BETWEEN IRISHMEN:
QUEERING IRISH LITERARY AND CULTURAL NATIONALISMS

By

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This dissertation explores the relations between various strands of Irish nationalism and the homosocial/homosexual continuum as represented in texts by Irish writers Edward Martyn, James Joyce, Brian Friel, Thomas Kilroy, Frank McGuinness, and Jamie O'Neill. Drawing upon Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theories of homosociality, the epistemology of the closet, and homosexual panic as well as Judith Butler’s theory of melancholic gender performativity, I argue that the Irish representation of homoeros is not only a submerged counter-tradition within Irish writing, but also an integral part in the constitution of modern nationalist identity. Specifically, homosociality and homoeroticism, I argue, have affected the nature of Irish literary and cultural nationalisms insofar as homosocial desire resides in the heart of romantic nationalism’s ideology and symbolism, and in its sacrificial interpellation of the homosexual figure.

The first chapter looks at the influential impact of gender and homoeros on the histories of nationalisms by examining homosexual panic in the Irish Gothic, the influence of Dion Boucicault’s sentimental melodramas, and by reading the Irish Revival through George L. Mosse’s analysis of nationalism’s creation of a respectable normative masculinity and through David Cairns and Shaun Richards’s discussion of Irish familism and its regulation of sexuality. The Irish Revivalists’ reaction to the discourse of Irish feminization informs their understanding of the model Irishman as both peasant and warrior. Also, a homosocial cultural imaginary, akin to romantic nationalism’s, shapes Ulster Unionism as well, apparent in Loyalist marches and Orange fraternal organizations. The second section of the introduction consists of three case studies
investigating the queer lives of Oscar Wilde, Patrick Pearse, and Roger Casement. Each man is an exemplary figure of the contradictory discourses of homoerotic desire in conflict with Irish nationality.

My readings of selected literary texts in the following chapters elaborate upon the queer-inflected construction of masculinist nationalist identity. In Chapter 2, I show how Edward Martyn’s play *The Heather Field* charts a tension between the physical and emotional yearning for men and a brand of Catholic asceticism, or hieratic homoeroticism. In the subsequent chapter, I turn to James Joyce’s ambivalent strategies of representation and their imbrication within romantic nationalism. This chapter discusses *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* through theories of gender inversion and performativity and homosexual panic within male homosocial relations.

In Chapter 4, Brian Friel’s *The Gentle Island* and Thomas Kilroy’s *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* dramatize Ireland’s continuing disavowal of its culture’s homosocial foundations through homophobic scapegoating. The fifth chapter reads Frank McGuinness’s plays *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* and *Carthaginians* through melancholic gender as Northern Ireland’s warring communities grapple with psychic and bodily wounds. The dissertation ends with a short epilogue analyzing the homosocial and homoerotic desires configuring the Easter Rising of 1916 in Jamie O’Neill’s novel *At Swim, Two Boys*. 
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Margaret Rose Wright Lapointe, and my grandmother, Agnes Hartshorn Wright, both of whom did not live to see this project completed. My uncle, Howard Leroy “Junior” Wright passed away four days after my oral examination. I also wish to dedicate this work to my father, Angelbert Joseph Lapointe. I could not have reached this point without them. I offer special thanks to Julie Richards, Dr. Alan Lewis, Dr. Thomas Hastings, Martin Russell, Paul Gorbould, and Nancy Body for their decades of friendship, loyalty, and love.
I

Of Irish Nationalisms and *Homoeros*

I look into his eyes, they’re closed
But I see something.
A teacher told me why, I laugh
When old men cry.
My body grows and grows,
It frightens me, you know.
The old man tried to walk me home.
I thought he should have known.
Twilight,
Twilight, lost my way.
Twilight, night and day.
Twilight, can’t find my way.
(In the shadow boy meets man
In the shadow boy meets man).
I’m running in the rain.
I’m caught in a late night play.
It’s all and everything.
I’m soaking through the skin.
Twilight, darkened day.
Twilight, lost my way,
Twilight, night and day.
Twilight, can’t find my way.
(In the shadow boy meets man
In the shadow boy meets man).


Our Nationalism has for far too long been our Egoism. It was our lovely, shining youth. Like all the appurtenances of youth it was lovely in its day. After its day passed to attempt to wear it was a form of ‘Death in Venice’, a middle-aged man raddling his cheeks to keep his youthful glow in times of plague. Ireland has clung to her youth, indeed to her childhood, longer and more tenaciously than any other country in Europe, resisting Change, Alteration, Reconstruction to the very last.


I realized that I must make the attempt not only to come out of the closet but, just as importantly, to discover and articulate the relevance of gay/lesbian liberation within the struggle for Irish national liberation.

In the first pair of excerpts from two of Ireland’s favourite sons, Bono of Irish rock band U2 and writer Sean O’Faolain, a curious incongruity of homoerotically-charged imagery registers within an unlikely Irish context. The first passage, the song “Twilight”, from U2’s debut album entitled Boy, possesses the melancholic tone which accompanies a loss of innocence through maturation into adulthood, but the lyric also speaks to an adolescent male’s confusion and fear over his sexual identity. The boy’s ambiguous encounter with the old man (perhaps a father figure) in twilight’s shadows not only can be read as the boy meeting a mature version of himself, but also as an encounter where the old man provides the boy with a key to potential sexual discovery and revelation. In the second excerpt, Sean O’Faolain criticizes romantic Irish nationalism through recourse to Thomas Mann’s short story “Death in Venice” (1912), thereby joining questions of Irish identity and homosexuality. Mann’s story, a favourite in gay prose anthologies, brings to O’Faolain’s table same-sex desire, voyeurism, the erotic relationship between the artist and his inspiration, and the paternal desire for the son never born. Perhaps, O’Faolain’s “lovely, shining” youth is the slightly younger, less knowing, counterpart of Bono’s frightened Dublin boy “running in the rain.” O’Faolain’s mocking personification of nationalism as an aging dandy— an Oscar Wilde or Quentin Crisp with too much rouge on his cheek to hide his receding attractiveness—serves as a stubborn and pathetic figure ironically so unlike nationalism in its full glory of boyhood.

Romantic and revolutionary nationalisms have been twentieth-century Ireland’s principal cultural and political frameworks and the foundational smithy upon which the country’s badge of identity has been forged, even if only diminished to a symbolic residue over the past few decades. Nationalisms’ power to define who one is
and who one isn’t in relation to imagined communities structures beliefs and myths, while simultaneously creating clear internal borders and boundaries historically between the Irish and the Other: women, Travellers, the working class, immigrants, Jews, people of colour, abused children, and gays and lesbians (Cullingford, Others 7). Conservative religious attitudes towards sexuality common to Ireland’s various Christian faith groups and a dominant masculinist patriarchal cultural order suppress the freedoms of a queer Ireland for the purposes of shoring up the communities’ sense of uncontaminated Irishness or Ulsterness. In the third quotation above, McClenaghan’s apparent paradoxical identity, to many nationalists, as a gay Republican functions as a telling instance of revolutionary nationalism’s wilful blindness and hypocrisy towards gays and lesbians within Irish communities. McClenaghan’s statement is a bellwether of the historic and cognitive distance between his context and that of O’Faolain and Bono’s, underscoring the dramatic progressive social changes that have swept over Ireland in the past fifteen years.

Roughly, three major species of Irish nationalism have substantially shaped the country in this past century: conservative constitutional nationalism, militant revolutionary nationalism, and romantic cultural nationalism. In turn, these three strains remain internally fractured, exhibiting sizeable overlap with each other and cross-fertilization over the last two hundred years. Ulster Unionism obliquely may be considered a form of nationalism as it looks to London yet is very dissimilar to English or British nationalism. This thesis primarily examines the enormous impact upon Irish writing of Ireland’s triumphant, romantic cultural nationalism and its intersection with insurgent nationalism. The relationship between cultural and revolutionary nationalist
and Ulster Unionist identities and the continuum of homosociality and homosexual
identities has not been examined by scholars until very recently.

I am not dealing here first and foremost with sexual acts, but, instead, with a
plurality of sexual categories, of expanded, yet often vexed, notions of love and male
friendship, and of emotional and spiritual yearning for another member of the same sex.
These relational discourses, sometimes marked by an intimacy or intensity usually
associated with most standard configurations of heterosexual romance, are also, at other
times, marked by anxiety and hostility: I have grouped all these variable phenomena
under the term homoeros.¹ Sexual desire, practices, and identities are best conceived as a
fluid spectrum, as David Bergman comments: “sexual identity and sexual practice are
frequently separate in the discourse of both homo- and heterosexuality. In both
discourses, the way you feel about what you do is far more important than what you do”
(29). Sexual desire, always in flux, often refuses to respect boundaries of identity,
resulting in sexual behavior not aligning itself logically within predetermined sexual
categories; for example, the fact that many men who engage in sexual activity with other
men, even if only once, are heterosexually-identified, underlining the incoherence and
fissures amongst what one says, what one does, and what one, supposedly, is.

¹ Homoeros is my umbrella term encompassing the diversity of (homo)sexual phenomena synthesized from
the work of a coterie of both queer theory and gay studies scholars to whom I owe an intellectual debt of
gratitude: Michel Foucault’s discursive subjectivity through institutional power in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1977) and The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (1978); David Halperin’s
extension of Foucault’s work to the specificity of gay male experience in Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography (1995); Ed Cohen’s work on normative masculinity and cultural normalization in Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities (1993); and Eve Kosofsky
Sedgwick’s notions of homosociality and the workings of the closet in Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (1985) and Epistemology of the Closet (1990). Thanks to Eve Sedgwick also
for the inspiration for my dissertation’s title. In addition, I have drawn from Judith Butler’s influential re-
This dissertation closely examines *homoeros* in the texts of writers spanning over a century of Irish writing: Edward Martyn’s play *The Heather Field* (1899), James Joyce’s novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), Thomas Kilroy’s drama *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* (1968), Brian Friel’s play *The Gentle Island* (1971), Frank McGuinness’s dramas *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985) and *Carthaginians* (1988), and, lastly, Jamie O’Neill’s novel *At Swim, Two Boys* (2001).

The rich ambiguity of these works does not permit unequivocal statements about homoerotic representation or about the authors responsible for them. The complex terrain of these widely divergent texts recommends the adoption of a diversity of approaches or methods such as queer theory, feminism, psychoanalytic criticism, formalist readings, postcolonialism, and Irish historical and cultural analysis in order to stimulate the most productive queer readings. Since the plethora of Irish texts to be queerly reread promises many critical rewards and a compelling claim arguing for the tenacious presence of *homoeros* in Irish writing is grounded in the examination of numerous authors, the focus here, due to practical limits, is upon a detailed re-reading of these six writers and approximately eight texts, which best illustrates queer theory’s insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of diverse categories of Irish nationalism.

The queer re-readings of Irish texts\(^2\) that I am proposing in no sense intend to rebut more traditional interpretations which eschewed any mention of *homoeros* in any

form but, instead, often build upon this work to open up space to marginal readings. Competing marginal interpretations remain crucial to orthodox analysis since they constitute the limits of dominant understanding. Likewise, some mainstream criticism depends upon the containment of these very margins for their own canonical power and prestige through censorship and silence. Lee Edelman posits that a germane parallel exists between male homosexuality and writing, for as he states, “[l]ike writing, gay male sexuality comes to occupy the place of the material prop, the excessive element, of representation: the superfluous and arbitrary thing that must be ignored, repressed, or violently disavowed in order to represent representation as natural and unmediated” (xvi). Analogously, in discussing nationalism, David Lloyd writes that “it is a paradox of nationalism that though it may often summon into being a ‘people’ which is to form and subtend the nation-state, it is always confronted with that people as a potentially disruptive excess over the nation and its state” (History 33; emphasis Lloyd’s).

Much Irish literary and cultural criticism has been indebted to the same gendered and sexual ideological discourses which shape Irish nationalisms that, I argue, the representations in the texts under examination critique. Although recent queer and progressive work has been done in Irish Studies by such scholars as Colleen Lamos, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, Gerry Smyth, Joseph Valente, Vicki Mahaffey, Michael Cronin, Luke Gibbons, Declan Kiberd, Lionel Pilkington, Margot Gayle Backus, Joseph Allen Boone, Garry Leonard, Éibhhear Walshe, David Lloyd, Seamus Deane, Emer Nolan, Edna Longley, Adrian Frazier, Lance Pettitt, Elaine Sisson, and Vincent Quinn to name just a handful, Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis comment, however, that,
the study of gender in Ireland has been suppressed, with some notable exceptions, in the dominant male-centered discourses of historiography and literary criticism, which have until very recently assumed an understanding of culture that marginalizes gender in revising nationalism or in analyzing Ireland's postcolonial status. (2)

A queer reappraisal of Irish texts and nationalism, I contend, offers a productive response to Edna Longley's diagnosis of what Irish criticism lacks when she speculates that "[p]erhaps the equivalent of advanced feminist ‘troubling and subverting’ is precisely what our Nationalist and Unionist patriarchal strait-jackets need" (Living 187). More specifically, David Lloyd announces a new promising horizon in future Irish scholarship: "What has yet to be adequately documented and analyzed is the emergence of differently articulated male and female homosocial spheres in colonial and postcolonial Ireland, though these doubtless exist and have probably profoundly affected political and social life in Ireland" (History 88).

Queer Theory and René Girard's Scapegoat

Queer theory posits a deconstructed and divided subject, where identity is fluid, in flux, and socially constructed, undermining traditional binary oppositions of gender and sexual categories such as heterosexual/homosexual, masculine/feminine, and male/female. Two broad approaches characterize queer theory: Foucauldian discursive analysis of the social construction of identity, in this case homo- and heterosexuality, as explored by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and a queerly-inflected psychoanalysis heavily indebted to the work of Judith Butler, focusing upon the influence of the interior realm of the subject’s mind,
development, and functioning. Both exterior and interior approaches, as it were, are productive when queerly reading Irish writing and developing an understanding of homoeros within Irish nationalisms.

Sedgwick's descriptions of the homosocial architecture of same-sex relations; of the epistemological strategies of the closet: the interaction of knowledge, ignorance, power, and denial; and of the inherent homophobic scapegoating of the homosexual figure by the homosocial afford far-reaching critical and social insights. Male homosociality involves the social bonds or “the glue” (Men 2) of male bonding, frequently triangulated through the exchange of women or the discourse of Woman and often accompanied by acute homophobia. Normative constructions of male heterosexuality are conceptually dependent upon “a distinction between men's identification (with men) and their desire (for women), a distinction whose factitiousness is latent where not patent….show[ing] how close may be the slippage or even the melding between identification and desire” (Closet 62; emphasis Sedgwick’s). Sedgwick argues that the structure of men's relations with their own sex should be viewed as possibly an unbroken continuum between the homosocial and the homosexual, which is, however, on the surface visibly and drastically ruptured (Men 1-2). This rupture means that “male heterosexual identity and modern masculinist culture may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallization of same-sex male desire that is widespread and in the first place internal” (Closet 85).

