

FROM MOTLEY TO GREEN: THE INFLUENCE OF YEATS AND JOYCE ON IRISH NATIONAL  
IDENTITY

By

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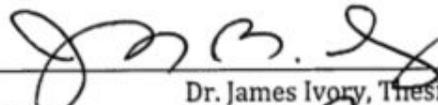
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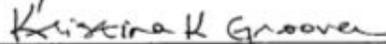
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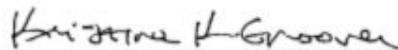
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### **Abstract**

This essay takes a historical approach on the works of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce. By exploring the history of Ireland, including the 1798 Rebellion in comparison to the Easter 1916 Rising, the literature takes on new meaning as a force for social change. Whereas Yeats focuses on the history of Ireland as a precedent for the future, Joyce seeks to bring Ireland into the modern era by rejecting the institutions and norms that have kept Ireland from evolving. These approaches to the past, as conflicting as they may be, incorporate Irish history into literature, thus creating a collective identity based on a shared history and interaction between the past and present.

The question of national and cultural identity is one that all citizens must answer at some point. In Ireland, generations of freedom fighters and revolutionary leaders attempted to identify a singular culture and prevail as a nation over English rule. From the Rebellion of 1798 to the Easter Rising of 1916, Irish history is plagued with the loss of lives and bloody struggles in the name of independence. But to be independent of England, Irish history would need to forge anew and rebuild after generations of subjection to outside rule. This independence would mark a new era in Irish history, and in order to succeed, the nation would need to come together under one identity. At the forefront of the Irish Renaissance, which took place in the 1900s and was essential in reviving Irish culture, were William Butler Yeats and James Joyce. Both writers were deeply interested in what it means to be “Irish” and the importance of the revolution to the whole nation. However, whereas Yeats focused heavily on past Irish leaders and believed that they continued to be relevant in the 20th century, Joyce strove to bring Ireland into the modern era by rejecting its past hardships and embracing a new future. Despite their differences, their works drastically shaped an Irish collective consciousness and brought forth a new dawn of Irish literature, culture, and identity.

The goal of the literary revival was to bring together the political and cultural concerns and pillars of the time in connection with the larger scope of Irish literary imagination and mythology. The attempts of Yeats and Joyce to make sense of the literature of the past and its influence on the present are core components of the Literary Revival. The common themes and beliefs that bind a nation together are reflected in the literature of that nation, depending on the political conflicts of the time. Literature is essential in shaping a nation’s collective identity. As a force for social change, literature reflects the changing tides of a culture in motion as citizens

attempt to reshape the values and norms of their society. Understanding a nation's history is essential in this, as it shows the transformation of culture over time and provides a background to usher in the new age of literature and political thought.

For Ireland, history is plagued with political and social division, in the forms of nationalists versus loyalists and Protestants versus Catholics. These distinct cultural divides have long shaped Irish identity, both past and present. As Ireland began to make strides for independence, the question of how to deal with these long-standing divisions deeply affected political and literary thought. The writers of the Revival were interested in transcending these boundaries by creating a collective identity which would be accessible to all Irish, regardless of their individual background. For Yeats, his original focus was on the mythology of Ireland and the Celtic folklore that was a traditional aspect of Irish culture. His notion of "romantic Ireland" was essential in his early works as a foundation to build an understanding of Irish identity. However, as the political and social crisis surrounding the push for an independent Ireland intensified, Yeats turned more toward the notion of utilizing figures from Irish history as a type of mythology to give Ireland a history to be proud of and rally behind to face the challenges of the present and future.

Yeats's move from mythology to history is best exemplified in "September 1913". His repetition of the lines "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone/It's with O'Leary in the grave" emphasize the disillusionment with the mythological aspects of Ireland, replaced instead with a sense of loss and new importance on historical figures as forces of change and points of rally for Ireland. Yeats writes:

Was it for this the wild geese spread

The grey wing upon every tide;  
For this that all blood was shed,  
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,  
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,  
All that delirium of the brave? (Yeats lines 17-24).

The mention of Fitzgerald, Emmet, and Wolfe Tone sets these historical figures of the 1798 Rebellion as a part of the forces that have shaped Ireland as much, if not more, than traditional mythology. Their willingness to die for romantic Ireland allows it to live on in memory, even though Yeats makes clear that there will be no going back to it. Rather, by using this memory and incorporating Irish history into an understanding of Irish culture, even the darker and more tragic parts of Irish history can create a sense of unity among generations fighting for the same cause: Irish independence. Independence, in this interpretation of history, becomes a core principle in creating a united Irish identity.

“September 1913”, like many of Yeats’s political and historical works, showcases a period of Ireland’s shifting perceptions of nationalism and national identity. John O’Leary, the dead man that lies with romantic Ireland, was Yeats’s literary and political mentor whose beliefs in Irish identity were intended to span across the cultural divides of religion. The idea of transcending these boundaries became essential to not only revolutionary leaders, of both 1798 and 1916, but for writers of the Revival as well. In “Reading Yeats’s ‘September 1913’ in Context”, George Bornstein describes the relationship between O’Leary and Yeats: “Yeats praised [O’Leary] for having ‘seen that there is no fine nationality without literature, and...that there is no fine literature without nationality.’ For Yeats the aged O’Leary...exemplified the

tradition that he liked to call ‘romantic Ireland’, which harked back to the martyrs” (228).

Romantic Ireland, for Yeats, recalled the sacrifices made by the Irish heroes of the past. In the final lines of the poem, Yeats considers this sacrifice: “They weighed so lightly what they gave/But let them be, they’re dead and gone/They’re with O’Leary in the grave” (Yeats lines 30-32). For those who have sacrificed their lives for Ireland in the past, the action, to them, seemed so necessary and yet “weighed lightly” in the larger scheme of Irish history and the struggle for independence. Yeats recognizes the profound impact that the sacrifices of the past have on the course of the future. By remembering and utilizing the past as a guide for the future, new generations can indeed reflect the fallen romantic Ireland and create an identity that is shaped by the important events and figures of the past.

Bearing this viewpoint of history in mind, it is nearly impossible to consider the works and span of influence of the Literary Revival without examining the events that played a role in shaping the works which, in turn, inspired social change and a re-examination of Irish identity through the lens of the fight for independence. Yeats’s connection to the past is more obvious than Joyce’s, which will be explored later. As stated in “September 1913”, Yeats seeks to utilize the past as an example for future generations to base their fight for independence on. In addition, the history of Ireland, for Yeats, is a part of all Irish citizens, regardless of political and social divisions that have affected Ireland for centuries. By using the past as a kind of mythology, Yeats creates a new trend in Irish literature and the effect that literature has on nationality. Not only for Yeats, but for the members of the Revival as a whole, the past and the movement of history play a role in shaping Ireland and the struggles of the 1900s as Ireland attempted to forge a place in the modern world, as well as an identity to call their own. Whether taking the Yeatsian view of

the past as an example, or turning against the tide of the Revival and viewing the past through a critical lens as Joyce did, the literature of this time period is reliant on history as a necessary aspect of understanding Ireland's identity challenges and the growth of nationalism.

