland, Patterson chooses to use the name Londonderry instead of Derry. While both names are politically charged, Patterson’s choice of Londonderry calls attention his Protestant upbringing while rightfully acknowledging that Northern Ireland is still part of the United Kingdom.

Cliff, an “alternative community.”¹⁰⁸ In his discussion of the work of Northern Irish playwright Frank McGuinness, Cliff argues that one must maintain the difference between nation and community because when conflated, both models become totalizing. As a result, the nuances of community, those which demonstrate its transformative potential, are placed under erasure:

When this model [the nation as the central model of social and political relations] conflates community and the nation, however, the intersections between literature and community can also become distorted. The drama of Frank McGuinness resists this distortion by seeking ways of belonging that do not resort to the totalizing alternatives of what Jean-Luc Nancy has described as “the disintegration of the ‘crowd’ and the aggregation of the group” (1991:7). Because such false alternatives fail to recognize different kinds of community and acknowledge only its total presence or total absence, they obscure the paradoxical nature of community: as a web of overlapping and often incompatible relationships, community is necessarily composed of rather than simply threatened by disagreement and difference. (33)

For Cliff, differences within a community become unifying elements that strengthen the community. Furthermore, Cliff’s contention, that disagreement and difference provide a useful way of understanding community, speaks to Patterson’s articulation of the issue with communities in Northern Ireland which endorses communication across lines and “reject[s] the languages of Ulster loyalism and of Irish republicanism” (Patterson, “Reclaiming” 23). As a result, Belfast becomes a mutable space that “generate[s] new realities and fictions” whose people “refuse to be defined by constructions whose [Loyalist and/or Republican ideologies] validity they do not accept, whose [Loyalist and/or Republican ideologies] value, in so far as they had any in the past, they consider

¹⁰⁸ I have touched on the idea of an “alternative community” in my discussion of Roddy Doyle (see above). While Doyle’s work does create an “alternative community,” it does not fully explore the potential for transformation that such communities have in the same way that Patterson’s novel does. More specifically, because Patterson’s work comes out of a culture of violence and disagreement and seeks to give voice to multiple perspectives (as opposed to Doyle’s desire to write the working-class into existence) his formulations of community are positioned in a way that suggest far-reaching change.

now to be reactionary or redundant” (Patterson, “Reclaiming” 23). Patterson recreates a city and country in which multiple communities become necessary parts; as a result, the “other” becomes unknowable because the “other” is not easily identifiable.

By detailing how a family fails to accept its past in the midst of an ever-changing Belfast, Patterson demonstrates that without the understanding of difference, both community—as represented by the Linden family—and city will never be able to come to terms with their pasts and develop a network of interconnections that will serve as the foundation for a productive engagement with the modern city. Upon returning to Belfast, Drew Linden thinks that “The Belfast he left, the Belfast the Ex-Pats foreswore, was a city dying on its feet” only to realize that the city is in the midst of a monumental change (Patterson, *FL* 4):

But the Belfast he had heard reports of this past while, the Belfast he had seen with his own eyes last month, was a city in the process of recasting itself entirely. The army had long since departed from the Grand Central Hotel, on whose leveled remains an even grander shopping complex was now nearing completion. (Patterson, *FL* 4)

Belfast, since Drew’s departure, has assumed a new character; it is no longer dead because The Troubles cease to define the city. Instead, it has become a place of capitalistic venture where there are opportunities for success. The city is no longer the “cadaver” that is entirely knowable; in place of “old” Belfast is the image of a transformed city that is also a transformative space.

While changed, the Belfast to which Drew has returned is problematic because it is “a modern place with the pluralities, discontents, and linkages appropriate to a modern place” but “is also a city haunted by myth, a city anxious to find significance in narrative, and a city condemned to endlessly reconstitute its past” (Hughes 3; Kirkland 49). History

becomes that which must be dealt with and, for Patterson, the way in which to dismiss this historical ghost is through coming to terms with differences and disagreements. This reconciliation, however, is not one that can happen as a result of the built environment. Instead, it must come from within the communities that define the city. For Patterson, the most basic form of community is family. In *Fat Lad* the Linden family is the unit that demonstrates the importance of understanding the past and relying on difference and disagreement to build a stronger community.