René Girard’s writings concerning the sacrificial process and the scapegoat mechanism, which influence Sedgwick, shape my own discussion of Irish nationalisms’ homosocial foundations. According to Girard, scapegoats serve as surrogate victims or
substitutes for a community’s internal rivalries, jealousies, dissensions, and feuds. This venting of pent up frustration within a community manifests itself in violence against the victims in order to preserve social solidarity and harmonious order. The victims of this scapegoating mechanism are already condemned in advance by tradition and cultural fiat; moreover, they are chosen because they unable to defend themselves since they lack any recourse to vengeance or justice, having no one to champion their interests (*Violence* 2-8; *Scapegoat* 36). In Ireland, historically, the diverse strains of nationalism’s antagonistic relationship with Britain and, in the main, its ineffectual resistance to external rule are one root cause of nationalist communities’ anger and violence.

Separately, scapegoats might be selected at random, but, collectively, they share certain characteristics. Girard notes that the victims are “exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants” (*Violence* 12). When turning his focus to sexuality, Girard posits that when “one trespasses beyond the limits of matrimony to engage in illicit relationships—incest, adultery, and the like—the violence, and the impurity resulting from this violence, grows more potent and extreme” (*Violence* 35), epitomized, I contend, by the sacrifice of homosexual desire in the name of an ideal romantic nationalism. Since the sacrificial process is never ultimately efficacious, scapegoating violence is always in demand and unavoidably repeatable. Regarding the homosexual figure, Sedgwick asks, “what tighter turn could there be to the screw of an already off-center, always at fault, endlessly blackmailable male identity ready to be manipulated into any labor of channeled violence?” (*Closet* 84).

The position of martyrdom in this sacrificial economy remains another factor
worth considering. Martyrs are not outside this scapegoating system, for “what the martyrs say has little importance,” argues Girard, “because they are witnesses, not of a determined belief, as is imagined, but of man’s terrible propensity, in a group, to spill innocent blood in order to restore the unity of their community” (Scapegoat 209). Within nationalist communities, the blood sacrifice of the individual is a reaction to the injunction that homosocially-bonded men must die as willing victims for idealistic notions of fraternal comradeship and for the elevated objective of serving the nation with its imaginary masculine identity. Ironically, in the cases of Patrick Pearse and Roger Casement, the scapegoating mechanism overlaps with conspicuous martyrdom, possibly in the forms of these men’s internal psychic compulsion and of the communities’ (and, in Pearse’s case, his own) repudiation of the homosexual “enemy within.” A sacral Irish nationalism’s celebratory representation of the martyr figure naturally draws upon an overdetermined Christian inheritance, which spawns a sense of the innocence of the heroic person persecuted by being put in Christ’s place (Scapegoat 202). This Christic parallel typically invokes sympathy for Irish martyrs, yet, contrary to the intent behind nationalist-sanctioned homophobia, this affective parallel in conjunction with authorial design often invokes sympathy too for these other victims in the texts under study.

Queer theory’s second approach involves Judith Butler’s seminal work in queering Freud’s Oedipus complex, where a defensive strategy of ambivalence underlies the formation of the superego from the melancholic incorporation of prohibited lost loves and proscribed desires. Gender, according to Butler in Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’ (1993), is the effect of the incorporation of that phallic prohibition against homosexuality and incest mapped onto the body. Butler theorizes
gender identity as a form of melancholic incorporation by following Freud’s speculations in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Butler describes how the ambivalent lost object of love “is set up within the ego as a critical voice or agency, and the anger originally felt for the object is reversed so that the internalized object now berates the ego” (*Trouble* 61). Producing feelings of guilt and self-hatred, the berating agency of the internalized object regulates gender identity by prohibiting homosexual desire, where identification is conceived as a substitute for this loss which “continues to haunt and [to] inhabit the ego as one of its constitutive identifications” (*Power* 134, 137, 140). Melancholia functions as a sign of unresolved object relations, and Butler demonstrates that “in the case of same-sexed gender identification, the unresolved object relations are invariably homosexual” (*Trouble* 63). The melancholic preservation of homosexual cathexes is effected through a repeated renunciation where a “disavowed male homosexuality culminates in a heightened or consolidated masculinity, one which maintains the feminine as the unthinkable and unnameable” (*Trouble* 69; *Power* 143). Masculinity is, thus, composed of the unresolved grief of sublimated homosexuality; in other words, modern male identity is made up of the man one is, plus the man one was barred from loving (*Power* 143). Accordingly, misogyny and homophobia are psychic effects initially produced by a threat from within, where an ideal masculine identity secures its boundaries as a subject by defending himself psychically and ideologically from the feminine, and thereby, the perceived homosexual, whom are both castrated and powerless figures (Butler, *Trouble* 57-65; *Power* 132-40).

This deconstruction of gender allows us to rethink the illusionary performative effects of hyperbolic normalized behaviour rather than perceiving gender as an expressive
or essentialist phenomena. Gender identity is performative in the ways subjects unconsciously and consciously draw upon discursive cultural practices to embody and act out the gender role that remains a cultural given. Gender performativity refers to the repeated and citational practices by which compulsory heteronormativity and the heterosexualization of desire produce the “naturalizing” effects of gender and the body’s materialization of sexual difference.

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Gender* (1990), Butler additionally argues that gender is an involuntary performance of embodied socially-constructed gender norms; it is something a man or woman *does* as opposed to *is*. Performativity is not a conscious or voluntary “act” most times, but, rather, a citational reiteration of the norms of regulatory discourses that produces the effects that it cites. Butler additionally posits that the cultural parodies found in drag and cross-dressing may offer insights into the functioning of gender performativity so that the possibility of less oppressive regulation can emerge through parodic resignification and a form of agency where the discursively enmired subject does not have to be a self-present essence to effect change. “*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency*” (*Trouble* 137; emphasis Butler’s). Drag tends

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3 In an examination of linguistic performativity and its oblique connection to theatrical performance, Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argue that the performative in British philosopher J. L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (1975) has already been marked by *homoer*os. Parker and Sedgwick are astonished at what they see in Austin’s text as “the pervasiveness with which the excluded theatrical is hereby linked with the perverted, the artificial, the unnatural, the abnormal, the decadent, the effete, the diseased....If the performative has thus been from its inception already infected with queerness, then the situation has hardly changed substantially today” (5). Theatricality has a long history of association with normative homophobic-resonating qualities such as the “artificial”, the “flamboyant”, the “feminine”, the “peculiar”, and the “non-serious” (Parker and Sedgwick 5). This tying together of a genealogy of repressed *homoer*os, or other forms of “inversion”, within the imputed linguistic origin of a *straying* performativity converges with Butler’s theories of gender masquerade and solidifies the constitutive magnitude of an abject emblematic ‘homosexual’ in the functioning of identity as a signifying practice which one finds in the Irish texts under discussion.
to operate as a heterosexual allegory of its own constitutive melancholia through the hyperbolic that exposes the taken-for-grantedness of heterosexual performativity (Bodies 237; Trouble 139).

Here specifically, queer theory allows the careful examination of the overwhelming male temperament and normative masculinity that structures and defines Irish nationalism's and Ulster Unionism's ideology, symbolism, practices, and values as well as the implications of this unisexual dimension upon power relations between men. Conventional categories of masculine and feminine "ideals" dissolve under close scrutiny when the border between heterosexual/homosexual turns out to be indistinguishable as discerned in these fictional Irish pairs: Martyn's Carden Tyrrell and Barry Ussher, Joyce's Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, Kilroy's Seamus and Kelly, Friel's Philly Sweeney and Shane Harrison, and McGuinness's Kenneth Pyper and David Craig. The 'scandalous' lives of Irish personages such as Oscar Wilde, Patrick Pearse, and Roger Casement belie hegemonic nationalism's heterosexist fantasy of "community". Unstable sexual desire slides around in surprising contexts, generating incoherence and throwing readily available pigeonholes into confusion; moreover, this ambiguity of sexuality impacts Irish identity by exposing the unreal and fictitious meaning of Irishness itself as a historically-contingent volatile signifier. Queer theory assists in foregrounding the importance of the unacknowledged reliance upon diverse sexual and gender categories in manufacturing nationalism's imaginary communities, while remaining reticent about this debt.

Queer theory demonstrates how homophobia is crucial to the reassertion of the sexual/gender border between Irishmen as scapegoating sacrificial relations are harnessed
and circulated by nationalisms for the purpose of consolidating bonds of loyalty and political identification. The literary representation of this scapegoating of the homosexual within assuages and reaffirms communities’ illusory, yet fractured, sense of self. Their sacrificial victims however, persistently return to trouble nationalisms’ authority. In turn, the Irish texts under discussion unveil a queer alterity within the subjectivity of the Irish male, which aligns with queer theory’s own proposed social construction of the subject. A defensive ambivalence, commonly found within the relationships between the male characters, draws attention to prohibited desires that register as a form of vigilant anxiety on the part of both the literary creations and their creators.

Lastly, queer theory offers an unsurpassed explanation of how the closet works and articulates the central role that secrecy has played and continues to play in the regulation of sexuality within Irish society. Theories of the closet intersect with the performative nature of silence and the consequential power of the unspoken. As silence restricts the variety (or lack thereof) of legitimate and acceptable relationships that Irish men, potentially, may have with each other, queer theory assists in identifying points where Irish men either braved and thwarted these prohibitions upon their mutual bonds, or failed in the attempt. Silence is a tool for the imposition of a specific vision or worldview of Ireland, where controversies and asymmetrical contests for power have arisen over sexual definitions and gender dissonance spanning more than a century.

Queering Irish Writing: Some Queer Arguments

First, I argue, that the representation of homoeros, collectively spanning from Martyn to
O'Neill, constitutes a submerged tradition in Irish writing, particularly those texts that tackle the national question and represent Irish male identity in crisis. As Joseph Leerssen points out, "the idea of Irish nationality is, in its origin and in its expression, governed no less by literary than by political parameters" (452). The texts of Martyn, Joyce, Friel, Kilroy, McGuinness, and O'Neill share eight salient thematics revolving around *homoeros* in varying combinations: the betrayal by a "brother" figure, confessions of secrets and the threat of blackmail, the importance and strategic cultural practice of gossip, crisis in the community/family, unhappy marriages, the misunderstood and persecuted artist, the healing of trauma engendered by some result or demand of paternal law, and the figure of the spectre haunting the community in a return of the disavowed and repressed. In an interview, following the release of his film *The Crying Game* (1992), director Neil Jordan states, "'There's always homoerotic feeling between men in conflict'" (qtd. in Pettitt, "Pigs" 271). This homoerotically-charged architecture of male relations becomes more explicit representationally as we read across the century.

Coupled to this argument remains the assumption that there is some *prior* quality to gender and sexuality within the construction of national identity. It is not the case that other axes of identity such as race, ethnicity, and religion are not as important if, indeed, not more, to the common understanding of Irish identity, but rather that gender identification has a certain epistemological priority that is effaced and suppressed by lifelong accretions of more common markers of national identity. For instance, at the birth of a child in a maternity ward in Dublin or Belfast, no attending physician will ever declare, "It's an *Irish*", or "It's a Presbyterian", and, of course, one will never hear, "Congratulations, it's a lesbian!" either. I am suggesting that gender is, if not the very
first, then certainly one of the earliest markers of personal socio-cultural identity from which ensues the processes of gendered socialization and the inevitable heterosexual object choice in mainstream discourses. In her analysis of the presumed incompatibility of questions of sexuality to Irish Studies, Margot Gayle Backus suggests that, up until recent work by feminists and queer theorists, sexuality has been nationalism’s Other (“Sexual Figures” 115). According to Edna Longley, many Irish feminists are in agreement with Backus’s notion. Longley claims that the national conditioning which nationalist women faced, and continue to do so, in Northern Ireland, stifles their gendered difference as women. They are forced to “cling”, as Longley puts it, to the goodwill of their male counterparts and to the fallacy that “‘there can’t be women’s liberation until there’s national liberation’” (191).

Second, I argue that these texts interrogate the stability of the homosexual/heterosexual hierarchical binary that deconstructs, blurring the boundary between one type of Irishman and another. The historicizing and problematizing of essentialized identity accentuates the internal differences within the construction of identity itself. Identity is a failed yet powerful fiction built upon the psychic and socially discursive exclusion or repudiation of sexual and gender differences. In the case of normative heterosexual male identity, it is the feminine and the homosexual that is, and that must be, repudiated according to paternal law; the same process of disavowal holds true in the construction of women’s and queer identities, but the striking asymmetries of power amongst these groups have led to a concentrated focus by gay and feminist scholars upon the internal differences of identity within the normative male.
The distinct boundaries marking off various categories of identity are solidified through the interaction of, on the one hand, a set of unconscious and conscious performative gendered practices with, on the other hand, the discursive interpellation and construction of the subject as a social being. This dynamic process of subjectification also works to erase or, at least, veil, its own process of construction yet reveals itself repeatedly through the subject's participation in contradictory cultural and social practices, thereby deconstructing and collapsing the very distinctions that the subject's identity is founded upon. Furthermore, the texts under study reveal how gender and sexuality cannot be extricated either from the constructedness of Irish identity fashioned by the diverse discourses of respectability, familism, sentimentalism, normative masculinity, effeminacy, and Gothic homosexual panic as nationalisms have requisitioned these for their own political ends. The Irish writing studied in the following chapters subverts the construction of nationalisms' masculinist ideal by the representation of other kinds of men. In an emphasis upon the differences within, the representation of homoerōs deconstructs normative heterosexual identity: from the melodramatic 'closet' dramas and failed coming-out narratives of Edward Martyn, to the foregrounding of the slipperiness of taxonomic sexual categories of identity in James Joyce, to the bold rewriting and queering of the Easter Rebellion of 1916 by the arrival of Jamie O'Neill.

Third, I argue that these shifting representations consciously or unconsciously contest a stable notion of nationalist Irish identity and Irishness in each text. Sexual and gender identity, homoeroticism, same-sex love, and homosocial bonding have affected, in particular, the nature of Irish cultural nationalism within the intensely homosocial societies of Ireland and Ulster. "After all," as Vincent Quinn reminds us, "the issues
which reverberate in current discussions of (homo)sexuality—such as history, amnesia, selfhood, and authenticity—are also at the heart of the Irish question” (261). This implication of nationalisms and homoeros, particularly the sacrifice of homosexual desire around which fraternalist nationalist ideologies often cohere, stems from a remark that Benedict Anderson makes when he observes that “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (7; emphasis mine). Although Anderson’s work focuses upon the creation of national consciousness through the means of print capitalism and the creation of homogeneous empty time, his metaphor of an “imagined community” remains productive in understanding the cultural imaginaries of a nation. The cultural imaginary encompasses the dominant mythologies, ideologies, and self-perceptions that give a people an illusory integrity and coherent identity maintained by unconscious investments in discourses of nationalism, culture, gender, sexuality, and religion.

Fourth, I further argue that the homosocial is at the heart of romantic and revolutionary nationalisms’ ideology, rhetoric, symbolism, and its sacrificial interpellation of those living within nationalist communities. Homosocial bonding remains essential in the development of allegiance to the nation which stipulates male sacrifice. Romantic and revolutionary nationalisms encourage a renunciation of life for a patriotic ideal of freedom and national renewal which appears as a displacement of an expression of homoerotic desire. The notion of blood sacrifice, paralleling Christ’s, has a long history in Ireland as philosopher Richard Kearney explains that the authority of sacrificial martyrdom derives its power through aligning itself with a mythico-religious
tradition dating back through the revolutionary pantheon, including the 1916 rebels, Terence McSwiney, O'Donovan Rossa, the Fenians, and Cuchulain ("Myth" 61-2). In the trajectory of freedom and revolution, the horizon of political sovereignty appears contiguous with and subtended by an appeal to sexual freedom, a promissory and anticipated liberty whose affective power is exploited by romantic nationalist rhetoric.