One of the most prominent events in the Irish struggle for independence is the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which is commemorated largely by Yeats in his historical works. The period leading up to the events of 1798 was an incredibly turbulent time for both England and Ireland. By 1782, Great Britain had lost the American colonies and struggled to maintain a strong grip on the territories they still controlled, as well as ensure that these territories would fight for them if necessary. Ireland, on the other hand, having witnessed the victory of the American revolutionaries, strove to institute its own form of government equal to its British counterpart. As Thomas Pakenham recounts in *The Year of Liberty*: "For six hundred years she had been consigned to a political limbo—poor, weak, and divided...[with] Ireland still predominantly Catholic, still poor and burning with hatred for her English oppressors" (25). Great Britain agreed to negotiate with the Irish Volunteer Army, made up of primarily upper class Irish citizens, and reached an agreement before the end of the year. This ensured that the Irish and British Parliaments would become equals, with a "fragile link [holding] the two kingdoms together: the British Crown, and the golden chain of Crown patronage...that secured the loyalty of the Irish Parliament" (Pakenham 26). After this, both Great Britain and the Irish upper class believed they had avoided a full-scale revolt, yet the majority of Irish citizens, specifically the Catholic majority, had been left out of the deal.

At this time in Ireland, and throughout much of Ireland's history, Catholics had been subjected to the whims and rule of the Protestant upper class, despite the fact that Ireland was,

historically, composed of primarily Catholic citizens. The British had long been supporting the upper class, consolidating their political and social power against the masses. The compromise in 1782 benefited only the Protestant elite. Whereas they now had representation in government, the conditions of the Catholic Irish remained the same, and needed a new social movement, a fact that Peter Collins emphasizes in “The Contest of Memory”:

The Protestant political elite who controlled the Irish parliament during the eighteenth century had defined the nation solely in terms of themselves. The United Irishmen sought to negate this “by substituting for Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter the common name of Irishman”...this meant forging a synthesis between Catholicism and nationalism, a further redefinition of the Irish nation. (32)

The United Irishmen, unlike the Irish Volunteer Army of the 1780s, was comprised of a wide range of Irish citizens and focused on Irish liberation wholly, rather than specific groups, which were often in competition with one another. Though the Irish Volunteer Army originally inspired the leaders of the movement, they sought to extend the freedoms won in the 1780s to the larger Irish population. In a landmark moment of Irish history, the United Irishmen strove to bring together members of radically different social groups under one banner of Irish nationality and independence.

The cause of the United Irishmen first gained traction in 1791. The Irish Volunteer Army, whose main goal was parliamentary reform, had faded into the background after their success in creating an equal Irish Parliament. However, the radical movement had not yet been sated, and felt that the real work was ahead. Since the initial Irish threat for rebellion, the Irish Parliament had done little to alleviate the tensions among social groups. Catholics were still barred from

holding a seat in Parliament, and “the war with France, that began in 1793, caused a slump that crippled the Irish economy...[and] exacerbated resentment” (Pakenham 27). The United Irishmen believed that the only way to ensure true equality for all Irish would be to cut ties completely with England and start from scratch under a new Irish-born and Irish-led government. By 1793, the Irishmen had begun compiling weapons for an insurgency, and by 1797, an established Irish government closely monitored this revolution.

Meanwhile, the French Revolution, beginning in 1789, attracted international attention as yet another attempt by freedom fighters to push back against a form of government they no longer supported. The leaders of the United Irishmen saw the new French order as an opportunity for collaboration. Led by Theobald Wolfe Tone, a number of exiled Irish revolutionaries travelled to France in search of aid for their own revolution. The Irish radicals had long admired the actions of the French Revolution; in 1791 and 1792 revolutionaries took to the streets in Belfast to commemorate the fall of the Bastille in France, viewing the anniversary as a symbol of the destruction of corrupt and abusive governments. In addition, controversial papers, such as the United Irishmen’s own *The Northern Star* and Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* reached all corners of the Irish population. As these viewpoints spread throughout Ireland and prepared national consciousness for revolution, Wolfe Tone and his associates met with their French counterparts in preparation for direct and swift action.

Asking for aid and preparing for the invasion, Wolfe Tone met with French General Lazare Hoche, the commander of the Revolutionary army, in the early months of 1796. Despite the deep Irish admiration for the actions of the French, Tone knew that he would need more than flattery to convince the still-young French republic to help. Without their help, Tone believed

that the goals of the United Irishmen would never be fully met. In her biography of Wolfe Tone, Marianne Elliott recounts this necessity: “The landing of a large French force was an essential prerequisite to a war of independence. This would prevent civil war, turn it into a revolution rather than an insurrection, facilitate the immediate establishment of a revolutionary government and, given the proper guarantees, win over hesitant militiamen and property owners” (281). With French backing, Great Britain would have no choice but to take the rising and the revolutionary leaders seriously. At the same time, the help of a great power like France, which had already succeeded in its own revolt, would legitimize the United Irishmen and their political ideals, bringing them out of the shadows of Irish culture and into the forefront. And for the French, the invasion offered the opportunity for revenge on Great Britain for increasing the chaos during France’s civil war, with Hoche long advocating for retaliation. The aid of the Irish revolutionaries offered the perfect opportunity for both parties to take action against a power that had taken advantage of both groups in the past.

This collaboration between the French new order and the struggling Irish revolutionaries marked the first sign of a collective, more independent Ireland. Here, the revolutionaries took charge of the fate of their own nation and acted in the interest of Ireland and its people, putting their needs and goals before those of Great Britain’s. By being recognized as a legitimate force by another nation, Ireland proved that it was able to break out of the constraints placed on it by both the Irish Parliament and the Crown and begin the process of creating its own consciousness and position within global affairs. In taking these steps, the United Irishmen attracted the attention of two former members of the Irish upper class:

By early June 1796 [Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor] had arrived on the Continent with instructions to open communication with...Tone. The United Irishmen believed that uncontrolled and piecemeal popular insurgency in Ireland was drawing such a reaction from the authorities that if French help did not arrive soon organised resistance would be entirely suppressed. (Elliott 289)

The defection of Fitzgerald and O'Connor indeed strengthened the resolve of the Irishmen and increased the power of their politics and goals, but it also drew more attention to their actions and meetings from both British authorities and anti-revolutionaries in Ireland itself. Time, it seemed to Wolfe Tone and his associates, both French and Irish, was running out.