On the second Saturday in August 1971 a sniper fired a bullet into Norman Russell's, Drew Linden's neighbor's, house. For Drew, this day marks the first day that his father hit him and, as is matter-of-factly pointed out, "There was no apology. He [Drew's Father] just smoothed the hair at the back of his son's head (with the same hand that had ruffled it) and disappeared upstairs" (Patterson, *FL* 122). Just as important is Drew's reaction after his mother returns home. Instead of telling his mother what happened, Drew chooses to remain silent and internalize his father's beatings as well as the violence in Belfast; everything that happens around him becomes his fault:

He didn't tell her [his mother]. Not that time, nor the next time, nor the time after that again. Not ever, in fact. He accepted it as part of his disgrace to have to bear his punishment in silence. Because Drew was in no doubt that he had brought this on himself, for if the family had to come back here in order for him to be born, then, balancing the scales, it stood to reason that had it not been for him they would never have come back at all and exposed themselves to such repeated danger. (Patterson, *FL* 122)

As a result of internalizing every negative aspect of his family's life and failing to communicate with those around him, Drew leaves Belfast for England and alienates himself from his family. For Patterson, self-imposed exile and alienation are a consequence of the inability of the Linden family to confront their past. The rift amongst

the family, much like the divide in Northern Ireland, becomes one that haunts the existence of family.

Patterson does not only blame Drew for the failure of communication and the inability to confront the past; indeed, coming to terms with a dualistic divide demands that both parties engage in critical conversation and self reflection. While Drew's father is to blame for the abuse, Patterson focuses on Ellen's failure to talk to Drew about the past. Because of her close association to their father who becomes "My Daddy," Ellen realizes that, after looking at a photograph of their family in which Drew is next to their father and she is next to their mother, "Somewhere along the line, brother and sister had swapped sides. Now it was Drew and his mother who were, in their very different ways, severed from Ellen and her father" (Patterson, *FL* 266; 267). In positioning Ellen as the individual who most closely associates with their father and despite the fact that she was also abused, Patterson indicts Ellen for never speaking to Drew about the things that she knows happened.

While watching her father interact with her children, Ellen reflects on her coming to understand what was happening to Drew. While she remembers it as something that happened slowly, Patterson calls attention to the fact that she only acknowledges Drew's plight once her father beats her:

The realisation of what her father was doing to Drew had been a gradual process for Ellen; a sense of rather too much order on coming into rooms they had been closeted in together, a depth of silence between them that all the desperate distractions of background noise only made more apparent. She was aware, however, that for a long time then she had resisted drawing the ever more obvious conclusion from these and other clues and that ultimately the acceptance that her father was capable of violence against one of his children only came when he was violent towards the other one too, that is, Ellen herself, though she was no child by that stage, but turned seventeen, in work, in and out of love. (Patterson, *FL* 255–6)

Ellen's indictment stems from the realization that Drew's own reflections on her life come through eyes that are "in part her own eyes" (Patterson, *FL* 266). Ellen's recognition of a shared experience, about which Drew does not know, but her unwillingness to talk about it—despite the fact that she insists that "she knew more than he gave her credit for"—demonstrates the issues with never confronting the past. More specifically, simply thinking that "One day they would talk it out" because "There would be other moments" is not a sufficient response to dealing with history (Patterson, *FL* 269). Just like the advantageous moment that is ignored, future moments will also prove to be futile. As a result, there will be no meaningful conversations in which individuals, communities, and nations can come to understand each other's differences. Without such an understanding, no foundation for future progress can be established and the individuals, communities, and nations become the goldfish who "follow[s] its tail on round the bowl" and whose "nose and tail [were] so close together in the bowl it was almost able to eat its own shit" (Patterson, *FL* 145; 9). Like the nation itself, Northern Irish citizens who refuse to actually confront the past, end up living a cyclical life that repeats, rather than overcoming the past.

In "Welcome to Northern Ireland: A Guide for New Millennium Tourists," Patterson defines "community" and "tradition" in a way that demonstrates the devastating potential of both ideas:

Communities. A polite term for sides. There are apparently only two, though where this leaves the Chinese community, the Indian community, the Gay community, etc. is anybody's guess. (See 'traditions'.) ...

Traditions. As for communities, though may also refer to dancing with your arms by your side and/or marching around in a collarette. (2; 7; italics original)

Patterson's definitions of these terms demarcate the fact that the division in Northern Ireland is one that is neither rational nor easily overcome. More specifically, the fact that "traditions" are cultural, political, and social practices and become synonymous with "sides" implies that the division in Northern Ireland is one that will be passed on from generation to generation. With these two definitions Patterson articulates Northern Ireland's problematic relationship to its history and the damage that it has the ability to instigate. In 2006, Patterson revised his definition of community but still articulated the way in which the "old" ideology dominates Northern Irish life: "*Communities*. One step forward—belated recognition that there are more than two communities here—two steps back—as witnessed by recent vicious attacks on the gay community, the Chinese community, the Polish community" (Patterson, "Afterword" 194). While there is acknowledgement of more than two communities, hatred and violence have also grown with this recognition. Instead of fostering an atmosphere of acceptance in order to promote conversation between various communities, their recognition has provided new avenues to maim and hurt others. For Patterson, thinking along the lines of definitive, closed communities will never open lines of communication in Northern Ireland.