In my selection and study of Irish texts, there is a recurrent focus on the types of sustaining exclusions within the national imagination and the construction of communities. Striking historic parallels emerge amongst the rhetorical tropes of racial exclusion as applied to the Irish, especially of Catholic stock, and the homophobic exclusion of queer people. Both groups have suffered the labels of dominant discourses: "feminine", "diseased", "degenerate", "polluting", "contagious", "impure", "fallen from the light", and "the enemy within". The tendency to persecute, argues Girard, "always takes the same direction, it is embodied by the same stereotypes and always responds to the same threat. Despite what is said around us persecutors are never obsessed by difference but rather by its unutterable contrary, the lack of difference" (Scapegoat 22).

Moreover, as Jonathan Dollimore states, it is the degree of closeness, of similarity that disturbs, for "a terror of the other may be premised on a terror of the proximate; not only does the excluded remain adjacent, but the adjacent becomes threatening in a way that the excluded never quite does" (52).

Hegemonic ideologies of Irish nationalisms and Ulster Unionism present the homosexual figure as aligned with its degraded or degenerate Others as the liminal boundary to the romantic idealism of the Irish nation or the preservation of Protestant masculine identity. Repeatedly, Irish nationalist and Ulster Unionist cultures harbour an
emblematic homosexual as the “enemy within”. The texts then figure the return of the repressed, whether as the to-be-redeemed masculine body-as-homeland as in Martyn, McGuinness, and O’Neill, or as Christic and, therefore, a redeemed homosexuality in the service of patriarchy which one finds in Friel and Kilroy. Joyce’s fictions remain ambivalent and open-ended in their treatment of recuperation and redemption, however.

These texts investigate the manner in which a culture structured by nationalist ideology polices or resists, often violently, homosocial and homoerotic desire. The modalities of this productive repression vary from authorial self-surveillance or ambivalence, to the wary nature of the reception and criticism of such elements in these texts in an Irish literary Renaissance’s epistemology of the closet and “privilege of unknowing” to borrow Sedgwick’s unnerving phrase (Tendencies 23). Nationalist repression within the dramas and fictions manifests itself in the sexual and gendered dynamics that foreground homosexual panic and scapegoating. Romantic nationalist mythology finds its stable notion of Irish identity contested in these texts through the development of the shifting and increasingly deconstructive force of homoeros.

Romantic and revolutionary nationalisms’ cultural imaginaries are, I argue, masculinist and heterosexist and, therefore, by necessity homosocial in structure, given that it is the brave laddies and the boyos who struggle in the cause of an idealized feminine Ireland symbolized by Cathleen ni Houlihan and her coveted “four beautiful green fields” (Yeats, Plays 226).

This dissertation supposes to enter the current Irish Studies debate over what it means to be “Irish” in a rapidly border-dissolving, cosmopolitan world and how homoeros impacts national and cultural identity. A second purpose is to interject queer
affirmative readings of both canonical and non-canonical texts of the Irish tradition back into Irish literary history. It is also to help break the oppressive silence surrounding gay experience and identity, but, more importantly, to analyze, theoretically and politically, male subjectivity and its entanglement with nationalisms' cultural influence over the twentieth-century. I have intentionally focused on the representation of men's relationships with other men by gay male writers or "queer" texts by heterosexually-identified men. This limit is to help clarify the focus for practical and theoretical reasons.

I have chosen not to overstep these parameters by articulating the distinct experience of Irish lesbians and women and their own homosocial/homoerotic interpretations of Irish writers as diverse as Maria Edgeworth, Somerville and Ross, Eva Gore-Booth, Elizabeth Bowen, Molly Keane, Kate O'Brien, Edna O’Brien, Mary Dowcey, Emma Donoghue, Cherry Smyth, Jo Hughes, Linda Cullen and Máighréad Madbh. Unlike the illicit identity of Irish gay men until 1993, Irish lesbians have faced the crucial problem of legal and public invisibility although there have been unsuccessful attempts in 1895 and 1922 to criminalize lesbianism (Walshe, "Shamrock" 164). Theoretically, since cultural and revolutionary nationalism are both homosocial ideologies and forms of cultural practice, it is productive to place this gendered aspect of these nationalisms under scrutiny, for women are excluded from the centre of nationalist action and the mythology of martyrdom as they are, instead, reified as the reputed idealized symbol of the nation embodied as Mother Ireland or the Shan Van Vocht. "Within nationalist narratives the female body is seen as an allegorical symbol of the nation," contends Elaine Sisson, "but the male body possesses full political citizenship and is understood to be the nation" (149). In nationalist ideology, Irish women are required to take up the sacrificial task of
reproducing sons that will further the political cause as the paternal parameters of nationalist discourses that constitute identity as male remain overdetermining. This dissertation only examines gender insofar as it impacts upon male homosociality and desire.
1.1 Irish Nationalisms and Gender/Sexuality

Contexts for Romantic Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism

Nationalism is a modern phenomenon despite frequent nationalist claims for the ancient genesis of nations. Nationalism is not purely a nostalgic relation with the past or clear-cut defence of tradition, nor is it merely a reaction to colonialism; rather, nationalism remains an ambivalent response to modernity as its discourses draw upon the past to project some enhanced political dispensation in the future (Howes and Attridge 11).

Attempts by an array of Irish nationalisms to create a static and fixed Irish identity have not been successful as is borne out by evidence which demonstrates that complicated, fluctuating definitions of *Irishness* are contingent upon historical and cultural contexts. This complex diversity obfuscates the precise relationship between political and cultural manifestations of Irish nationalism:

> there existed well-developed separate threads of cultural and political nationalism among some writers and thinkers even as others continued to insist on the inseparable union of politics with culture. The result is a complex matrix of incrementally different nationalisms, leading to disagreement over where a given figure ought to be placed on the grid, or whether such a figure was nationalist at all. (Burgess 18)

Although specifically addressing the Romantic period, Miranda Burgess’s comments apply equally as well to the problematic task of unravelling Irish nationalist strands later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As mentioned above, under the designation Irish nationalism, one most often discovers militant revolutionary nationalism, conservative constitutional nationalism,
romantic cultural nationalism as well as socialist\(^4\) nationalism with a great deal of interaction and cross membership. First, the radical, cosmopolitan republicanism of the United Irishmen of the 1790s through to the militancy of the Fenians and Irish Republican Brotherhood (later I.R.A.) represent the case of insurgent nationalism. Second, Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic emancipation campaign and aborted repeal movement best embodies early constitutional nationalism. O’Connell’s legacy of harnessing organized mass democracy married to parliamentary pressure tactics re-emerge in the 1880s in the form of the Home Rule movement under Irish Parliamentary Party leader Charles Stewart Parnell and the reforms of Liberal Prime Minister William E. Gladstone.

Third, within the European context of Romanticism’s alienated reaction to modernization and industrialization, particularly in Britain, cultural and literary nationalism materializes in three principal cultural movements of its own in Ireland. First, the Anglo-Irish writers and antiquarians of the Literary Revival are a small coterie of artists and intellectuals, largely descended from Ascendancy families, who, in lieu of campaigning for political independence, repossess native folklore, heroic sagas, and myth as inspiration for launching a new Irish literature in English. Backing some form of devolved Irish autonomy that would preserve their class’s power and privilege within Irish society, the Revivalists frequently hold a contradictory mixture of both nationalist

\(^4\) James Connolly and syndicalist Jim Larkin headed the socialist movement by establishing the trade union I.T.G.W.U. (Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union) in 1908 and directed many successful labour strikes across Ireland. Appalled that Dublin was home to the worst slums in Europe, socialists were concerned about the plight of peasants, tenant farmers, and workers whose interests nationalists usually ignored. Nevertheless, Connolly committed his movement to more militant action when he founded the small Irish Citizen Army and participated in the Easter Rising. Additionally, Maud Gonne and Constance, Countess Markievicz worked for women’s suffrage through the nationalist feminist organization Inghinidhe na h Eireann (Lyons, Famine 276-86).
and unionist attitudes towards the shaping of an “Irish” public’s aesthetic tastes and political opinions. Second, the Gaelic League’s valiant efforts to save the Irish language from extinction by increasing its daily use and to secure bilingual education in Irish schools and universities had a wide, middle-class following led by writers and intellectuals. Third, the attempted recovery of the ancient Irish sports of hurling, camogie, and Gaelic football by the Gaelic Athletic Association or G.A.A. was enormously popular as thousands of fans regularly attended matches. All three of these movements are, individually, inward-looking and anti-modern in orientation in trying to preserve aspects of Gaelic culture and in inventing new myths with great emotional appeal for the purposes of reinvigorating Victorian and Edwardian Ireland.

The majority of Irish historians contend that the seminal origins of political nationalism in Ireland can be traced to the critical final decade of the eighteenth century with the crisis leading up to the rebellion of 1798. Unhappy with the corruption of Grattan’s oligarchic parliament established only in 1782, the Society of United Irishmen was founded in Belfast in 1791. The United Irishmen were comprised mostly of middle-class, idealistic, professional men of Presbyterian and Protestant backgrounds such as the barrister Theobald Wolfe Tone; moreover, they were heavily influenced by the French and American Revolutions and their inspirational Enlightenment principles of benevolence, rationality, progress, civic virtue, universalism, and, most importantly in the spirit of modernity, a harmony between national character and the law (Whelan 59; Elliott, “French” 87-9). The group wanted to overcome the divisive Irish past and were “very conscious of the French Revolution’s claim to have annihilated history” (Whelan 59). However, they confronted the dilemma that there could be no equation between
national character and the laws of the land while Catholics remained disenfranchised and barred from government office and parliament (Whelan 59-60).

The ideals of the Enlightenment, particularly as articulated by Thomas Paine, combined with Romantic notions that the French were fighting despotic monarchs and aristocracy for the liberty of all humanity, helped bring Catholic, Protestant, and Dissenter together for a common cause. The United Irishmen fostered the creation of Irish public opinion through the printing of broadsheets, handbills, popular ballads, and pamphlets such as Wolfe Tone’s best-selling *Argument on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* (1791); consequently, they were responsible for fashioning a revolutionary culture years before the radicalization of the group. The United Irishmen were keen to support parliamentary reform, universal suffrage, the disestablishment of the church, removal of tithes, and the dissolving of rotten boroughs (Hachey *et al.* 46-7; Elliott, “French” 86-90).

Embroiled in war with revolutionary France, the British proscribed the United Irishmen in 1794, helping to transform this erstwhile debating club into a secret oath-bound revolutionary organization and, thereby, aiding the instigation of insurrectionary nationalism in Ireland. Nevertheless, in soliciting the cooperation of the Catholic Defenders—gangs formed to express peasant grievances by raiding wealthy estates and farmhouses but who had also indulged in sectarianism—the United Irishmen lost crucial support from the Protestant and Presbyterian communities. Aspiring to establish a modern non-sectarian republic, the United Irishmen’s rebellion of 1798 turned out to be a botched and bloody affair, degenerating into rural massacres along sectarian lines;

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5 The Catholic Relief Act of 1793 permitted Catholic forty-shilling freeholders to vote, attend Trinity College, bear arms, participate on juries, and serve in the army but not at the rank of general (Fry 195).
subsequently, the leadership of the organization was executed, exiled, or imprisoned with Wolfe Tone dying a week after trying to cut his own throat with a penknife in his prison cell (Fry 208; Elliott, “French” 100). “The remarkable era of liberal protestant reform came to an abrupt end,” states Marianne Elliott, “with it was lost the one real opportunity of peacefully incorporating the catholics into a more independent Irish state, before fundamentalism muted the driving force of protestant radicalism in the next century” (“Watchmen” 25). Identity in Ireland continued to be predominantly a religious matter since the nationalism of the Catholic peasants and small tenant farmers “remained dormant; they did not seem to care who ruled them...so long as their grievances were attended to” (Fry 210). Marianne Elliott reminds us that until the nineteenth century the majority of the Irish population continued to be nominally committed to Rome and that Catholic edicts were regularly ignored; moreover, the “overwhelming identification of catholicism with nationalism” is a relatively recent occurrence (“Watchmen” 16).

Following the Act of Union in 1801, Daniel O’Connell altered this equation through the entrenchment of Catholicism as a chief marker of Irish identity by means of mass protest utilized in his successful Catholic emancipation campaign of the 1820s and his later, unsuccessful bid for the repeal of the Union in the 1840s with the establishment of the Loyal National Repeal Association. Modelled on the Catholic Association, this new organization’s stated principles included loyalty to the Crown, disavowal of violence or illegality, exclusion of sectarianism, the importance of public opinion, and the re-establishment of an Irish parliament (McCartney 110-24, 151-8). Kevin Whelan details the development of a powerful Catholic big-farm\textsuperscript{6} class which would serve as the

\textsuperscript{6} Kevin Whelan’s \textit{The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830} (1996) chronicles the existence of an underground Irish Catholic gentry in the eighteenth-
"backbone" of O'Connell's nationalist agitation:

O'Connell's Catholic nationalism appealed to history for authenticity and legitimacy, using an idealized past to destroy the decadent present, thereby liberating the desirable future. In other words, it would utilise (or invent) tradition as the binding force shaping and perpetuating the Irish nation. That paradigm would flourish in the nineteenth century, as the Enlightenment politics of the United Irishmen lost impetus and definition under the challenge of romanticism, nationalism, and sectarianism, and as Irish society petrified into sectarian rigidities. (55)

Following the catastrophic Great Potato Famine of the 1840s, Catholicism was further cemented to styles of nationalist identity through the so-called 'devotional revolution' which reformed Irish Catholicism and increased the power of the priests and the hierarchy over their flocks (Ó Gráda 73-4; Hachey et al. 94-6).