After much planning and cooperation between the United Irishmen organizing at home and Wolfe Tone and the group in France, the invasion was set to take place in the winter of 1796. France had agreed to make it clear, to both the English and the Irish that their role would not be conquest, but rather support for the new order, which would take power in a self-governing Ireland. Tone had ordered the United Irishmen militants to forgo any major uprisings until the French invasion for fear of being put down by the English before the true revolt even began. In December, Hoche and his fleet set off for the Irish coast, but were delayed by bad weather. Storms kept the ships from being able to land, and poor communication between the French and Irish leaders prevented action from being taken in time. The French fleet had no choice but to return home, leaving Ireland poised for a revolt but with no backup.

Regardless of the failure of the French invasion, the United Irishmen continued to mobilize in secret. Rebels led raids on houses across the Irish countryside gathering arms for a full-scale rebellion, and the *Northern Star* continued to circulate. Many of the skirmishes that

took place in the countryside were caused by peasants, not officially backed or organized by the United Irishmen. With the Irish government under pressure from the upper class to put down these protests, the United Irishmen had the chance to continue to plan. Wolfe Tone himself had ordered the movement to remain entirely underground until further notice. "The United Irish movement was strongest where there was the *least* disturbance.... The real threat must lie in ... Dublin and the politically conscious counties around it" (Pakenham 37). The government continued to keep the United Irishmen under surveillance, tracking its leaders, such as Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward. Meanwhile, the leaders bickered amongst themselves on the best way to initiate the revolution. The Irishmen were divided between radicals and moderates, but did not want to act without appearing united or before being fully prepared.

After the spreading of such disorder and chaos from December of 1796 and throughout the next year, the Government moved to impose martial law on Ireland in March 1798. This action made it clear that the Government took the threat of revolt seriously, even after so many failures and missteps by the revolution. "They had watched it grow from a perfectly legal society of reformers, before war broke out with France, to a huge underground army, incorporating it was claimed, 300,000 Irish sworn to join in an armed revolution" (Pakenham 41-42). In addition to martial law, the Government also moved to arrest sixteen prominent rebellion leaders, including Arthur O'Connor. Despite the threat of arrest looming over him, Lord Edward Fitzgerald moved to take over O'Connor's followers within the group and spread the order to revolt, even without French assistance, in May 1798.

United Irish forces moved on Dublin on May 23, 1798. Their goal was to take over Dublin and the surrounding counties in order to prevent reinforcements from being able to retake

the capital. Additionally, Lord Fitzgerald, in hiding until his arrest in early May, had sent orders to militia members waiting in the more Irish rural areas to take over their local garrisons and spread the revolt across the country. On May 24, however, the United Irishmen were met with military resistance outside of Dublin, the Government having been tipped off about their movements. Regardless, the revolution still began. "On 24–25 May Dublin and the adjacent counties had risen. The rising spread through the southeast and finally to Ulster on 7 June. In France the news produced such a frenzied rush to get help to Ireland that basic caution was thrown to the winds" (Elliott 366). Wolfe Tone and the French were surprised that the Irish had revolted so suddenly, but French backing was still an option.

However, it seemed French aid would arrive too late. It took the French longer than expected to rally assistance and gather supplies, while the Irish struggled to hold their ground in skirmishes across the country against the much larger and better equipped English military. Some members of the Irish Volunteer Army formed mostly by the Irish elite backed the English. In Paris, as news spread of the skirmishes and Lord Fitzgerald's death in prison on June 4, Wolfe Tone despaired that the revolt would ultimately end in defeat. Regardless, the French sailed for Ireland in September and were met almost immediately with British resistance when they attempted to land on October 12 (Elliott 373). Wolfe Tone was among the captured after the battle at sea and was arrested and brought to Dublin to be tried. Tone committed suicide in prison in November 1798, leaving the battle-weary Irish rebels rudderless and conflicted.

The loss of civilian lives and the horrendous amount of bloodshed in the name of revolution shocked and disheartened both the United Irishmen and the moderate Irish citizen. The battles over the summer while awaiting French aid had cost countless lives and destruction

across the Irish countryside. In the end, the once great and fully united armed groups fractured into smaller squads, but the commitment to the cause had diminished almost entirely. Even Wolfe Tone, in his final days, distanced himself from the armed resistance in order to avoid taking the blame for the vast loss of lives. “In the immediate aftermath of the 1798 rebellion there was a collective recoil from the shock of the disastrous events that in only a few months had led to the deaths of some 30,000 persons and the maiming, jailing, and exile of many thousands more. In certain parts of Ireland hardly a family was untouched by these tragic events” (Collins 29). Great Britain easily put down the major rebellions, and by the end of the summer the majority of the fighting, save for a few stubborn Irish guerrilla fighters led by Robert Emmet, had ended.

Where did this failure leave Ireland? With Wolfe Tone and Lord Fitzgerald dead and the majority of the rebel factions suppressed, victory was nowhere in sight. Great Britain reaffirmed its control over Ireland with the Acts of Union in 1800, which merged Great Britain and Ireland into one official kingdom and created a joint Parliament. Additionally, with the cruelty of this defeat, the fraternity created by the collective desire to break free of British rule diminished entirely. The old boundaries among Catholic, Presbyterian, and Protestant were redrawn, and each faction worked to rewrite its own involvement in the tragedy, while also once again returning to focusing only on its own issues. For many years following the rebellion, many refused to even acknowledge the commemoration of the efforts of the freedom fighters. “The memory of the United Irishmen and the events of ‘98 had indeed become a travesty” (34). Rather than a source of pride and unity for the Irish, the rebellion had become a painful reminder of the divisions that still plagued Ireland and prevented them from breaking free of British control.

Despite the destruction, both literally and ideologically, the importance of the 1798 Rebellion and its leaders transcended well into the later search for Irish culture and history by the time of the Irish Renaissance in the 1900s. Keeping this history in mind, an exploration of Yeats's work becomes much more profound and personal when considering the effect of the disastrous end of the 1798 Rebellion on future generations. As with the loss of romantic Ireland as expressed in "September 1913", Yeats is able to transform the pain of this part of history into a sacrifice that is intended to be honored and reflected in the actions of future generations for the same noble cause. His ideas shed new light on the once-scorned memory of the rebellion and retold the defeat as rather the first step in a long, proud Irish cause that spanned throughout history. For Yeats, although the original rebels had been unsuccessful, their legacy would always remain within the hearts and minds of their descendants. This gave 20th century advocates for Irish independence a precedent to rally behind, as well as a reminder that their common cause was not in vain.