The division of Northern Ireland, as determined by the sectarian communities, is one that, for Patterson, has become tradition and continues to destroy the country and people. When discussing the problem he has with Northern Irish politics, Patterson deftly dismisses the ideology behind the two communities and the way in which he works around it:

To return to politics, one of the things I really loathe about politics in Northern Ireland is this thing they call the "two communities." The two communities are Catholic and Protestant. I don't believe in two communities. By birth, my religion is Protestant, but it has not defined

who I am. I define myself by all kinds of other things. Some of them are useful communities; some of them are very frivolous communities. There are communities of musical likes and dislikes; there are, again, communities of sexual preference, communities of sports. And those are the things that usefully define who I am. Religion is nowhere in defining who I actually am. So what I've always wanted to do when I set a novel in Belfast is to bring in a character from somewhere else, or there will be some avenue in. (Burgess)

Here, Patterson's definition of community becomes one that effectively articulates that there are multiple communities which assume different societal positions; some are fleeting while some are more permanent. In either case, Patterson's communities become entities that can be productive; if understood and deployed properly, these communities provide an "avenue in." In other words, when the nature of community is understood in the proper context, it becomes a vehicle through which individuals can come to an understanding of the place from which they come or as a vehicle for outsiders to understand a world in which they are not completely immersed.

Unlike Joyce, Doyle, or McLiam Wilson, Glenn Patterson constructs a city in which coming to terms with multiple perspectives is vital to the success of that city. More specifically, Joyce's critique of Dublin results in Stephen's flight and return and Stephen's and Bloom's alienation from other Irishmen like themselves; Roddy Doyle's Dublin is Dublin in which the working class, and only the working class, are given a voice; and Robert McLiam Wilson's Belfast becomes an apolitical space in which romantic relationships seem to be the answer for all ideological and political issues. Patterson's critique of Belfast and of the dominant ideologies of Northern Ireland, however, offers a solution, albeit a rather simplistic one, to moving beyond the problems that each author explicitly addresses. That is, by tracing the dysfunctions of the family, Patterson deftly critiques the inherent unwillingness to broach the subject of the past.

Despite the apologies at the end of the novel—Drew’s father scrawls “sorry” on a piece of newspaper and Drew mails a letter to his father—the family does not reconstruct itself in a manner that recreates Ellen and Drew’s father; indeed, their father remains *Ellen’s* father. It is the stubborn unwillingness to accept history that leads the Linden family to repeat the past.

Furthermore, advocating open lines of communication, Glenn Patterson’s suggestion proves valuable when we think through each author’s position on an Irish engagement with modernity. Each author’s experiential map of the city from which he comes and the solutions that he suggests do fail and are, despite all claims otherwise, quite divisive. As a result, each author’s proposition does, in fact, re-create that which he is trying to overcome. More specifically, Joyce’s Dublin remains a place that stifles creativity and hinders individual development; Doyle’s Dublin becomes a place in which the working class experience becomes *the* Irish experience; and McLiam Wilson’s Belfast becomes a knowable, mythologized city. In essence, the re-presentation of each city is as violent an act as that which created the original understandings of Dublin, Belfast, Ireland, and Northern Ireland.

However, this is not to say that Joyce’s, Doyle’s, or McLiam Wilson’s experiential maps preclude any positive developments. Indeed, each author’s respective re-presentation of “his” city’s foundational elements is based on the difference and disagreement that effectively divide the city. These elements, nevertheless, continue to divide, instead of serving as factors that can strengthen their respective communities, cities, and nations. In presenting histories that can and should be discussed, Patterson’s approach to the importance of acknowledging the past is one that can be extended to the

projects of Joyce, Doyle, and McLiam Wilson. Patterson's *Fat Lad* asks us, as readers, to not only come to terms with history but to also make that very same history a shared experience that enables points of political, social, cultural, or religious divergence to be points of conversation and understanding. To extend this concept to the project of modernism and modernization would enable each author's experiential map to articulate more than a divergence from the past. Instead of charting conflicts that only signify the modern experience of an individual or small group of individuals, these maps become a representation of a specific modernity that incites productive conversation. In making modernity his own, each author contemplates his experience as a small part of the total modern Irish experience. As a result, experientially mapping each iteration of modern Dublin and Belfast does not define the modern Irish experience; rather, the maps demonstrate that the Irish articulation and experience of modernity is polyvocal and necessitates an understanding of the complex relationships between a diverse set of communities.

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