While O'Connell was engaged with repeal, romantic nationalism coalesced into the writings of Young Ireland's weekly Nation newspaper, originally published in 1842. Young Ireland was indebted to the combined talents of former law students and journalists, Thomas Osborne Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, and John Blake Dillon. The Nation attracted writers, poets, and thinkers such as John Mitchell, John O'Hagan, and

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A re-examination of the landed Catholic families, who converted to Anglicanism to safeguard their holdings, shows that their conversions were nominal only and not seen as a weakening of the Catholic position. In contrast to the five percent figure from 1778 that is traditionally cited for Catholic land ownership, Whelan claims the actual figure is closer to 20%, making powerful Catholic landowners like Edward Martyn less of an anomaly than earlier thought. With this land, a new inconspicuous gentrified class consolidated their power and control over the tenants and peasants, replacing the role of the old feudal defunct Gaelic aristocracy. The gentry frequently made common cause with the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy when it suited their interests and oversaw the rise of a new class of conservative Catholic big farmers as the Penal laws were repealed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Whelan 6, 27-37; Hachey et al. 29).
James Clarence Mangan⁷ and featured poems, historical essays, stories, reviews, biographical sketches, ballads, and editorials in its pages. Influenced by the writings of Thomas Carlyle, Young Ireland wished to build a nation based on cultural sovereignty through a heroic return to the superior spirit of the Gaelic people embodied in their literature, music, dances, games, and customs of the past. Thomas Davis insisted upon “a nationality of the spirit as well as of the letter” (Lyons, *Famine* 105):

> Romanticism believed that a renovated society could not be achieved by law alone; instead one needed to re-create the people, by recuperating their cultural identity. In this sense, the nation was to be assembled organically, not artificially by the law or state. A nation was a people bound by blood, cemented by custom and a desire for political autonomy. If a nation is without an enabling set of political institutions, it retains its cohesion and collective order by cultural means. (Whelan 55)

For the Young Irelanders, all the inhabitants of Ireland were heirs to the country’s past civilizations and, as with Yeats’s writing decades later, a common united identity might be constructed that would transcend sectarian beliefs. Young Ireland were proponents of peasant spirituality, the Irish language, equality of religion, solving the land question and tenants’ rights, the reconciliation of the country’s divisions, and, initially, O’Connell’s repeal movement (Hachey *et al.* 73-7). Still, as F. S. L. Lyons clarifies, “Young Ireland while themselves, disclaiming any revolutionary intent, were constantly resuscitating, by

⁷ David Lloyd discusses poet James Clarence Mangan as a mannerist and dandy. Mangan was fond of wearing a blue cloak, baggy pantaloons, a witch’s hat, and carrying umbrellas under each arm, modeling himself after the style of dress worn by Oscar Wilde’s great uncle Charles Maturin. Mangan’s writing is characterized by puns, inverted hierarchies, and jocularity. Lloyd describes the dandies as “the nonproductive men of fashion,” revolting against the values of both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (*Minor* 202; 195-204); nonetheless, Lloyd studiously makes no analytical link between the dandy figure and gender dissonance, or nineteenth-century conceptions of homosexuality.
the war-like imagery of their prose and verse" an inclination towards political violence 
(Famine 106-7). These underlying tensions, combined with the onset of the Great 
Famine and—as was the case with the United Irishmen--the British crackdown on the 
Nation newspaper, assisted in making possible the farcical rebellion of 1848.

Irish nationalisms' revisiting of an romanticized past for the purposes of 
grounding a noble identity worthy and capable of independence in the present depended 
upon the rapidly declining images of Gaelic Ireland that had been uncovered by the 
antiquarians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and promoted in the Nation. As 
Joseph Leerssen posits, “the icon, indeed the image, of Gaelic nationality for Ireland 
could survive the extinction of the Gaelic tradition in Ireland, and be transmitted to, 
translated into, a new English-speaking, middle-class, urban tradition” (443-4). In many 
ways, this phenomenon was a passion of educated Dubliners who were invested in 
studying the folklore and Gaelic sagas in order to revive old myths which would 
eventually, and not without irony, provide tremendous political capital for the Irish-Ireland movement and the Anglo-Irish Revival. Romantic nationalism’s focus upon 
language and cultural issues stringently defined itself against British modernity, 
industrialization, and materialism. From this, Irish-Ireland also inherited the romantic 
nationalist mythos which recounts the story of an exclusive community of long-suffering 
martyrs whose status of victimhood and experience of treachery and betrayal justifies the 
recourse to violence and bloodshed when constitutional means of nationalist desire are 
frustrated, all the while reciting a litany of heroic Irish resistance to British tyranny and 
oppression.
Ulster Unionism

Ulster Unionism, or Loyalism (in its more extreme mode) locates its immediate origins in the conversion of Gladstone’s Liberal party to Irish Home Rule in the mid-1880s and in the Ulster Crisis of 1912 when the government introduced the third Home Rule bill with its enactment imminent. To resist the implementation of “Rome Rule”, as they called it, Unionists formed the Ulster Volunteer Force, a militia 100,000 strong; moreover, 470,000 Ulstermen and women signed either the Solemn League and Covenant (men only), or a declaration (endorsing the men’s covenant), stating that they would use “all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland” (Travers 127, 128). Pledging to refuse to recognize its authority, Loyalists threatened London with civil war over the legislation; by late 1913, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith budged from a “wait and see” policy to one of political compromise (Travers 129).

With the intervention of World War I, Home Rule was suspended, and Ulster leaders pressed to be excluded from any future independent Irish state. The British Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which officially partitioned the island, granted a devolved form of parliamentary government at Stormont to the six counties in the northeastern region of the country with a future Boundary Commission to finalize the border between the new statelet and the Irish Free State. In 1921, the Belfast government passed the Local Government (Emergency Powers) Act, which enabled them to disband any local councils with allegiance to Dublin, and likewise approved the draconian Special Powers Act in 1922. This act furnished the police force with the authority to “search, arrest and detain without warrant, impose stiff penalties, and...to suspend civil liberties
when deemed necessary” (Harkness 29; 1-14). Protestant politicians, with the support of
the Protestant majority, managed the province as a one-party state in which Northern
Irish Catholics were treated as second-class citizens in theory and practice: as new Prime
Minister of Northern Ireland, Sir James Craig, stated, the Six Counties would be “a
Protestant nation for a Protestant people” (Hachey et al. 231).

The hegemony of the Unionist establishment survived until the late 1960s when
demands for Catholic civil rights exploded into low-grade guerrilla warfare between a
reinvigorated Irish Republicanism and its Loyalist paramilitary counterparts. The British
government deployed the army in August 1969 to protect the communities from
internecine violence with thousands fleeing from their burning neighbourhoods. The
Stormont regime ended with the imposition of Direct Rule in early 1972 following the
shootings on Bloody Sunday, marking the beginning of almost three decades of political
and military stalemate (Hachey et al. 230-5; Harkness 152-73). Beginning with the
Anglo-Irish Accord (1985), and followed by the Downing Street Declaration (1993), the
Framework Document (1995), and the Good Friday Accord (1998), Irish and British
governments have cautiously worked towards a permanent settlement of Northern
Ireland’s status. Consequently, Unionist fears of being sold-out by London have
increased as Dublin now has input into Northern affairs through the setting up of power
sharing institutions; these developments are read by many in the Protestant community as
paving the way for the eventual reunification of the island.

Ulster Unionism presents a philosophical challenge of structural asymmetry in
relation to that of romantic Irish nationalism. In contradistinction to identification as a
‘nation,’ Ulster Unionist ideology traditionally has offered its allegiance to the British
Crown. Often configured, rather, as an embattled garrison defending Protestantism, Ulster maintains its ties to Great Britain as an integral part of the United Kingdom which serves as its guarantor of liberties and, historically-speaking, cultural privilege. Critics like Edna Longley view Unionism, however, as a reactionary cultural phenomenon:

Unionism since the first Home Rule bill has always been reactive: a coalition of sects, interests, loyalties and incoherent hatred in the face of a perceived common emergency. No totalising philosophy covers the whole coalition, even if religious and secular alarms fuse on its fundamentalist wing. Orangeism and Paisleyism maintain a select tribal memory-bank of historical persecutions, in which emblematic events (1641, 1690) are reinforced by biblical parallels. But this has never developed into a comprehensive symbolic system. You can't personify Unionism. (174)

Commentators such as Gerald Dawe, Sally Belfrage, and Cathal McCall agree with Longley in her characterization of Unionism and additionally assert that Ulster identity has a weak claim to an independent “ethnic” culture distinct from their English and Scottish ancestors. Dawe argues that Unionist identity has remained undefined historically and imaginatively, shaped instead by stereotypes from outside forces (108), or as Belfrage suggests, Loyalists suffer from “culture-envy” (294) and that they are “patriots without a patria” (265).

Terence Brown, Marianne Elliott, and John Wilson Foster, however, dispute these assumptions and contend that there exists a separate Unionist culture that closely overlaps with Protestantism, which must not be prejudged because the culture has not been adequately studied nor well-articulated outside of Northern Ireland. Observers are also
cautioned not to ignorantly assume that the politics of Orange marches or the actions of the U.D.A. are coextensive with Ulster culture. Elliott, for example, emphasizes the laudable heritage of Irish Protestantism, especially Presbyterian notions of libertarianism, radicalism, contractarianism, freedom of conscience, and opposition to authoritarianism. Irish Presbyterians supported the Stuart monarchy against Cromwell, denounced the regicide of Charles I, and promoted the Restoration of 1660, all contrary to later Loyalist mythology ("Watchmen" 9). Elliott maintains, furthermore, that "it is a reflection of the 'loyalist' and 'nationalist' misrepresentation of Irish history that the United Irishmen are traditionally considered part of the catholic nationalist heritage," as their leadership was, in fact, largely Presbyterian in composition ("Watchmen" 20). In addition, Foster underscores the liberal individualism of Presbyterianism and the cultural links with the English literary tradition, while Terence Brown demolishes the idea of the monolithic nature of both Protestantism and Unionism. Brown accentuates the differences between Episcopalians and Presbyterians as well as ultraconservative fundamentalists and the tension generated amongst these denominations in regards to the province's cultural history of egalitarianism and radical dissent (Foster, "Unionist" 59-64; Brown, "Whole" 4-7). Finally, Foster astutely grasps that part of the quandary of Northern Ireland remains the "racialist withholding of Irishness from [Ulster Protestants] by the majority culture" (Colonial 249; emphasis Foster's), and, thereby, eliding the Protestant communities' unique, though often times, misunderstood identities.

Sexuality and Gender in Ireland and the Victorian Legacy

In Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture (1988), David Cairns and
Shaun Richards establish that a crucial component in the Irish history of sexuality is the institutional practice of familism. Building on the pioneering work of sociologists Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball in *Family and Community in Ireland* (1968), Cairns and Richards depict familism as a post-famine phenomenon where tenant farmers attempted to consolidate their landholdings in order to pass on inherited wealth from one generation to another. Fathers nominated an heir, typically the eldest son, to inherit.

Strict codes of behaviour between men and women controlled access to marriage, and celibacy was espoused outside matrimony which was delayed in farmers' families until the heir took possession of the land. Other post-famine behavioural changes included the expansion of matchmaking before marriage, emigration pressures on surplus children, communal demands to observe strict chastity—all in the name of not risking the transmission of inheritance on account of gratuitous sexual desires. Marriage patterns were endogamous in character within a narrow social circle: women were pawns in a marriage game that included cousin marriages, double marriages, and marriages across generations, which all attempted to preserve family interests (Whelan 29-30; Cairns and Richards 42, 43).

Tenant farmers comprised the most numerous class in Ireland following the Famine, replacing the previously numerically-superior agricultural labourers and their families. The omnipresent impact of familism was felt most keenly by this demographic of the populace:

For familism to operate it was essential that the codes of belief and behaviour upon which it depended, particularly the regulation of sexuality, and unquestioned patriarchal authority guaranteed by the Church’s sanctions and
underpinning stem inheritance, should be accepted both by the family and the whole community. Only widespread acceptance could make it possible to perpetuate a system which demanded so much of individuals. (Cairns and Richards 59-60)

Familism and Catholicism were intimately linked and constituted two strands of Irish nationalist identity interwoven with the discourses of sexuality. At the turn of the century, many emigrants from the countryside brought the codes and practices of familism with them into the cities and towns, thereby not restricting familism’s alliance with Catholicism to rural parts of Ireland (Cairns and Richards 42, 43, 60).

Sexuality was (and remains) deployed through the institution of the family. The powerful connections amongst marriage, fertility, and succession to property increased the bargaining power of landowners and competition among possible inheritors. In Irish culture, sex became subsidiary to the more important, material, and pressing issues of inheritance and legacy (Cairns and Richards 61). More prosperous, Catholic families were “obsessed, almost to the point of neurosis, with ancestry, family background and the Cromwellian rupture,” states Kevin Whelan (10). Any attempts to resist or subvert familial codes through promiscuity, extra-marital pregnancy, or elopements were viewed as challenging sanctified nationalist norms and were regarded as sinful. No public recognition or understanding of common sexual desires and needs existed since all eros was harnessed to serve economic imperatives.

Yet this unspoken cultural arrangement was problematic as cheap English literature, in the form of titillating gothic shockers and penny dreadfuls, were easily available and popular in Ireland’s open market. The Roman Catholic hierarchy
condemned these English imports as “immoral trash” since familism’s survival depended upon the proscription of sexual activity outside marriage. Sexuality, at every turn, was equated with sin. “The Irish in effect mortgaged bodily pleasure (the repression of which was one salient mark of Catholic difference), to retain cultural autonomy,” maintains Margot Gayle Backus (“Sexual Figures” 114). Hence, the nationalist defence of familism to secure tenant farmers’ economic and social position demanded intense cooperation between priest and laity as they countered cosmopolitan discourses of sexuality. Unregulated desire was a disruptive threat to livelihoods and the social order and, thus, explains the success of the Catholic Church’s indoctrination of their flock with norms of extreme sexual restraint, intensified by the late nineteenth-century ‘devotional revolution’ in Ireland (Cairns and Richards 62).

George L. Mosse’s seminal work, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (1985), investigates the reign of respectability and the development of “manliness/womanliness” as ideal stereotypes of masculinity and femininity within nationalisms in England, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe. European nationalisms, argues Mosse, “absorbed and sanctioned middle-class manners and morals and played a crucial part in spreading respectability to all classes of the population” (9). As women were consigned to the domestic sphere as passive, virtuous, and motherly, the stereotyped masculine male was characterized by physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strength and righteousness. A well-developed body--strong, muscular, and virile--was modelled after the Greek *kouros*, the ideally proportioned male nudes in marble (10, 13-6).

Victorian respectability for the culturally triumphant middle classes was hinged
upon a distinction between the “normal” and the “abnormal”. Pitted against the “normal”, “manly” patriot were those who threatened with their trademark vices, disease, and licentiousness: drunkards, Jews, criminals, the insane, and homosexuals (10, 32). The maintenance of all of these binaries fell under the aegis of a regime of normality, testified to by the medical and early psychiatric establishment, for it was these men who did the most to raise the alarm about degeneracy, abnormality, disease, and effeminization (27, 33-6). With national health being intricately bound up with sexual health, the homosexual male emerged as the antithesis to the masculine Christian gentleman and his way of life from the normalizing pages of the medical journals and writings of sexologists such as Iwan Bloch, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and Max Nordau—the popularizer of theories of degeneracy. The symptomatic signs of homosexuality ranged from fatigue, a nervous disposition, a feminine appearance, to physical weakness, sensuality, and compulsive onanism (28-31). The erroneous tacit assumption was that the homosexual man was neither “manly” nor healthy by any index. At the turn of the century, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and Magnus Hirschfeld took a somewhat more enlightened and sympathetic approach by arguing that homosexuals were victims of either a congenital condition or psychological underdevelopment which should elicit pity and sympathy from the public (Mosse 32-40; Cohen 9-10, 15-9).

Victorian institutions such as public schools, universities, and professional and athletic clubs were locations where masculine privilege was nourished by male friendship, whose articulation, along with homosexual love and the ambiguous middle ground between them, utilized the lexicons of “comradeship, religious devotion, aesthetic pleasure, and the recurrent lure of ancient Greece” (Hammond 127). The necessity of
marrying and having children meant that “the intensity and sufficiency of male bonding needed to be strictly controlled by homophobic mechanisms” (Dellamora 195). In late nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, public anxiety was high, however, as various sex scandals—homosexual and otherwise—were splashed onto the pages of the homophobic press.