As a part of his transformation of history into a facet of modern Irish identity, Yeats works to make the leaders of the 1798 Rebellion, such as Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Theobald Wolfe Tone, more accessible to a newer generation of Irish leaders, rather than simply names out of history. The 19th century rebellion was, similar to that of 1798, not without its share of defeats. Yeats uses Wolfe Tone and Fitzgerald to remind those left behind that the fight does not end simply in death. Quite the contrary in fact, Yeats insists that though the loss of prominent and beloved leaders is without a doubt tragic, their legacy will continue to fuel the ongoing quest for Irish independence and unification. One of the best examples of this theme can be found in Yeats's "Sixteen Dead Men." The poem commemorates sixteen prominent leaders who had been

shot for their involvement in the Easter 1916 Rising. Yeats does not shy away from the more brutal truths of rebellion, including loss of life, the immense power of England against Ireland, and the loss of direction after important leaders have been captured. He writes: “O but we talked at large before / The sixteen men were shot, / But who can talk of give and take, / What should be and what not” (lines 1-4). These lines capture the futility of talking rather than acting.

Whereas the sixteen fallen leaders were persecuted for their involvement in taking action against British rule, they leave behind those who were too involved in debating what their next move should be. Now, Yeats insists, it is too late to talk about what could be done to change the situation the revolutionaries now face.

However, Yeats notes that there is no reason to mourn the dead in this instance. Though they have left this world and those left behind, they are now with “those new comrades they have found / Lord Edward and Wolfe Tone” (lines 15-16). By making the ultimate sacrifice for Ireland and its people, the sixteen have earned their place in Irish history with the heroes who paved the way for the 20th century movement. Their memory is honored by Yeats’s poetry, as well as the actions of the remaining committed members of the revolution. In dying, the sixteen rebels have become an example for future generations, embodying commitment and honor that the 1798 heroes have since been commemorated for. The heroism thrust upon the leaders of both the 1798 and 1916 rebellions becomes a cornerstone for the Irish Renaissance by beginning to create an independent Irish history and culture that could support Ireland through its turbulent times in the 20th century and into the future. In his discussion of the influence of the Renaissance in “The Eternal Cycling of Yeats and Joyce”, John McCourt argues that “Collectively the works that makes up the expanding corpus of the Revival do not form a chorus but a vibrant cacophony

of voices...some of which can be considered as internal and indeed integral to a tight-knit movement” (343). The importance of honoring the past in these works, for Yeats, was essential in spurring on the Renaissance. By creating and mythologizing this past, and adding well-known contemporaries into it, Yeats was able to link many facets of one growing society into a powerful movement.

An analysis of Yeats’s poems like “Sixteen Dead Men” and “An Irish Airman foresees his Death” allude to the political and social struggles surrounding the 1916 revolution. But the poetry alone is not enough when attempting to understand the political climate of this time period. The history *and* politics during this time are essential to understanding the immense importance of the Renaissance, as well as the emotion and desires of Yeats’s poetry and the heroic figures in it. Among these figures are Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, and John MacBride, members of the 1916 revolutionary group and part of the sixteen who were killed for their involvement. Their commitment to the cause can be traced back to the very beginning, to the formation of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which would prepare itself for the 1916 revolution.

Plans for the rebellion first began circulating in the early 1910s. Ireland had been allowed home rule and self-government since 1886, but was still technically a British colony. That alone was enough for many Irish citizens to feel that they had not achieved the complete and total independence that they had long sought after. However, on the other side, unionists loyal to England felt that home rule was too much freedom for a British territory and resolved to attempt to bring back a more direct line of rule from England. In his history of the Easter Rising, Allen Ward addresses the divide between the unionists and nationalists: “The third home rule bill was

about to become law in 1914 when it was blocked by the unionists of Ulster using the threat of civil war. The Irish party had played by the rules of the parliamentary game only to find that its opponents had not” (95). Whereas the nationalists of 1798 had to resort to force to make their opinions known, the nationalists of the 1900s initially were able to take steps toward an independent Ireland through continuing to pass home rule bills. However, when the Ulster unionists attempted to rise up, it became clear that parliamentary action would not be enough to protect Ireland’s freedom anymore. The Irish National Volunteers, founded in 1913, served as a direct countermeasure to the Ulster forces, but did not have the benefits of wealthy support to finance their needs. With groups on both sides militarizing, the fear of civil war in Ireland began to mount.

Attempts to appease the northern unionists in Ulster only served to weaken the attempts of the nationalists for independence. Ulster was viewed as the Protestant heartland, but even there, small Catholic majorities clamored for the continuation of home rule. Collaboration between the British Parliament and the subordinate Irish government worked to secure a compromise, which was intended to prevent another threat of uprising from either side. Initially Ulster wanted to be kept completely separate from home rule, but with a strong Catholic majority in a few of its counties, it was impossible for the nationalists to allow it. Later, it was proposed for six of Ulster’s counties to be kept out of home rule for a temporary period of time, but the unionists would not agree. In the end, the home rule bill was passed for all of Ireland, but was put on hold when Great Britain went to war with Germany in August of 1914. Despite this, the underlying issues, which had first caused the conflict were still present. “Many constitutional nationalists themselves wanted full independence and saw home rule as a means to that end, not

an end in itself...the constitutional imperfections of home rule contained the seeds of future discord between Ireland and the United Kingdom” (Ward 102). The concerns and disagreements of the Irish nationalists and unionists had been sated and put aside in 1914, but without a more permanent solution, the “Irish problem,” as it was called, would continue well into World War One.

Yeats addresses the dissatisfaction of Irish nationalists with the actions of the British-approved Irish government and Great Britain itself in “An Irish Airman foresees his Death.” The sentiments expressed by the Irish soldier in this poem reflect the apathy and disillusionment toward Great Britain’s involvement in World War One. The airman was based on Major Robert Gregory, the son of Yeats’s long-time patron Lady Gregory who owned the estate at Coole Park, which Yeats frequently visited. “Robert Gregory became the embodiment of a strange and short-lived phenomenon, the noble Irish aviator...Memorialized by the national poet, and yet dying for an already unfashionable and unpopular cause, Gregory’s image and status remain curiously paradoxical” (Smith). Because Ireland was technically subordinate to Great Britain, Irish citizens were conscripted to fight on the British side. Yet despite the disenchantment with the British, Yeats commemorated the courage and honor of those who fought, even if it was against their principles, as symbols of what it meant to be truly Irish.

Yeats’s poem reflects clearly the sentiments of the Irish airman during the war: “Those that I fight I do not hate, / Those that I guard I do not love; / My country is Kiltartan Cross, / My countrymen Kiltartan’s poor” (lines 3-6). The airman identifies solely based in his kinship with fellow Irishmen, rather than the British cause. Instead, the airman is concerned with how Ireland and its most needy citizens will be treated after the war is over. He muses that “no likely end will

bring them loss / Nor leave them happier than before” (lines 7-8). The overall outcome of the war would have no effect on the conditions of the average Irish citizen and the continuing discussions on ensuring true, complete Irish independence. Because of this, Yeats’s depiction of the Irish airman takes on a somber and disconnected air. The war against Germany, for the struggling Irish revolutionaries, took second place to the concerns of freedom and identity that had plagued Ireland for centuries.