The Cleveland Street Affair (1889-1890) involved the investigation into a male brothel in Cleveland Street, near Tottenham Court Road, where teenage boys, employed as telegraph messengers, served clergy and upper-class clientele, including, it was alleged Prince Albert Victor, the Earl of Euston, Colonel Jervois as well as Lord Arthur Somerset, who fled to France in exile. The justice system prosecuted the men involved in running the operation, but members of the nobility or high society avoided penalty, creating in the minds of the public a sense of cover-up and unequal application of the law when it came to sexual transgressions of the wealthy and powerful elites (Cohen 91-3, 121-5). This chain of events sparked controversy, instigated by the newspapers and by Henry Labouchere, who on 28 February 1890 in the House of Commons alleged that Cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister were conspiring to silence the matter (Hyde, H. Montgomery, Other 123-7; Fisher 144-6).

Dublin Castle had been home to an earlier homosexual scandal involving high-ranking officials in 1884, yet, as in the case of Cleveland Street, people of privilege

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8 In 1907, another homosexual scandal involving Dublin Castle transpired when the Irish crown jewels were stolen from a safe in the library of the College of the Heralds. Sir Arthur Vicars, the homosexual Ulster King of Arms, was responsible for the jewels’ safe-keeping. His live-in assistant Francis Shackleton and Captain Richard Gorges, an army musketry instructor who had been booted out of his regiment in the Boer War because of his dalliances with a drummer-boy, got Vicars drunk one night and made wax impressions of the keys to the safe. Shackleton and Gorges made off with the jewels and fled to Amsterdam, where Shackleton pawned them for £20,000, a quarter of their value, and then returned to Ireland. When the jewels were discovered to be missing, authorities met with blackmailing contempt on the part of the thieves. They threatened to shake the government by revealing the “dirt” about prominent
escaped legal censure. Two Irish Nationalist MPs, William O’Brien and Tim Healy, both leading advocates for Home Rule, publicly exposed the questionable behaviour. O’Brien and Healy had learned through an inspector with the Royal Irish Constabulary that according to rumour certain Castle employees were engaging in homosexual acts. The head of the Criminal Investigation Department, James Ellis French, was attacked by Healy in an unsigned article in the Home Rule journal *United Ireland*. French sued for libel and £5000.

However, Irish police officers, fearing the loss of their jobs, refused to assist O’Brien by giving evidence in the lawsuit. O’Brien hired a private detective named Meiklejohn, who within two weeks, “‘got into his hands the clues of a criminal confederacy, which for its extent and atrocity, almost staggered belief,’” to quote O’Brien (Hyde, H. Montgomery, *Other* 129), for “‘[i]t included men of all ranks, classes, professions, and outlawries, from aristocrats of the highest fashion to outcasts in the most loathsome dens’” (Hyde, H. Montgomery, *Other* 129). Meiklejohn found four young men, including an army officer, who were willing to give evidence about sexual relations with French as well as with Gustavus Charles Cornwall, Secretary of the General Post Office and Captain Martin Kirwan of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. O’Brien raised the matter in Parliament charging French and Cornwall with “certain felonious practices” and accused Crown Solicitor George Bolton (French’s superior) of conspiracy. O’Brien

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overstepped parliamentary privilege when he reproduced his accusations in the *United Ireland*. Cornwall and Bolton also began libel proceedings against O’Brien claiming (with French’s suit) a staggering £70,000 in damages. French, because of financial problems, delayed his action, and, subsequently, O’Brien successfully had French’s lawsuit dismissed (Hyde, H. Montgomery, *Other* 127-33; Fisher 143-4).

In the first week of July 1884, the case of *Cornwall v. O’Brien* was tried in Dublin and lasted five days, generating sensational news. After a short period of time when the defence witnesses refused to appear—the army officer had fled to France—the remaining three young men changed their minds yet again and gave testimony of the intimate details of sexual liaisons with Cornwall. The jury took only an hour to render a verdict for O’Brien and Irish nationalists celebrated; furthermore, O’Brien won the Bolton case too. Irish nationalist newspapers tracked homosexual scandals as an instrument to ruin particular high-ranking bureaucrats within Dublin’s seat of British administration (Rose *Diverse* 6). Cornwall, French, and Kirwan were arrested, a Grand Jury returned True Bills against the men and seven other defendants. The Grand Jury asked that the evidence presented should be banned from publication, and, consequently, no evidence was published in either the Irish or English press. What’s more, the court records were destroyed in the Irish Civil War, so the details are vague, but, according to H. Montgomery Hyde, Cornwall and Kirwin were acquitted on charges of conspiracy to commit homosexual acts after the jury’s opinion was divided. As for French, he faced three trials before he was finally convicted and faced two years imprisonment. These Irish cases of “homosexual vice” hurt Gladstone’s Liberal administration, and along with the withdrawal of support from Home Rule MPs the next year, the government was
defeated and replaced by Lord Salisbury’s Conservatives (Hyde, H. Montgomery, *Other* 127-33; Fisher 143-4).

Both the Cleveland Street affair and the sexual shenanigans in Dublin Castle prepared the way for the phenomenal trial of Oscar Wilde, who was prosecuted and punished under the 1885 Labouchère Amendment, which coincided with the evangelically-inspired purity movements. In the mid-Victorian period, homosexuality was not a public controversy; however, by the 1880s the knowledge that a homosexual underworld existed moved into the public realm, and it was in the 1890s when moral panic over homophobia became endemic (Fisher 136-40). Finally, the Dublin Castle scandal of 1884 highlights O’Brien’s and Healy’s public homophobia as a force in nationalist politics, serving to bring English rule into disrepute.

The intermingling of hegemonic discourses of nationalism, respectability, and sexuality shaped public attitudes throughout the Western world by stereotyping sexual “degenerates.” By the 1870s Irish nationalisms began to congeal into their familiar divisions in tandem with the seeds of the Irish Literary Renaissance being sewn. Strands of Irish nationalism took onboard discourses of respectability and normative gender roles and ideals as part of their definitions of *Irishness*, unwittingly, yet inevitably, producing homosocially-inflected nationalisms that drew upon normative models of masculinity and its various repudiations of the feminine. For example, Margot Gayle Backus cites James Joyce’s distinction between bourgeois and revolutionary forms of nationalism and his recoil at “bourgeois nationalism’s regulation of national identity through the institutionalized regimentation of sexuality and the body” (“Sexual” 119-20). Luke Gibbons further observes the overlap between strands of nationalism and bourgeois
standards: "through an accommodation of Victorian values," the Irish Catholic hierarchy launched a widespread programme of social reconstruction focusing on health and education initiatives, church construction, and "a pursuit of respectability consistent with the emergence of middle-class constitutional nationalism" (Gaelic 13).

Andrew Parker cautions that sexuality and nationality are not transhistorical nor supranational realities as each country experiences these constitutive discourses differently (Nationalism 5). The most germane difference between Ireland and England was the former's unequal historic partnership within the United Kingdom as a settler colony. In many ways, Irish culture was attuned to England's ideal stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, but Ireland differed in its Catholicism and familism's imbrication of gender and sexual norms that were crucial in the articulation of romantic and constitutional nationalist ideals. In urban centres such as Dublin, Belfast, Cork, and Waterford, where the Irish middle class lived, it is reasonable to assume that the cultural affinity and identification of Irish and Ulster Protestants with English concepts of respectability and normality was common. But Countess Cathleen, as it is always objected to, is not John Bull; nonetheless, the experience of settlement impacted the metaphorical construction of international sexual dynamics:

Post-colonial countries like Ireland have particular difficulty with the real presence of the homoerotic. Colonialism itself generates a gendered power relationship and, inevitably, casts the colonising power as masculine and dominant and the colonised as feminine and passive. One of the consequences of this resistance to the imperial was an increased unease with the shifting and 'unstable' nature of sexual difference, and so
a narrowing of gender hierarchies ensues. In Irish cultural discourse, silencing sexual difference became imperative because of a supposed link between homosexuality and enfeebled, ‘feminised’ masculinity. The post-colonial struggle to escape the influence of the colonising power became a struggle to escape the gendered relation of male coloniser to female colonised. Therefore the post-colonial culture could not permit any public, ideological acknowledgement of the actuality of the sexually ‘other’. (Walshe, “Introduction”, Sex 5)

Within this tension of contradictory discourses of sexual identity, the Irish cultural imaginary became more tightly bound to the veiled homoeros repressed within ideological stereotypes of normative Irish masculinity and its attending anxiety over effeminization, surfacing covertly and then overtly in Irish writing.

A chief intellectual source of the discourses of gendered relations and femininity in Ireland is Matthew Arnold, the representative spokesmen for conservative mid-Victorian sensibilities. In 1867, Arnold presented his series of Oxford lectures and essays, “On Celtic Literature,” within the context of the Fenian uprisings that same year and the Manchester executions of three young Irishmen in retaliation for an alleged police slaying, which served as “a sharp reminder,” as F. S. L. Lyons puts it, “of the turmoil just below the surface of Victorian life” (Culture 4). Arnold’s romantic construction of the Celt partially drew upon Adam Smith’s representation of the Scottish Highland militia as physically “soft”, less “manly”, less disciplined, less capable in the use of arms, and inclined to a domestic lifestyle (554). The image of the Celt contrasted with that of the Saxon had far-reaching implications. First, Arnold’s lectures further stimulated interest
in romantic Celticism based on over a century of academic scholarship and popular publications ranging from James Macpherson’s contentious Ossianic poems that synthesized traditional tales and ballads to the work of Irish scholars Eugene O’Curry, John O’Donovan, and German philologists Heinrich Zimmer and Kuno Meyer. Second, as an explanation of the cultural, linguistic, and temperamental differences between the Irish and the English, Arnold produced a version of the Celt that was overall sentimental—“always ready to react against the despotism of fact” (Arnold 344; emphasis Arnold’s). According to him, the Celt was variously, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. (347)

Arnold’s depiction of this imaginary feminized figure, who willingly offers his body and soul to his leader (always another male), is placed side by side with the “manly” Saxon, who would not compromise his limits, and, I would argue, his, implied, bodily integrity. However, Arnold develops this idea as he continues on the same page with, “no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret” (347). Arnold’s portrait of the Celt

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illustrates the convergence and mutually supportive echo of discourses on race, colonialism, gender, and (homo)sexuality. The Celt is de-masculinized and childlike and made to share many of the same symptoms as the homosexual, in contrast to the superior, "manly", and born-to-govern Anglo-Saxon. Arnold's definition of the Celtic disposition would be influential and commonplace for the remainder of the nineteenth-century and beyond (Fallis 60). Generally, as Britain faced growing demands for women's suffrage, the fear spawned by this development was projected onto populations labelled as "feminine", which undercut support for both suffrage and Irish Home Rule (Curtis 61-2).

There exists, however, a native Irish tradition in song and in literature of Ireland troped as Woman. Declan Kiberd informs us that "one of the most ancient and... subversive conceits in bardic tradition was the notion that the land was a woman, to be worshipped, wooed, and won, if necessary by death" ("Literature" 235). Underneath this trope is the ancient ideal of the fertility of the land tied to the beneficence and wisdom of the king. In the *aisling* poetry of the seventeenth century, a defenceless virgin--deserted by her spouse and menaced by a masculine England--symbolizes Ireland, where "[h]er only hope is the return of her rightful husband...one of the Stuart pretenders" (Harrison 276). Later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the passive girl appears, instead, as an aggressive mother goddess summoning her loyal sons to fight and die for her so that she might be redeemed to her pre-colonial condition by means of a "pristine virginity of language, land, and liturgy" (Kearney, "Myth" 77). Arguably, if nationalist traditions configure Ireland as "feminine" and pure or, moreover, as a born-again virgin and if sexual knowledge is the sole prerogative of Irish men, then theoretically with whom are the men in their bonded communities sanctioned to have sexual relations if Irish women
are to remain untouched?

The latter version of Ireland as a mother figure with heroic or betraying sons is seen in Yeats’s “womanly” nationalist paragon in *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902). There remains a certain vampirism to the Old Woman, however, as she feeds off the blood of young Irishmen to avenge injustice and to restore her queenly beauty. Seamus Heaney’s bog poems utilize the older formulation of Ireland as a young traumatized woman, where the relationship of England/Ulster to Ireland is not only gendered, but also where sexual violation occurs. In “The Ocean’s Love to Ireland,” Sir Walter Raleigh ensnares an Irish maid who is backed up “to a tree/As Ireland is backed to England,” resulting in the girl’s downfall (Heaney, *North* 46). According to Vincent Quinn, Heaney, under the voyeuristic gaze of the speaker, indulges in heterosexualizing the myths of Irish culture and history and, thereby, marginalizes homosexuality (267-9).

Nevertheless, Edna Longley cautions that to embody Irish cultural nationalism as “archetypally female both gives it a mythic pedigree and exonerates it from aggressive and oppressive intent. Its patriarchal elements also disappear….While Virgin-Ireland gets raped and pitied, Mother Ireland translates pity into a call to arms and vengeance….Traditionally, it is her sons whom Mother Ireland recruits and whose *manhood* she tests” (189, 190; emphasis Longley’s). Longley is correct to refocus the rhetorical emphasis back onto romantic nationalism’s masculine character and testosterone-driven aggressiveness. Elaine Sisson concurs with Longley that “although the female body continued to have currency as a literary and visual metaphor for Ireland, it was the ‘real’ male body which was seen to ‘embody’ Irish identity and social and political reality. By implication the male body was considered to represent a ‘natural’
and 'native' Irishness” (15). So too Seamus Deane acknowledges the shift away from
the earlier trope of Ireland as Woman, which “has now yielded to a concept of national
identity that has physical virility, both athletic and sexual, as its indicative characteristic”
(Strange 144).

Dion Boucicault’s Sentimental Drama Queens

Elizabeth Butler Cullingford’s research into narratives of on stage, homosocial/erotic
bonding between English and Irish men, who function as vectors in overcoming the
animosity between the two nations, partly corresponds to my own arguments. “The stage
Englishman is seldom the villain,” observes Cullingford; “indeed, he is usually a decent
chap, and often he becomes the object of Irish desire” (Others 7). Cullingford’s
identification of theatrical Irish homosociality in the melodramas of Dion Boucicault
mark the early development of a history of homoerotic in nineteenth-century Irish theatre.
Boucicault became the leading and most popular playwright in the English-speaking
world as his career spanned almost four decades, composing over forty plays with hits in
London and New York such as London Assurance (1841), An Irish Heiress (1842), Old
Heads and Young Hearts (1844), The Corsican Brothers (1852), The Vampire (1852),
The Colleen Bawn (1860), Arrah-na-Pogue (1864), The Rapparee (1870), The
Shaughraun (1875), and Robert Emmet (1884) (Parkin 13). Although George Bernard
Shaw accused him of perpetuating Irish stereotypes, Boucicault transforms the stage
Irishman from “a foolish, drunken butt of English wits... into a clever, courageous and
resourceful descendant of the tricky slave of ancient comedy” (Parkin 19; Cullingford,
Others 14).
In his pamphlet *The Story of Ireland* (1881), Boucicault is passionate in his denunciation of what he perceives as the imperialism of the British government and Ireland’s victimization and neglect. These political sentiments translate, however, into Boucicault’s tactful rendering of the Irish question through soliciting compassion from English audiences. Boucicault manipulates the politics of sympathy in driving home the similarities between the English and the Irish, divided, not by their inherent natures, but by the political interests and policies of their rulers (Cullingford, *Others* 19, 33; Parkin 19). Critic Augustin Filon states that “until Boucicault’s time it had been the fashion to laugh over Ireland, never to weep over her” (Parkin 15). As a genre, melodramas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries adaptively intermingle sentimental, romantic, didactic, and moral elements into a powerful instrument for endorsing the emergent cause of Irish nationalism (Brannigan 109).

In Boucicault’s play entitled *Robert Emmet* (1884), the plot centres around the homosocial triangulation amongst the three lead characters: Scottish soldier Norman Claverhouse is in love with Irishwoman Sarah Curran yet bitterly stifles his affections as she is in love, in turn, with rebel Robert Emmet, despite her father’s desire to see her united with Claverhouse. In the opening scene, Claverhouse becomes complicit in a plan to smuggle Emmet out of the country, shirking his duty and guided by his emotions as evident when he tells Sarah, “‘Tis hard on me to say the words; it is verra bitter, dear. Before this night is past you must bear my rival’s name....I will never quit your side until you are Robert Emmet’s wife” (Boucicault 338, 339). Emmet is shocked and grateful at this seemingly altruistic gesture since the soldier risks his career and his life by not arresting his adversary, but Claverhouse explains, “I only know that she loves you—that
makes me at once your foe and your accomplice” (Boucicault 250).

The closing scene stages the slipperiness of the homosocial and homoerotic continuum when Emmet faces execution by firing squad. Claverhouse comes to bid farewell and to deliver the news that Sarah has died; “My sentence killed her!” cries Emmet (Boucicault 396). With the mediating presence of Sarah removed, Claverhouse’s obsessive relationship of “foe” and “accomplice” with the rebel reaches a climax in his sensational swooning at Emmet’s brave heroism: “NORMAN falls in his arms weeping. Come, come, do not let your tears unman me,” counsels the condemned, “Men! you have your duty to perform—do it bravely, as I have done mine! This death is a boon, not a penalty!” (Boucicault 396). Emmet then embraces Claverhouse “tenderly” (397) and kisses him twice—once for Sarah and the other for Tiney Wolfe, which ostensibly legitimates the gesture through calling to mind the missing women (Cullingford, Others 36). The drama concludes in a tableau where Emmet’s spirit gazes into the face of the figure of Ireland wearing a coronet of shamrocks in her hair, no less, as his body is drawn backstage (Boucicault 397). Robert Emmet endeavours to seduce both genders and nationalities in the audience into “a quasi-erotic relation with the dying hero, and by implication with the cause for which he died” (Cullingford, Others 36).

On Boucicault’s stage, it seems, that tear-prone Englishmen such as the benevolent sergeant who weeps at Shaun’s impending execution in *Arrah-na-Pogue*, Captain Molineux in *The Shaughraun*, and, here again, Claverhouse, all signify the playwright’s reversal of the Celtic stereotypes of feminine sentimentality, assigning them to the Saxon instead (Cullingford, Others 36). “Boucicault, and later Whitbread, Mangan, and Bourke among others, appropriated this model of popular theatre for Irish
nationalism,” posits John Branningan, “focusing in particular on the mythology of the 1798 Rising in order to garner popular patriotic support for revolution and independence” (109). Boucicault’s early depictions of homosociality within sentimental nationalist melodramas made visible these representations in culturally acceptable forms, channeling them into the homosocial/homosexual thematics implicated within romantic and revolutionary nationalist discourses and identity constructions. Boucicault’s pervasive influence in Ireland is evident by the fact that his melodramas remained a much-loved favourite at the Queen’s theatre in Dublin into the 1930s, with *Arrah-na-Pogue, The Shaughraun*, and *The Colleen Bawn*, presented regularly (Brannigan 106-7).

The Irish Gothic and Homosexual Panic

Heavily indebted to the earlier Romantic Gothic tradition, inaugurated in Ireland by Charles Maturin’s novels, especially *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish horror-mystery genre assisted in spreading to the public scenes of *homoeros*, especially, homosexual panic as a mechanism of control over men’s bonds. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains that “the paranoid Gothic [is] the literary genre in which homophobia found its most apt and ramified embodiment” (*Closet* 186). With tropes of the “unspeakable” and the role of the aristocratic homosexual, Gothic fiction “crystallized for English audiences the terms of a dialectic between male homosexuality and homophobia, in which homophobia appeared thematically in paranoid plots. Not until the late-Victorian Gothic did a comparable body of homosexual thematics emerge clearly, however” (*Men* 92). In early Romantic Gothic novels such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794), and James Hogg’s
Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824), homosocial desire registers in the male hero’s often intimate yet fatal relationship with his “double” (Closet 186). The Gothic genre not only frequently codes these “doubles” as monsters such as the vampire, but also exploits a culture’s worst fears by the common themes of incest and sexual deviancy. As a creature of the Un-dead, part human and part beast, that subsists by feeding on the blood of the living, “the vampire is perhaps the most absolute embodiment of ‘the unnatural’” (Williams 3).

In 1872 Sheridan Le Fanu published the novella “Carmilla” in his collection In a Glass Darkly. Le Fanu’s plot closely echoes the events of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Gothic poem “Christabel” (1816), and the text remains the most noteworthy of the Victorian vampire tales since “Carmilla” connects “Romantic vampires and their late-Victorian ‘grandchild,’ Dracula” (Williams 8). “Carmilla” tells the story of Laura, the nineteen-year-old narrator, and her harrowing ordeal following the arrival of Carmilla after a stagecoach accident. Immediately the two teenagers bond with one another, taking on an aura of lesbianism with constant references to handholding, caressing, and kissing. All is not well, though, as Le Fanu presses the homosexual panic “button” early on through the narrator’s misgivings:

“I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you:
I have never had a friend—shall I find one now?” She sighed, and her fine dark eyes gazed passionately on me. Now the truth is, I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, “drawn towards her,” but there was also something of revulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed.
Following Carmilla’s disturbing insinuations about *eros* and *thanatos*, Laura confesses to experiencing “a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust” (Le Fanu 104). After a passionate kiss, Laura ascribes to Carmilla a romantic nature; to which her pale languid companion whispers, “I have been in love with no one, and never shall...unless it should be with you” (Le Fanu 112).

Horrifying nightmares, late night visits by unidentified creatures, a mysterious “disease” or “infection” that kills local villagers, all culminate in terrorizing Laura who suffers Carmilla’s bites to her breast and neck. General Spielsdorf reveals that Carmilla is, in fact, Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, a vampire who ultimately meets the fate of many demonized scapegoats with questionable sexual tastes: ritual staking through the heart, decapitation, and incineration (Le Fanu 145). Margot Gayle Backus argues that Gothic tales such as “Carmilla”, Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* are all cautionary tales and relief maps of the internalization of heteronormative sexual and gender identity constructions within the Anglo-Irish family, marked off from and defined against, in this instance, lesbianism, and designed to engender homophobic anxiety in Le Fanu’s audience (*Gothic* 133). Because of lesbianism’s relative invisibility, Victorians found it less problematic *per se* than male homosexuality; nonetheless, Le Fanu utilizes Laura’s homoerotic/homophobic response to her bosom companion to contain the threat of the lesbian vampire and to retain the “natural” order referred to frequently by Laura’s father. This dynamic psychological reaction produces the thrill of the vampiric encounter for both the audience and Laura, who narrates her tale, not once
but twice, through an act of ventriloquism via the General’s account within the double-folded structure of the novella.

Le Fanu’s fiction directly influenced Bram Stoker’s imagination as female vampires, sexual transgression, and paranoid homophobia are surfeit in Dracula, published in 1897 (Wilson ix). Several critics have commented on the *homoeros* between Count Dracula and Jonathan Harker and amongst Lucy Westenra’s suitors, Arthur Holmwood, Dr. John Seward, Quincey P. Morris, and not to mention, Dr. Van Helsing. The men’s blood transfusions necessary to save Lucy’s life underscores not only the homosocial triangulation of the Count and his adversaries mediated through a mixing of their blood within Lucy’s anemic body, but also the symbolic and physiological equivalence of blood and semen’s life force (Hammond 133). In a confrontation with Harker and the others, a cornered Dracula, underlining this point, threatens revenge as he has been drinking Harker’s wife’s blood: “Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed” (Stoker 306).

Likewise with Le Fanu’s defensive closure and exploitation of homophobic

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10 Stoker’s father, Abraham, was chief secretary of Dublin Castle mid-century, so, when Stoker graduated from Trinity College, he became a clerk in the Irish civil service at the Castle from 1868-1878. Then he left Ireland, following actor Henry Irving, ten years his senior, to the theatrical world of London but not before marrying his nineteen-year old neighbour, Florence Balcombe, twelve years Stoker’s junior. Stoker remained Irving’s faithful friend for twenty-seven years. Although there appears to be no evidence of a physical relationship between the men, “Stoker had fallen in love” (Farson and Dematteis 248, 249). Writing about his relationship with Irving, Stoker later records, “in those moments of mutual emotion he too had found a friend and knew it. Soul had looked into soul! From that hour began a friendship as profound, as close, as lasting as can be between two men” (qtd. in Farson and Dematteis 248).

thematics, Stoker attempts to contain the homosocial from sliding into the homoerotic within the intimate encounters between vampire and victim by safeguarding its ostensible heterosexual relation (Howes 119). Imprisoned in Dracula’s castle, Harker experiences homosexual panic as “a vague feeling of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near” (Stoker 26). In the heterosexual seduction scene, Harker passively rests in feminized “languorous ecstasy” (39) where he observes of the three women, a “deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive” (38); however, it is Harker’s relation with Dracula that is paramount, for “another sensation swept through me...I was conscious of the presence of the Count” (38). In a jealous rage, Dracula reprimands his three minions: “How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!....when I am done with him, you shall kiss him at your will” (39). Harker passes out unconscious and later records in his journal that he has awoken back in his guest room, evidently undressed by the Count (40). Yet Harker possesses no puncture wounds on his body after this experience, begging the question: what exactly did the Count want with the unconscious man if not sustenance?

This mystery remains the unresolved secret which hangs over the text and only is acknowledged to Mina as a “great shock” (104) that must be redressed through heterosexual marriage. The betrothed wed that day, thereby, creating a buffer between the bourgeois normality of the couple and Dracula’s abnormal world as well as trying to banish any lingering doubts about Harker’s “manly” desires (Hammond 131). At the end of the novel, the Harkers have a baby, completing the traditional family unit but still bearing the mark of the male homosocial bond: “His bundle of names links all our little
band of men together; but we call him Quincey” (Stoker 378). *Dracula* inexorably “feminizes...irrepressible and subversive desires and represents the fear of succumbing to the seductions of a vampire as the fear of being emasculated,” remarks Marjorie Howes (107). Seamus Deane expands the scope of this reading to the national level as “sexual degeneration has been prevented by chaste heroics, [and] the family has asserted its values against those of the mob. Politically, the family is...the embodiment of the nation and the national values, and it speaks the nation without flaw” (*Strange* 93). Moreover, Count Dracula allegorizes both the sense of racial threat posed by the Irish in the period and the coeval “racial crisis constitutive of Britishness itself” with its coexistence of opposed ethnic communities under a mutual national identity where difference was internally inscribed (Valente, *Dracula’s* 76).

The Gothic genre aligned itself with the emerging racial discourses that were built upon a scientifically-validated medicalized regime of normalcy and its concern over the racial hygiene of the nation with all of its impacted prejudices and paranoia in tow. “Though originally a literary genre with a distinctively popular or sensational appeal,” states Luke Gibbons, “the Gothic spread out into the recesses of everyday life, giving rise to a phantom pubic sphere haunted by fear, terror, and the dark side of civility” (*Gaelic* 10). The racial theories, incorporated by the Gothic, expanded their formulation of threats to national health to embrace more intangible markers of regression, infection, and contamination. The Gothic aided in propagating this new pathology obsessed as it was “with invisible adversaries, and fantasies of corruption, infiltration, and pollution from within” (Gibbons, *Gaelic* 38; emphasis Gibbon’s). The consequences of these discourses of normality appropriating the resources of Gothic fiction in the analogous rhetorical
construction of both Irish and homosexual identities through recourse to homophobic
tropes as “pollution”, “pathology”, “degenerates”, and as the “enemy within” were
enormous.

For the Irish posed a threat of contamination insofar as they were associated with
the spread of cholera, “the Irish disease”, which was cited as further evidence of their
national deficiency. With the outbreak of Fenian violence in the 1860s, the resulting
moral panic set off a fear of Irish infection of Britain’s working class, both
epidemiologically and politically via Chartism, and became transformed into “a fully
fledged political Gothic, visualized above all in the pages of Punch and like-minded
periodicals” (Gibbons, Gaelic 69; 46, 68). Underpinning this Gothic fear is the
nightmare of a “reverse colonization” through a massive internal immigration of Irish
people within the United Kingdom, especially during the Great Famine of the 1840s: a
panic that the Irish “would return, perhaps vengefully, to England’s shores, with
disruptive effects on English life, degrading effects on English culture, and degenerative
effects on the Anglo-Saxon race” (Valente, Dracula’s 62). This Gothic inheritance
disseminated in the popular press and fiction with its dialectical relation of homosexual
identity and homophobia impacted the nationalist and literary conceptions of male
subjectivity in Ireland.

Queering the Irish Revival

It is instructive to read the reaction of the Anglo-Irish Revivalists to the feminine
stereotyping of the Celt, the Gaelic tradition of the Shan Van Vocht or Mother Ireland,
plus the homosexual panic in Gothic fiction. Standish O’Grady’s History of Ireland:
Heroic Period, published in 1878, became “almost a bible for young Irish writers and nationalists. They found in his Cuchulain an exemplar of the Irish spirit, manly, courageous, extravagantly emotional, and genuinely noble” (Fallis 63; 60-2; emphasis mine). The Revivalists turn to and disseminate the hypermasculine heroic figures of ancient Irish saga with Celtic Supermen such as Finn mac Cool and his Fianna, Ferdia, Conn, Cu Roi, and, above all, Cuchulain. This masculine Irish role model is paired with a glamorization of violence and bloodletting incorporated into nationalist iconography and rhetoric. For William Butler Yeats, Cuchulain personifies the pagan aristocratic warrior ideal—a “man of passions and ungovernable will” (Hutchinson 145) as discussed in Lady Augusta Gregory’s Cuchulain of Muirthemne (1902) and Gods and Fighting Men (1904). Paradoxically, it is these qualities that were anathema to middle-class respectability but acceptable in Irish tales of heroism and tragedy.

In his essay “Return of the Fenians”, Douglas Hyde, head of the Gaelic League, playwright, and scholar prophesizes a Messianic return of Finn mac Cool and his strong men to restore a Golden Age through the resurrection of the Gaelic tongue which will serve as a weapon to “put an arrow through that monstrous poisonous crow” of the English mind (Gregory, Ideals 65-7). In addition, the motto above the entrance to St. Enda’s College, founded by Patrick Pearse, was an aphorism attributed to Cuchulain: “I care not if I live but a day and a night, so long as my deeds live after me” (Kiberd 241). Irish Revivalists draw upon the fantastic elements of hyperbolized heroism and bloodshed found in ancient Gaelic literature for reconfiguration in redressing their own contemporary circumstances. In Dublin, visitors and the Irish alike can still view the imposing Laocoön-esque bronze statue of a dying Cuchulain by Oliver Sheppard inside
the General Post Office on O’Connell Street.