The question of Ireland’s global impact was prominent amongst the revolutionaries leading up to the 1916 Easter Rebellion. With home rule suspended, the Irish once again found themselves at the complete whim of the British government, rather than having at least a minor say in the governance of Ireland. Initially, the Irish nationalists believed that if they remained supportive of the war effort, Great Britain would not hesitate to re-implement home rule when the war ended. But as the war drew on, at the cost of many Irish lives and resources, the nationalists found their patience waning and their opinions divided on when exactly the best time would be to continue to advocate for home rule and eventual complete independence. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was quick to reaffirm its goals: “When war was declared, the revolutionary IRB Supreme Council resolved ‘to work for an insurrection in arms against England to be launched at the earliest possible moment’” (Ward 107-08). To the revolutionaries, war did not hinder the efforts, but rather was the perfect opportunity to take England by surprise and demand Irish independence when the British were most vulnerable. With Thomas MacDonagh and Patrick Pearse serving as military coordinators, the IRB began planning for a revolution in February of 1916.

Similar to their predecessors, the 1916 revolutionaries turned to foreign aid for assistance. Though the Irish technically served Britain against the Germans, the Irish Republican Brotherhood contacted members of the German army for military support. “[They] asked for one hundred thousand rifles, artillery pieces, and German officers. On March 4 the Germans offered much less: twenty thousand rifles, ten machine guns, ammunition and explosives, and no officers” (Ward 110). With little help from Germany, the already vastly outnumbered Irish revolutionaries continued to plan the rising, believing that at the very least, the demonstration would make a statement to both the British government and moderates within Ireland itself. The initial plan, as with the rebels in the 1798 rising, was to take over Dublin as a rallying point for IRB men to rise all over the country and declare themselves independent from England. On April 24, 1916, Easter morning, the IRB marched on Dublin and, with Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, and James Connolly at the head, signed a proclamation that named Ireland a sovereign republic.

Despite these efforts, the 1916 Easter Rising lasted only six days. Though the IRB believed that support would rise from all of Ireland for the rebellion, far less than the original ten thousand they counted on actually revolted. With less support at home, and having lost what few supplies the Germans offered in a shipwreck, the revolutionaries were extremely outnumbered and under-prepared. The leaders of the revolution were not overly optimistic; Connolly is quoted as commenting, “We’re going out to be slaughtered, you know” after declaring the new Irish Republic on Easter Monday (Ward 10). Even with this knowledge, the IRB pressed forward, able to take major governmental buildings such as Dublin Castle, the General Post Office, and Liberty Hall. By Tuesday night, however, British forces landed and marched toward Dublin to reclaim

Ireland as its own. The majority of the republican forces were blockaded in strategic positions throughout Dublin, which made it difficult for British forces to storm and overtake them. Rather, they focused on hitting these blockades with artillery forces for three days, until a fire spread through the city and threatened the General Post Office, the headquarters of the republican leaders. It was only then that Pearse announced on the afternoon of April 29 that he was ready to discuss surrender.

The republican forces surrendered unconditionally and were taken into custody. These leaders, who were executed for their involvement in the revolt, became Yeats's inspiration for "Sixteen Dead Men", considered the ideal sacrifice for the larger cause of Irish independence. Though the IRB forces had lofty goals for the 1916 Easter Rising, their driving force was not complete and total war for independence. They were, as demonstrated earlier, extremely aware that they would not be able to take on the much stronger British forces on their own. They were also aware that popular support for the revolution had not yet reached its peak. Rather, they intended to give Ireland a "blood sacrifice" for the greater, longer cause of independence, which they felt had been abandoned by the Irish government and the British parliament. They had hoped that with this sacrifice, the rest of Ireland would be emboldened to unite and continue the fight that they had begun. In *Dublin in the Age of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce*, Richard Kain explores the motivations driving the revolutionary leaders: "At his court-martial the scholarly leader Patrick Pearse expressed the spirit of the patriots: 'We seem to have lost, we have not lost...we have kept faith with the past, and handed a tradition to the future'" (121). The leaders kept faith that their actions would not be forgotten and their ideals would not be lost.

Their actions, they believed, would be only the first in a new generation of revolutionaries and nationalists who were committed to the Irish cause, even when others were not.

The intense sentiments of the IRB and its leaders were, predictably, not the opinion of the Irish population and the Irish party as a whole. The IRB's collaboration with Germany was, especially to Great Britain, a grievous offense. The IRB and its supporters claimed that Ireland should not fight Britain's war to free others from Germany and its allies when they themselves were not free from foreign rule. But to go to Germany for aid was considered treason and punishable by death during wartime, and was viewed as a German plot to weaken Great Britain rather than an Irish-motivated rising. Even governmental leaders within the Irish party in Dublin could not support the IRB's actions because they believed it went against all the legislative work they had done in the past to ensure self-government. Because of their actions, Ireland was placed under martial rule, which many felt was a step back from the progress the Irish party had made with home rule. Overall, the general sentiment was that the IRB had acted too quickly and too rashly by both involving Germany and attempting to take over knowing all too well that they would not receive unanimous support from the Irish.

The question of how much Ireland owed to Great Britain's endeavors in the war was one that plagued the members of the revolution. The controversial decision to involve Germany in an Irish revolt stemmed from a desire to put Irish needs first, though it was not a popular sentiment in the turbulent wartime political climate. In the end, this decision exemplified the revolutionaries' radical commitment to a free Ireland, no matter what the cost. Yeats explores the reasoning behind the revolutionaries' decision, as well as the importance of honoring it, in "Sixteen Dead Men":

You say that we should still the land  
Till Germany's overcome;  
But who is there to argue that  
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb?  
And is their logic to outweigh  
MacDonagh's bony thumb? (lines 7-12).

In Yeats's vision, the sacrifices of the revolutionary leaders were enough to outweigh any argument that Great Britain could make to tighten their rule over Ireland in the name of war efforts. In fact, the overall tone that Yeats takes in these lines goes as far to suggest that any idea of forsaking the cause for independence would be treasonous and dishonorable to those who so willingly laid down their lives for the cause. With the casualties of the 1916 Easter Rebellion, combined with the long-standing mistreatment of the Irish at the hands of the British, Yeats and many of his contemporaries felt that there would be no better time to continue the work of those who had died for Irish independence.

Even with British control once again tight around Ireland, the sacrifices of the IRB leaders had redefined what it meant to advocate for Irish independence, forcing both moderate and radical nationalists to reconsider their viewpoints. Now more than ever, Ireland needed unity in order to succeed. Unity is perhaps the most prominent theme of W. B. Yeats's "Easter, 1916". The poem serves as both a commemoration of the fallen revolutionaries as well as a call to action for the remaining nationalists to join the movement and continue their work. Despite the fact that instigators of the 1916 rebellion were far from hailed as public heroes, Yeats challenges his readers to put aside their personal opinions of the leaders and focus solely on the gravity and

importance of their actions for the Irish cause. Yeats himself admits his own misgivings and dislikes of those involved, describing one leader, Major John MacBride, as “a drunken, vainglorious lout / He had done most bitter wrong” (lines 32-33). Yeats’s strong disdain for MacBride stems from MacBride’s abuse of his wife, Maud Gonne, whom Yeats had always loved intensely. However, Yeats does not shy away from commemorating MacBride for his sacrifice and willingness to defend nationalist ideals:

Yet I number him in the song;

He, too, has resigned his part

.....

He, too, has been changed in his turn (lines 35-36, 38).

Despite whatever personal misgivings may exist about each of the leaders, Yeats argues with these lines that they are incomparable to the sacrifices that the leaders so willingly made for Ireland and its people.

Yeats believed and emphasizes throughout the poem that the great loss suffered by the rebellion leaders should be enough for the rest of Ireland to rally behind. Even in death, the leaders, similar to their 1798 ancestors, have left behind a legacy that can unite and set an example for Ireland. At the beginning of the poem, Yeats describes Ireland as “where motley is worn” (14). Ireland at this time was, as we have seen, diverse in its religious and political beliefs, which had made complete unity under one cause nearly impossible. But Yeats showcases that putting aside these differences for the greater good as the fallen leaders had done is indeed not only possible but also necessary. Yeats encourages his readers to take a lesson from the leaders and unite under a mutual love for Ireland and a desire to bring about freedom for all her peoples:

We know their dream; enough  
 To know they dreamed and are dead;  
 And what if excess of love  
 Bewildered them till they died? (lines 69-72).

The emotions and actions of the fallen revolutionaries are described here as so intense that it essentially led the rebel leaders to their deaths. The legacy of their dream is all that is left, and it is up to those remaining to attempt to understand and continue the work the leaders began, despite the shortcomings they as individuals presented. With their memories, Yeats expresses the hope in the final lines of the poem that “Wherever green is worn / Are changed, changed utterly / A terrible beauty is born” (lines 77-79). Because of their sacrifices, others will rally to the cause and Ireland will be elevated from their differences in order to create a united front in pursuit of independence

Yeats and many of those within his inner circle during the Literary Revival emphasized the importance of looking to the past for an example on how to best face the future. However, the example set by the fallen revolutionaries in both the 1798 and 1916 revolution is not one of success and unification. Because of this, many struggled to see the hope that Yeats insisted these leaders symbolized. At the head of this criticism was James Joyce, whose writing both identified and challenged what exactly it means to be Irish, and whether or not true Irish unification would be possible without a complete redefinition of Irish culture. Additionally, Joyce emphasized the importance of blazing a new trail in order to attain Irish independence, rather than canonizing and blindly following the failures of leaders Yeats holds in such high esteem. For Joyce, the past has been a hindrance on Ireland’s development into an independent and culturally unique nation

with its own identity and distinct beliefs. This is in part due to the constraints that Joyce argues Ireland has put on itself, such as its inability to let go of religious beliefs that have disenfranchised the movement forward, as well as the narrow view of nationality before all else. Joyce's interaction with the past is undoubtedly present throughout his writing, but he calls for a critical view of Irish history rather than Yeats's mythological view. Joyce's works explore the development of modern Irish culture and identity, but present it as a foil to the past. He believes that in order to best continue this development, the past must be utilized as a tool to leave behind the causes of the failures of previous revolutions. Joyce's view of identity and nationalism attempts to unite Ireland through common grounds such as masculine identity, while at the same time pushing the Irish to be critical of their own institutions as the purest form of love for their nation and its goals.

One of Joyce's biggest concerns in dealing with the past is the divide between the Catholic Church and the Irish nationalist movement. No leader is a better example of this rift than Charles Stewart Parnell, a historical figure mentioned both in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as well as in *Dubliners*. Parnell, for many Irish, was almost like a father figure guiding Ireland into a brighter, freer future. Parnell was an Irish leader who spurred constitutional reform forward in the 1880s. Confident and full of ideas and hope for the Irish people, he was a prominent and successful figure as a member of the House of Commons despite conspiracy accusations and possible defamation. However, Parnell's love for a married woman, Katharine O'Shea and her eventual divorce and marriage to him, put Parnell at odds with the doctrine of the Catholic Church and the traditions of Irish culture. Because of this, his political status was stripped and the public turned against him in November 1890. A year later, he was

dead. “Parnell was to Joyce a symbol of the ideal Ireland, and his betrayal became a paramount factor in Joyce’s hatred for whatever was cowardly and shoddy in his native land. The sense of betrayal was a traumatic experience for the Irish people at large, in that they were finally forced to face the fact that the national problem was not simply one of domination from the outside” (Kain 116). Parnell and his work suffered because of the restrictions of Irish culture, but the Irish suffered because he was not able to put his work and larger cause of Irish independence first. For Joyce, Parnell’s failure reflected not only the shortfalls of Ireland’s institutions, but also the futility of putting too much faith in any one man or institution.

With this understanding of Joyce’s view of history in mind, an exploration of his views on the shaping of Irish identity is necessary. In *Dubliners*, Joyce explores different facets of life in Dublin through a selection of short stories. The second story in the collection, “An Encounter” centers on a group of young boys and their infatuation with Westerns. This obsession with the masculine, independent figures of Western novels comes to a head when the boys decide to skip school and wander around Dublin. It serves as a coming-of-age story with the experiences the boys have around the city reflecting both the norms of Irish identity and culture and initiating them into it. The titular encounter and perhaps the most revealing path the boys will take as they grow into Irish citizens involves the narrator and his friend Mahony meeting and talking with a man they refer to as “a queer old jossler” (18) who seems to exist outside of the masculine world the boys inhabit and will inherit.

The importance of Westerns in the story stems from a sense of community and adventure that links the boys. In the beginning, the narrator describes how a big group of them get together consistently to read the Westerns and then play as cowboys and Indians. The narrator notes that

“a spirit of unruliness diffused itself among us and, under its influence, differences of culture and constitution were waived” (12). It is the masculine aspects of the stories that tie the boys together, bringing them away from the vast differences, such as religion and social class, that permeate Irish culture and unite them under one common trait. The Westerns also offer the boys an outlet from the constraints of the institutions that surround them and Ireland. The narrator notes that as he and Mahony continue on the adventure through Dublin that “school and home seemed to recede from us and their influences upon us seemed to wane” (15). A major theme in many of Joyce’s works, namely in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is that of breaking away from the social constraints such as school, religion, and brainwashed nationalism in order to enhance one’s ability to learn and improve. Mahony and the narrator seem to begin this process, but are also deeply involved in the aspects that make them Irish and unite them with other Irish boys.