However, Declan Kiberd also mentions the homoerotic features some scholars ascribe to the bardic tradition of hypermasculine warriors. The bardic “poet was married to his chieftain, with whom he had the right to share a bed,” and, “the physical attractions of the ruler’s visage were described by many poets in precisely the same terms which they had already used to celebrate their actual lady-love” (Kiberd, “Literature” 236; emphasis Kiberd’s). The lack of sexual orthodoxy among the Celts and the early Christian Irish before Anglo-Norman contact is verified by the non-judgemental Brehon laws that regarded homosexuality as a ground for divorce and the fact that medieval Gaelic poetry is often homoerotic (Rose, Diverse 8). Lillis Ó Laoire acknowledges the homosocial nature of the relationship between Cuchulain and his foster brother, Ferdia, in the Gaelic epic the Tain, partially evidenced by Cuchulain’s grief-stricken lamentation over Ferdia’s death (229-30; Kinsella 199-200).12 Inevitably, as attempts to reign in and contain meaning within the delimited stereotypes of “manliness” or the ideological practices of familism occur, homoeros subversively threatens the stability of nationalisms’ homosocial ideals.

Dublin journalist and political commentator, D. P. Moran, is best known as the main proponent of the Irish-Ireland movement, characterized by insular chauvinism illustrated through its exclusive focus upon race, religion, language, and economic protectionism. From the columns of his weekly newspaper, The Leader, founded in 1900 and widely read in Ireland, Moran pours scorn and vitriol on Irish failings and English pretence or raimeis as he calls it. Not unwilling to stoop to the level of bigoted

12 In Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland in the Middle Ages, Kenneth Nicholls further explains that the Irish married their own kinfolk even to degrees forbidden by the Catholic Church, practiced fosterage of children to cement political ties, and illegitimate children were not legally excluded from inheritance through the practice of “naming”, where the mother simply announced paternity (73-9).
sectsarianism, Moran labels Protestants, particularly Northerners, “sourfaces”; the Anglo-Irish are contemptuously “West Britons”, the Irish who ape English manners and customs are labelled “shoneens”, while Jews and Africans are routinely despised and dismissed.

Moran also opposed drinking, the politics of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and all English and “foreign” influence in Ireland (Lyons, Culture 58, 59). Moran has no qualms about shaming his fellow countrymen by emphasizing their supposed lack of masculinity:

On all sides one sees only too much evidence that the people are secretly content to be a conquered race, though they have not the honesty to admit it....There is nothing masculine in the character; and when the men do fall into line with green banners and shout themselves hoarse, is it not rather a feminine screech, a delirious burst of defiance on a background of sluggishness and despair? (Moran, Irish 6)

Moran frequently castigates Irishmen as feminine, emotional, and irresponsible as a reaction to the incessant Irish complaint of failure:

If I were autocrat of Ireland to-morrow, and someone were to come to me and ask what I wanted most, I should have no hesitation in answering—Men. And if we are to have men, we must make the population of Ireland either thoroughgoing English or thoroughgoing Irish. (Moran, “Battle” 39)

In Moran’s biography, historian Patrick Maume clarifies that Moran’s project is to resist the feminization of the Celt and to express a political preference for “real” men who are masculine, strong, confident, and assertive. On 16 July 1904, a cartoonist for The Leader “portrayed Moran’s symbol of Ireland [as] a powerful male nude grappling with the
serpent of Anglicisation” (quoted in Maume 9; emphasis mine). Paradoxically, it seems 
*homoeros* resurfaces in the organ of Irish-Ireland’s masculinist mouthpiece, where the 
quagmire of interpenetrative discourses opens up to subversion and reversal nationalism’s 
accepted symbolic rhetoric.

Against this backdrop of sexual norms and regulations in Ireland and England, the 
Irish cultural Revival emerges after the failure, albeit temporarily, of the Home Rule 
movement and the sex scandal that brought down Irish parliamentarian and “uncrowned 
king of Ireland,” Charles Stewart Parnell. Parnell’s adulterous relationship with 
Katherine O’Shea became public knowledge in December 1889 when her husband, 
Captain William O’Shea, filed for divorce. Viewed as another Cuchulain-like figure to 
supporters as well as having his own narrative of homosocial triangulation over eight 
years among the O’Sheas and himself, Parnell was a victim of hypocritical respectability, 
prudery, and *Realpolitik* (Lyons, *Famine* 195-6). Moreover, the attacks by the nationalist 
press in addition to Tim Healy’s efforts to destroy confidence in Parnell were 
synonymous with feminizing him, implying “a view of Parnell as henpecked, uxorious, 
even emasculated, unable to control the private affective side of himself, as evidenced by 
his destructive passion for Mrs. O’Shea” (Valente, *Justice* 60).

With the 1891 fall of Parnell, nationalist energies focus upon the realm of culture: 
literature, theatre, music, language, folklore, dance, and sports. Irish cultural nationalism 
is lead by a combination of Anglo-Irish Revivalists and Catholic constitutional 
nationalists whose political interests *diverged* far more than they overlapped. The Irish 
Renaissance is influenced by romantic nationalism which had inspired the antiquarian 
scholarship in Celtic languages and texts of the previous century as well as Young
Ireland’s non-sectarian focus upon nurturing sovereignty through the medium of cultural and literary production. Swayed by the nationalist ideals of John O’Leary, Yeats’s initial ambition is to mould the Irish imagination by avoiding English models and creating a national literature upon Irish themes in an Irish style that would educate the people about their own traditions (Fallis 3-6). Lionel Pilkington argues, though, that the Irish Revival, particularly as it pertains to the Irish theatre movement terminating in the founding of the Abbey Theatre, is not as decisively “nationalist” as is assumed and that Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge, and others—all members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy or gentry class—favoured policies aligned with constructive unionism13 over constitutional or revolutionary nationalism and the spectre of Catholic democracy:

a national theatre was not a forum for the expression of majority orthodoxies, but rather a means to critique dominant, widely held opinions from a critically sceptical perspective. In this, Gregory and Yeats were, of course, articulating the core element of a commonly accepted literary aesthetic. What may be less obvious, however, is that they were also expressing a distinctive cultural response to Ireland’s envisaged political future, a response that has its roots in fin de siècle southern Irish unionism....[T]he defiantly literary impulse of Ireland’s early national

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13 Constructive unionism involved the British government’s strategy of attempting through progressive legislation to create conditions on the ground in Ireland that would mitigate the need for Home Rule and end agrarian unrest. Under the stewardship of Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and Irish Chief Secretaries Arthur J. Balfour and, later, his brother, Gerald Balfour, land acts in 1887, 1888, and the Wyndham Act of 1903 resulted in the establishment of a stable peasant proprietorship 200,000 strong, who collectively owned half of all the arable land in the country. These reforms stripped away the last vestiges of landlordism and ended the land war. In 1891, the Congested Districts Board was formed to help with poor relief and to assist in economic growth. In 1898, the Irish Local Government Act set up county councils as well as urban and rural district councils, voted on by a franchise that included women, and, in the following year, Gerald Balfour and Sir Horace Plunkett established the Department of Agricultural and Technical Instruction, which endeavored to modernize Irish agriculture and the fisheries through education (Lyons, Famine 202-23; Hachey et al. 134-6).
theatre movement arises, at least in part, from a desire to anticipate and moderate the traumatic prospects of majority rule. (*Theatre* 3, 4)

This Anglo-Irish coterie of artists perceives its positions on the national stage as a type of philanthropy (10). As custodians of a range of Irish traditions, these writers’ exaltation of a harmonious society based upon heroes and peasants it was hoped would have salutary pedagogical effects on the “plain people” of Ireland. The contradictory tensions between the writers and the public flared frequently during times of controversy surrounding productions of the Abbey Theatre and its precursor, from Yeats’s alleged anti-Catholicism in *The Countess Cathleen* (1899) to the modern approach to questions of sexuality in Synge’s work. Nationalists were especially affronted by the fact that *The Countess Cathleen* was presented under the sponsorship of a theatre which proclaimed itself as “national”; in spite of this, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* restored Yeats’s nationalist credentials with Maud Gonne performing the key role in 1902 (Pilkington, *Theatre*, 24, 32).

The ideological discourses that conflate the Irish with a subservient femininity ignite a reaction in the Revival movement and other nationalists as they embark on constructing another version of Irishmen, drawing upon not only the noble “manly” warrior but also the noble masculine peasant. The new cultural masculinist manifesto is best summarized in a letter to Michael Cusack of the Gaelic Athletic Association by Archbishop Croke of Cashel. Croke attacks the importation of English fashions, immoral literature, dances, games, pastimes, mannerisms, and English sports, disparaging tennis, polo, and cricket (Travers 93). He carries on:

Indeed, if we continue travelling in the next score years in the direction
that we have been going in for some time past, condemning sports that
were practiced by our forefathers, effacing our national features as though
we were ashamed of them, and putting on, with England’s stuffs and
broadcloths her masher habits, and such other effeminate follies as she
may recommend, we had better at once, and publicly, abjure our
nationality, clap hands for joy at the sight of the Union Jack, and place
‘England’s bloody red’ exultantly above the ‘Green’. (qtd. in Travers 93)

This attack on presumed English femininity reverses the polarity of colonial discourse
and emphasizes the importance of Irish sport to nationalist identity. The Irish athlete
becomes a kind of modern day warrior. Further, in Douglas Hyde’s essay “The Necessity
for De-Anglicising Ireland,” Hyde comments on the impact of the G.A.A. and the revival
of ancient Irish sports: “the physique of our youth has been improved in many of our
counties; they have been taught self-restraint, and how to obey their captains....Wherever
the warm striped green jersey of the Gaelic Athletic Association was seen, there Irish
manhood and Irish memories were rapidly reviving” (“Necessity” 157). Hyde’s support
for abstaining from English sport in order to revive Irish ones through the intense
bonding of the homosocial world of male athleticism underscores the nationalist belief in
the importance of physical vigour and moral fortitude in the healthy building up of the
body of the nation while keeping in tact the reification of that male body in its physical
and athletic glory.

The Anglo-Irish Revival’s ideals and assumptions surrounding masculinity and
“manliness” surfaces as a concern in the writings of A.E., Yeats, and Synge. In a classic
instance of sublimation, George ‘A.E.’ Russell believes that a new soul for the nation can
only appear artistically through the restraint of passion and the rejection of decadent art and its coterie:

> Whether the art of any of the writers of the decadence does really express spiritual things is open to doubt. The mood in which their work is conceived, a sad and distempered emotion through which no new joy quivers, seems too often to tell rather of exhausted vitality than of the ecstasy of a new life.... Art in the decadence in our times might be symbolized as a crimson figure undergoing a dark crucifixion; the hosts of light are overcoming it, and it is dying filled with anguish and despair at a beauty it cannot attain. All these strange emotions have a profound psychological interest..... But in Ireland we are not yet sick with this sickness. As psychology it concerns only the curious. (Russell 79, 80)

A.E.’s rhetoric reiterates the anxiety surrounding decadent art and, by implication, its emblematic high priest Oscar Wilde; moreover, the notion of “sickness” and “exhausted vitality” and his triumphalist vision of decadence being crucified, no less, in a battle of righteousness and evil, reinscribes some of the disavowed homoerotic associations within Revivalist thought. A.E.’s comments, written in 1899 and four years after Wilde’s trial and imprisonment, fail to acknowledge that, especially in an Irish context, crucifixions are routinely followed by resurrections and returns.

The idealized peasant serves as the other stock image of the “manly” Irish, besides the Celtic warrior, for most of the poets and playwrights of the Abbey Theatre and its precursors. For Anglo-Irish writers, the imaginary peasants’ symbolic value resided in their physical hardiness, spiritual superiority and virtue, and imaginative genius
demonstrated in folklore, poetry, and song; however, the reality for most peasants was one of grinding poverty and isolation. The male peasant is the antithesis of the modern urban man through avoidance of cosmopolitan vices associated with degeneracy, decadence, and "abnormality" that supposedly saps the body and soul of its health. The peasants are imagined akin to simple "noble savages", who endure and battle the Irish elements, bravely fish in curraghs on the open sea, stoically subsist on the meagre agricultural yields from family plots of poor and rocky soil, all the while happily tending to their small herds of cattle and sheep. For other romantic nationalist writers however, the basic literary function of the peasantry is to demonstrate the acceptance of the familial order and rigid morality of Irish Catholicism; thereby, peasants would be inoculated from the influence of the corruption and materialism of English culture (Cairns and Richards 71).

The synergy of Catholic and pagan elements results in the peasantry, paragons of innocent moral Irish virtue, being stripped of any inkling of sexual desire by Yeats, Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde, A.E., Padraic Colum and other Revivalists as they compile and translate Irish peasant stories, ballads, poetry, heroic tales, and music before encroaching Anglicization and the catastrophic effects of the Great Famine separate the native Irish from their linguistic and literary heritage forever. The peasant poetry is esteemed by Yeats for its "passionless virtue and passionless vice" (Gregory, Ideals 90), echoing the values of control and restraint.

Michael Gillane in Cathleen ni Houlihan represents a proper peasant masculinity by nobly turning away from his bride-to-be in order to join French forces who have arrived, albeit late, at the invitation of the United Irishmen in 1798. Similarly, Yeats
underscores the masculine nature of archetypal peasant men in the lyrics “The Fisherman” and “The Host of the Air” (Poems 90, 251). Additionally, after reading some poems by A.E., Yeats displays an anxiety about gender norms when he writes in a letter of response that he would “underrate” the collection because the “dominant mood in many of them is the one I have fought in myself and put down....an exaggeration of sentiment and sentimental beauty which I have come to think unmanly” (qtd. in Fallis 127). Furthermore, by characteristically avoiding all overt references to racial or religious identities, Yeats wishes to create a spiritual sense of national unity that would overcome all contemporary differences and lead to a transcendental Irish essence grounded in a culture symbolized by the peasantry, on the one hand, and Celtic warriors on the other (Cairns and Richards 65). This Irish essence was to be shared by Anglo-Irish aristocrats and the “indomitable Irishry” (Yeats, Poems 451) alike in a nostalgic return to pre-conquest days of an ancient tribal society with its characteristic fantasies of “natural” and “organic” socio-political hierarchies.

On the other hand, John Millington Synge, the Irish Revival’s chief playwright until his untimely death in 1909, takes a more frank stance on peasant sexuality as his more modernist, yet iconoclastic, representations, especially of women, attest. In Synge’s In the Shadow of the Glen (1903), Nora Burke abandons her older husband and runs off with a tramp, which unleashed a storm of condemnation that criticized Synge’s ‘slanders’ upon Irish women based on the implication that Nora might have sexual desires. Maude Gonne objected to Synge’s play and resigned as the theatre society’s vice-president, complaining of a “unionist agenda” amongst Yeats’s friends (Pilkington, Theatre 39, 40). Arthur Griffith of Sinn Féin responded to the play with, “all of us know
that Irish women are the most virtuous in the world’” and “in no country are women so faithful to the marriage bond as in Ireland’” (qtd. in Lyons, Famine 242). For the Irish nationalists who attended the play, there was little room to manoeuvre in the judging of acceptable peasant stereotypes that, ironically, Synge’s fellow Revivalists were actively producing. Synge’s next major work, The Playboy of the Western World, ignited hysterical riots in Dublin in 1907 and, later on, in America when the play opened. Synge’s Playboy confronts some of the sexual contradictions and disavowals of nationalist ideology. Irish separatists believed that Irish theatre was to be a suitable vehicle for propaganda, so the ideals of purity and respectability were offended when Christy Mahon refuses to abandon his love of Pegeen Mike for “a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself” (Playboy 75).