The encounter with the man at the end of the story is essential to understanding masculinity as part of Irish culture and identity because the encounter gives them insight to an existence outside of the masculine world that Ireland values. When the man first begins to talk with them, he asks them about their experiences with and feelings towards girls; the narrator notes that, “he gave me the impression he was repeating something which he had learned by heart” (18). Rather than being able to understand and connect with the boys about a basic characteristic of traditional masculine identity--an attraction to women--the man has to essentially put up a facade. Later in the conversation, his attitude completely shifts away from understanding male attraction to women and toward violence and disgust at the thought saying, “if a boy ever had a girl for a sweetheart...then he would give them a whipping as no boy ever

got” (19). The drastic shift toward violence as a means of oppression is harrowingly similar to the experiences Ireland as a nation suffered under British rule. This and the falsity of his earlier claims completely alienate the man from not only the boys, but also the larger framework of Irish identity. The emphasis on masculine identity as a part of a larger Irish identity is presented in Christopher Elias’s “What Makes Them Dubliners? James Joyce’s ‘An Encounter’ and the Foundations of Masculinist Nationalism in Ireland”. Elias recalls that “Joyce famously stated that his objective in *Dubliners* was ‘to write a chapter of the moral history of my country’. ‘An Encounter’ fits with that project by capturing the forces that molded the identities of the young men who drove the Irish independence movement” (238). The experiences that the boys have throughout the story in Dublin remind them of what it means to be a man in Ireland, and what would separate them from that community. The unification brought about by this shared sense of masculinity is one that could create a singular, shared Irish identity across the boundaries that so starkly separated past generations of rebels.

The role of prominent male figures, such as Parnell, in shaping Irish identity is explored in Joyce’s “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”, one of the last stories in *Dubliners*. In the story, a group of men working for political candidate Richard Tierney discuss Irish politics and the differences between Tierney and his rival candidate--chief among these differences being their economic background and views of nationalism. As different characters come and go from the committee room, alternative viewpoints about Ireland’s current political state are presented and disputed, with the anniversary of Parnell’s death looming in the background and culminating in a ballad-style poem recited by one of the characters to honor Parnell’s memory. As in “An Encounter”, one of the focuses of “Ivy Day” is the camaraderie between the men in the

committee room. The importance of masculine identity is once again explored within the context of participation in Irish politics and the position of Ireland within the wider world. One of the debates among the men concerns whether or not Tierney would support welcoming King Edward VII to Ireland with a formal address. In doing so, Tierney would potentially lose the support of ardent nationalists by symbolically bowing Ireland down to the English monarch. One of the men, Mr. Hynes, points out: "The working man is not going to drag the honour of Dublin in the mud to please a German monarch" (Joyce 102). This line, to begin with, alienates King Edward even further from the Irish people by pointing out his strong German heritage in contrast to his rule of England and Ireland. In addition, it strengthens the ideas set forth in "An Encounter" by tying Irish identity and nationality to masculine ideals, such as hard work and maintaining dignity in the face of adversity.

The involvement of both the "working man" and the men in the committee room in nationalist concerns, as well as the reverence for Parnell as a strong male figure, reflects the influence of the forces that shape Mahony and the narrator in "An Encounter". In order to be a full participant in what it means to be Irish, the men in "Ivy Day" and the boys in "An Encounter" allow themselves to be molded by the strong ideas of active involvement in nationalism and politics as well as the importance of adhering to traditional masculine roles and values. The boys in "An Encounter" get a taste of life in Dublin when they watch the dockworkers and attempt to visit the Pigeon House, seeing male participation in shaping Ireland as a nation. They also get a glimpse of what life would be like outside of this model when they meet the old man at the end of the story, an event which reinforces their reliance on masculine identity as a way of fitting in. Similarly, the men in "Ivy Day" perform their duty not only to

Ireland, but to themselves, by living up to the standards set by previous generations. Their conversations in the committee room showcase the creation of a cohesive unit, molded together not only by politics, but by their shared male identification as well.

The importance of a male figurehead is furthered throughout “Ivy Day” by the men’s discussion of Parnell and his influence on Irish politics. Parnell’s memory is honored at the end of the story with a poem recited by Mr. Hynes that is certainly meant to echo the ideas set forth in Yeats’ work, which express the importance of commemoration of and identification with historical heroes of Ireland. The lines which most directly reflect this read: “And Death has now united him / With Erin’s heroes of the past” (Joyce lines 552-553). Similar to the sentiments set forth in “Sixteen Dead Men” and “Easter, 1916”, these lines indicate that Parnell has found a new home among other heroes who have died for the Irish cause. The poem also goes so far as to point out where the blame lies for Parnell’s failure and ultimate death: “Shame on the coward caitiff...Betrayed him to the rabble-rout / Of fawning priests--no friends of his!” (Joyce lines 542, 544-545). The “fawning priests” are clearly meant to represent the Catholic church as a whole, which turned its back on Parnell and influenced much of Ireland to do the same, despite the work that Parnell had done to change Ireland for the better. Though the men present for the recitation are indeed moved by the sentiment of the poem and still mourn the loss of Parnell, it is important to note that at the end of the story, nothing has truly changed. The men are literally paralyzed by their inability to move from the committee room, as well as figuratively as they are unable to reshape Ireland outside of the political, social, and cultural norms that have always constricted true Irish movement toward independence and modernity. Here, Joyce’s argument is clear:

reliance on figures and institutions of the past will only confine Ireland in the past along with them. True progress, for Joyce, means separating Ireland from the past altogether.

Male figures and masculinity play a prominent role in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as well, as the novel is primarily concerned with the relationship between sons and fathers, both literally between Stephen Dedalus and his father Simon and figuratively concerning Ireland and its heroes. However, it also serves as a cautionary tale to warn of the dangers of relying too heavily on the precedents set by the institutions and heroes of the past, no matter how strongly they fit into Irish identity. One of the early scenes in *Portrait* is a conversation involving Stephen's father and a group of guests at Christmas dinner. The conversation depicts the diametrically opposed political and religious lines that separate large portions of the Irish population from one another, with the former nun Dante representing the views of the strict, adherent Catholic Irish and Mr. Dedalus' friend Mr. Casey representing the radical views of the nationalists:

Dante stared across the table, her cheeks shaking. Mr Casey struggled up from his chair and bent across the table toward her...

--No God for Ireland! he cried. We have had too much God in Ireland. Away with God!

--Blasphemer! Devil! screamed Dante, starting to her feet and almost spitting in his face...

At the door Dante turned violently round and shouted down the room...

--Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend!...

Mr. Casey...suddenly bowed his head on his hands with a sob of pain.

--Poor Parnell! he cried loudly. My dead king! (Joyce 33)

Mr. Casey clearly demonstrates his belief that the Irish must move away from the restrictions that the Catholic Church expect from the independence movement in order for the revolution to truly succeed. However, Dante asserts that anyone who goes directly against the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and therefore God too does not deserve the support or respect of the Irish. The tension between the strong admiration many Irish felt toward revolutionary leaders and the strict rules and punishments of the Catholic Church created an angry divide between two important facets of Irish culture: the desire for independence and a religious tradition.

The disappointment of Parnell's weaknesses in the face of Irish expectations is symbolized in *Portrait* in Stephen's relationship with his father. His father, like Mr. Casey, is infatuated with the past and the people who represent it. Similar to those who immortalized Parnell's work even after he had essentially betrayed the Irish cause, Mr. Dedalus yearns for days gone by and romanticizes a past that no longer exists on a visit to his childhood town. "[Stephen] listened without sympathy to his father's evocation of Cork and of scenes of his youth, a tale broken by sighs or draughts from his pocketflask whenever the image of some dead friend appeared in it" (Joyce 78). Later on, Stephen reflects on his father and his friends' obsession with the past: "An abyss of fortune or of temperament sundered him from them. His mind seemed older than theirs...he had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health nor filial piety" (86). Stephen is able to separate himself from not only past experiences, but the entanglements of intense emotional relationships as well, unlike his father. His father, on the other hand, is too caught up with the past to focus on the present and the future. Stephen and Mr. Dedalus return to Cork in order to auction off property to

settle Mr. Dedalus' debt, implying that Mr. Dedalus' distractions from the past affect his duty to plan for the future.

Stephen's rejection of the past eventually evolves into a rejection of the institutions that establish the norms that have inhibited growth and development from past failures. By the end of the novel, Stephen has struggled not only with the relationship with his father, but with religion, school, and his relationships with his friends and peers as well. Close to the end of the novel, many of his friends have begun to develop nationalistic ideals for Ireland, calling Stephen to unite with them under the banner of Irishmen, both past and present. Stephen firmly rejects the idea of noble sacrifice in the name of abstract revolutionary ideals:

--No honourable and sincere man, said Stephen, has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I'd see you damned first.

--They died for their ideals, Stevie, said Davin. Our day will come yet, believe me....

--The soul is born, [Stephen] said vaguely, first in those moment I told you of...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 (188).

Stephen directly references two heroes of Irish history that newer generations of Irish revolutionaries have attempted to emulate. However, he insists that looking to the past is futile because of the imperfections of both the heroes and the nation that refused to rise to support them. For Stephen and for Joyce, the only way to achieve national liberation is to first achieve

personal liberation from the failures and shortcomings of the past and the institutions that have both caused these failures and hindered progression away from them.

Joyce's unique strain of nationalism, though it seems harsh and impersonal, is still rooted in a deep love of Ireland and the belief that it can become something greater than it has been. To critique the pitfalls of Irish culture is not to abandon them, in Joyce's view. Rather, in order for Ireland to be successful in its liberation movement and cultural revival, it must put aside and grow from the leaders, institutions, and norms that have failed in the past. This belief is articulated through Stephen's character. As presented in "Stephen Dedalus and Nationalism Without Nationalism", Aleksander Stević observes that "It is only after he realizes he is incapable of negotiating a tolerable relationship with historic Ireland, that the aspiring artist will reinvent himself as a demiurgic creator of national conscience...As he is preparing to go into self-imposed exile, it is a final gesture of severance and rejection. In order to be made tolerable, Ireland must be reinvented" (51). The true and purest form of nationalism recognizes national problems and seeks to work through them in order to create a new order. The past is neither guide nor romanticized myth. Rather, those living in the present should learn to separate themselves from it in order to build a more prosperous future.

It is clear after these analyses that the major difference between the works of Yeats and Joyce is how to deal with the past and how it can interact with the future. Yeats believed that the past is deserving of honor and recognition, as it paves the way for future generations to act as their ancestors did for the same goals. This new generation is described in Sarah Cole's *At the Violet Hour*: "As Michael Tratner has argued, Yeats was inspired by the promise of generative violence to create 'a new species of man...from terror,' specifically as a part of a desire to merge

with the masses and to find inspiration in a broad Irish history and imaginary” (151). Yeats believed the recurring rebellions throughout Irish history set a precedent to inspire present and future generations to action. The power of a collective history would bring the divided Irish culture together and prepare it to face and overcome the struggles of the future to better Ireland.

Joyce, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of growing from past failures and developing a new consciousness outside of the restrictions of the past. Yeats’s mythologizing fallen heroes from 1798 and 1916, in Joyce’s view, distracted from overcoming the real issue: moving away from the constructs that caused the failures of the past rebellions. Joyce desired a rejection of the past as a source of unification and the complete reliance and admiration of the heroes that were bogged down by their own shortcomings and the lack of unity among the Irish population. The creation of a new cultural identity, however, would allow Ireland to break free from the cycle of failure and become truly independent. George Watson describes the tragic causes of this cycle in *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival*: “In Joyce’s history, then, Ireland has sold herself twice over, to different masters who make common cause in enforcing servility on the nation” (156). In this case, the “masters” are both Great Britain and the Catholic Church. Without being able to break away from one, Ireland will never be free from the other. Therefore, looking to the past would only reinforce the norms that failed Ireland again, rather than paving the way for a new chance for success.

Despite these differences, the literature of both men was essential to the Irish Literary Revival and reshaping Irish identity to enforce ideals of liberation and cultural pride. The effects of British rule over Ireland caused a repression and sense of shame when it came to Ireland’s literary tradition. Because of this, the writers of the 1900s and the Revival had to work to make

the literature both recognizable and accessible to the majority of the Irish population. For Yeats, this meant incorporating the tradition into Modernist literature, whereas for Joyce, the end goal was to be able to build off of the old in order to create a new tradition. As Terence Brown points out in *The Literature of Ireland*: “The literary impulse to produce translations, bred of a nationalist climate, meant that Irish writing of the period exhibited characteristics that suggest Modernist aesthetics...It sought to summon from the past in its acts of translation the spirit of the nation” (24). The literature of any nation reflects the culture of that time period. In Ireland’s case, the revival of literary tradition gave rise to new literature that emphasized the Irish desire for unification and liberation, both through Yeats’s mythology and Joyce’s postcolonial future.

The Irish struggle for independence was far more than just political. The Irish sought to create a new culture and identity for themselves, free from British rule. However, the hardships of the past weighed heavily on their shoulders, as generations of freedom fighters gave their lives in the name of Ireland in an attempt to forge this independent identity. Both the 1798 and 1916 rebellions are perfect examples of the commitment and perseverance of the Irish cause, yet both ended with the British overcoming the Irish. In order to liberate itself, Ireland needed one united culture that all Irish could relate. William Butler Yeats and James Joyce, writers during the Irish Literary Revival in the 1900s, recognized the necessity of forming an independent Irish culture to empower the nation into revolutionary action. Though their approaches to the past and its effects on the present and future were drastically different, their works created new meanings for Irish identity and helped bring Ireland into the Modernist era politically, socially, and culturally.

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