It is ironic that such outrage over a reference to women’s nightgowns occurred in the context of a dark comedy where an exposed hero functions as the villagers’ scapegoat for failing to live up to his own parricidal fantasy and the audience’s standards of masculinity within the cultural imaginary. Synge’s insinuation “that the rhetoric of violence so beloved of Irish peasant society collapses when confronted by its brute reality” unpopularly implies that the contemporary agrarian unrest may also crumple when met head-on by “the violence of the state” (Pilkington, Theatre 59). Additionally upsetting for the audience was the numerous instances of “unmanly” behaviour by Christy: his cross-dressing in Sara’s petticoat to hide from the angry villagers (Playboy 75); his having been ignored by the girls in his parish (24); his admiration of the softness of his lovely skin in the mirror (32); Sara and his own father’s feminizing mockery of him (34, 49); and, not to forget, Shawn Keogh’s own marked lack of “manly” courage
and slavish piety (9).

Seamus Deane notes the nature of Christy's liberation at the play's conclusion: "male freedom is not accompanied by freedom for women. Rather it is through freedom from women" (Strange 143) with all of its homosocial connotations that the audience is left with. Synge was censured for "betraying the duty of the Abbey to support 'the forces of virile nationalism' against an insidious decadence" (Tifft 317); moreover, as an index of hypocrisy, a doctor in attendance told Synge that some members of the howling mob were under his care for venereal disease (Tifft 317-8). The controversy over *The Playboy of the Western World* presented an opportunity for unionists to take a stand against the nationalist mob mentality, as they discerned it, and to press for police and legal protection in the name of individual rights of artistic expression (Pilkington, Theatre 59). Synge's implicit acknowledgement of the instability of gender identity and of peasant female desire moreover, evidenced by Widow Quin and the young villager girls' interest in Christy, critiques the ideological restraints and limitations furnished by homosocial nationalism and its theatre.

After the 'Revolution'...Brendan Behan
The years 1914-1918 witnessed the Irish populace shifting away from constitutional avenues of attaining independence towards a more militant Anglo-phobic nationalism that emphasized a distinctive cultural identity, renewal of the national "manly" fibre, and the need for self-reliance as espoused by D. P. Moran and Arthur Griffith. The new nationalism was sustained by the campaigns of miscellaneous literary, cultural, and political organizations which the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.) had infiltrated, accustoming them to the inevitability of physical force (Travers 92). Following the 1916
Easter rebellion, the guerrilla warfare of the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921, the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, and the ten months of Civil War that followed in 1922-23, Ireland found itself militarily exhausted and morally weary, a dominion within the British Empire, and, for most Republicans, grievously partitioned with the creation of Northern Ireland in 1920 with its own Home Rule government established at Stormont. With the achievement of formal Irish independence, romantic-inspired revolutionary nationalism had achieved its raison d'être even though the problems of political violence, partition, and republic status remained unresolved. When not fighting the British or each other, the I.R.A. was busy disciplining other “enemies” of the nation, for between January 1920 and May 1923, 207 individuals were shot: 36% were Protestants, 8% tramps or tinkers, 7% “feeble-minded”, and 5% “sexual deviants” according to I.R.A. sources (qtd. in Walshe, “Wild(e)” 65). Obviously, not all Irish people in southern Ireland, even those with nationalist leanings, could wholeheartedly rejoice in Irish freedom as its parameters became clear.

In 1932, Easter veteran Eamon de Valera took over the Irish government and began to dramatically shape the country for the next three decades while he remained in power. De Valera’s vision of Ireland as an “asexual Utopia” (Cullingford, Others 215) was characterized by Catholic obedience and piety, the Gaelic language, rural family values, and isolation from the modern and cosmopolitan influence of London, Europe or North America. The most distinguishing feature of de Valera’s era was the control and power of the Catholic Church over government legislation, social and family matters, and artistic expression and freedom. For in the new 1937 constitution of Éire, the Catholic Church’s special status was enshrined as was women’s domestic position in supporting the state; separation of church and state was made, therefore, a fiction. Catholic family values and teachings permeated all facets of life: divorce, abortion, and contraception were proscribed by legislation in the 1920s, and homosexuality remained criminalized as
the Irish government retained British law barring sex between men (Hachey et al. 191-219; Cullingford, Others 227).

According to a government committee in the 1930s, "‘gross indecency between male persons’ was ‘spreading with malign vigour,’” on account, they believed, of poor parental control and the spread of dance-halls, movie theatres and motor vehicles; what’s more, in 1946, a Labour Party report on the Portlaoise prison claimed that homosexuals constituted 30% of its population and had to be separated out from other prisoners (Rose, Diverse 9). De Valera’s narrative of Irish identity was seized upon and adhered to, thus creating a culture whose values were shared by the main political parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, alike, for de Valera bore “the rural pieties of Corkery’s Hidden Ireland out of the closet in order to censor another Ireland, one that was less easy to contemplate with equanimity” (Cullingford, Others 215).

In 1929, the Irish Censorship of Publications Act banned “immoral” or “obscene” literature in a defence of Irish identity and Catholicism both threatened by sexual immorality and a decline in public virtue. The Catholic Church feared losing control over Irish society if their flock abandoned the Church for modern values. Intellectuals, writers, and artists entered what Colm Tóibín calls a “sort of dark ages” (Love 255). Almost every major twentieth-century writer was banned: Aldous Huxley, F. Scott FitzGerald, William Faulkner, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Graham Greene, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O’Casey, George Moore, Samuel Beckett, Brendan Behan, and John McGahern; by 1965, almost 10,000 books were forbidden (Fallis 172). But the authoritarianism of the Church did not go unchallenged as the writings of Sean O’Faolain, Frank O’Connor, and Liam O’Flaherty attest as they became spokesmen against religiously-fuelled state censorship, the Catholic Church’s abuse of power, and for the need for liberalization (Deane, Celtic 188-203). Needless to say, there was no public discussion in the media or open presentation on stage of same-sex desire or gender dissonance for fear of the censors. Irish and British state censorship
of publications, stage performances, and in film and television did not cease until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the United Kingdom, the authority of the Office of the Lord Chamberlain, empowered since 1737 to license and censor plays, was not revoked by parliament until 1968, when playwrights were free to stage sexuality as they wished. A decade earlier, the Lord Chamberlain had permitted discussions of homosexuality, but no embraces or other displays of same-sex affection were tolerated (de Jongh 12, 90). Unlike Britain, Ireland was not subject to the censoring eye of the Lord Chamberlain, but all of Dublin’s letters of patent, including the Abbey Theatre’s, forbid “the presentation of any work ‘which should be deemed or construed immoral,’ ‘profane or obnoxious,’ ‘whereby the Christian Religion may in any manner suffer reproach,’ or be ‘offensive to piety or good manners’” (O’Donnell 312). Against this history of censorship, the Irish theatre remained a conservative milieu copacetic with romantic nationalism’s narratives and mythology. Dramatists that broached, or included, facets of homo eros tended to revisit the earlier iconography of homosexuality: effeminacy in appearance or gesture, the use of camp language, being fussy, overdressed, or narcissistic, gentle, or nervous, artistic, and emotional—all functioned as coded clues telling an audience what type of man they were watching. But as Alan Sinfield cautions the stereotypes of the finicky bachelor or sissy-boy, some of whom possessed heterosexual credentials, sometimes failed to translate into an awareness of queerness; rather, a “cat-and-mouse game” (Stage 115) of stage representations of other men culturally reinforced what Sedgwick terms the epistemology of the closet, where both a “knowing” and an “unaware” audience were paradoxical concurrent possibilities.

The resilient and long-lived stereotype of the homosexual created by the Victorian media and medical establishment reinforced homo eros’s alleged threat to marriage, the family unit, and to heterosexual men with their phobic fear of “conversion” via seduction (de Jongh 3, 4, 9). John Clum posits, in the theatrical world, that when an
audience confronts the spectacle of physical affection or interaction between men or the appearance of the nude male body, many in the audience lose a sense of context: a drama staged by actors, often of differing personal sexual identities, role-playing. This shocking sight presses into action the codes of respectability and propriety and the programmed psychological reflex of disavowal, shame, and revulsion intimately tied to viewing the male as the object of the male gaze. Drag, another common strategy of representation of sexual dissonance in modern theatre, remains a safer choice for mass consumption since it allows the audience to maintain its imaginative distance from the performer and his/her gender while underscoring the historic link between effeminacy and homoeros (Clum 7, 19, 29, 30).

With his sheer magnetic force of personality and manic energy, not to mention legendary partying, Brendan Behan was the enfant terrible of the international theatre scene in the 1950s, rather a quare fellow himself, and a former member of the I.R.A. who spent several years incarcerated. Behan’s literary career marks an age of cynical disillusionment with the decaying idealism associated with romantic nationalism and the residual struggle in the North in 1940s and 1950s. Within the space between ideological rhetoric and social reality, Behan’s hybrid dramas The Hostage (1958) and

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14 Ulick O’Connor’s 1970 biography, Brendan Behan, tentatively broke the official silence surrounding the hitherto iffy subject of Behan’s sexuality. O’Connor labels Behan a “bi-sexual”—a product of the same-sex environment of the Borstal reform school (59-60). Michael O’Sullivan’s 1997 biography Brendan Behan: A Life, however, greatly expands the treatment of Behan’s sexuality and cites the furore in Ireland over the publication of O’Connor’s book. O’Sullivan examines Behan’s three year friendship with the attractive twenty-eight-year-old Irish sailor/boxer/aspiring actor, Peter Arthurs, whom Behan and his wife Beatrice ffrench-Salked met at a Y.M.C.A. in Hollywood in May 1961 during one of Behan’s stints in America (279-82). In his memoir, With Brendan Behan (1981), Arthurs claims Behan fell in love with him, relished his stories of naval sodomy and constantly asked for sexual favours—which Arthurs provided (23-5, 37-9). Along with Beatrice, Arthurs became Behan’s caregiver and support system, rescuing him from his debilitating drinking binges and bar room brawls (Arthurs 175-7, 248).

15 In 1937 Behan became involved with the I.R.A. at age fourteen following membership in the youth wing Fianna Éireann. Behan was arrested in Liverpool for delivering explosives; subsequently, he was sentenced to three years in Hollesley Bay Borstal Institution in Suffolk. In 1942 Behan faced fourteen years imprisonment for shooting at an Irish policeman during the annual commemoration of the Easter Rising. Four years later, in 1946 he was released from prison due to a general amnesty; nonetheless, he was in-and-out of detention for attempts to free an I.R.A. prisoner, assaulting police, and breaking deportation orders (Mikhail, 11-2; Brannigan 130n.14).
The Quare Fellow (1954) and autobiographical prison narratives Borstal Boy (1958) and Confessions of an Irish Rebel (1965) push the revisionist envelope and pose a queer challenge to hegemonic nationalism’s manufacture of a secure Irish identity. Featuring working-class Dubliners blended with the voices of other figures—prostitutes, soldiers, prisoners, and gay men—that he knew so well from the margins of British and Irish society, Behan’s writing resists conformity by stressing the subcultural heterogeneity of modern Dublin. Behan frequently revisits the theme of a fusion of British/Irish cultures and highlights how these two nations are largely indistinguishable from one another (Brannigan 21-2).

Borstal Boy (1958) is an autobiographical account of Behan’s time while imprisoned in Suffolk and was immediately banned in Ireland upon publication. Behan’s carceral narrative harkens back to the nationalist tradition of jail journals by John Mitchell, Wolfe Tone, and Michael Davitt. Behan’s sense of nationalist masculinity breeds a competitive rivalry between himself and his jailers; in spite of this, Behan realizes the futility of non-compliance and, by inference, the failure of nationalism’s performative masculinity (Brannigan 134-6). Rather, resistance takes the form of Behan’s homosocial/homoerotic relationship with fellow prisoners Charlie Millwall and Ginger, yet John Brannigan maintains that homoeroticism operates “not by subterfuge or conflict with the prison system, but by borrowing from the homosocial bonds encouraged within the prison itself” (141). The penal institution facilitates comradeship by dividing the men into houses after the public school system and by promoting sports and fitness. Ironically, it is the English penal system that alters Behan’s position as belligerent nationalist martyr to one where he identifies erotically with the English Other. Behan ostensibly exchanges one set of nationalist desires for another set of sexualized bonds with English men, seemingly unaware of nationalisms’ own constitutive homoeros.

Following the success of 1954’s The Quare Fellow, Behan composed the Irish language tragedy An Giall (1958), which he then translated and transformed into his
smash hit *The Hostage*. This drama centres upon the capture of Leslie, a British soldier, by the I.R.A. in hopes of a prisoner exchange; what’s more, Neil Jordan reimagined this story in *The Crying Game* (1992). *The Hostage* is a vaudevillian music-hall show crossed with a sentimental drama and shot through with doses of queer camp that mock Irish cultural nationalism—the I.R.A. are depicted as religious fanatics and buffoons. Diverging from *An Giall*, Behan, in his English play, introduces a gay couple, Rio Rita, a homosexual navvy, and Princess Grace, his African-Irish boyfriend, who enliven existence within the brothel setting; at one point, Princess Grace carries a large banner across the stage with the devastatingly trenchant message: “KEEP IRELAND BLACK” (*Plays* 204).

Behan taunts the Lord Chamberlain’s powers of censorship when the players dance provocatively and sing Rio Rita’s “ancient song”: “We’re here because we’re queer,/Because we’re queer because we’re here” (*Plays* 225). In this period, homosexuality was back on the moral agenda with the release of the 1957 Wolfenden Report\(^\text{16}\), and Behan exploits this fact by making queer people visible in a carnivalesque satire on sexual and national hypocrisy. The playwright, however, refuses to sanitize or glorify his marginalized characters, deciding rather to depict them warts and all. At the climax, Rio Rita, Princess Grace, and Mulleady, seemingly motivated by love for the soldier, direct an abortive rescue mission to save him, but Leslie is accidently shot in the mêlée. In *The Hostage*, “the repressiveness of extreme nationalism,” remarks Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, “contends with the power of homoerotic desire to breach national and racial boundaries” (*Others* 58). The lampooning of naturalist theatrical conventions

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\(^{16}\) In September 1957 the Wolfenden Committee, a British inquiry into prostitution and homosexuality, released its final report: “We accordingly recommend that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offense” (Miller, *Out* 283). Behan refers to the report on stage, “Have you read the Wolfenden report/On whores and queers?” (*Plays* 226). Wolfenden also recommended that the age of consent for male homosexual relations be fixed at twenty-one. Britons at the time were divided as a Gallup poll shows: 38% backed decriminalization, but 47% preferred the status quo. The British government took ten more years to finally change the law in 1967 (Miller, *Out* 283-7).
within a supposedly nationalist worldview generated controversy among critics who tried to assimilate the joking, dancing, and singing into a hostage drama (Brannigan 100-5).

Given Behan’s complex attitudes to sexuality uneasily poised between valourizing intimate fraternity and the fear of public exposure, a productive tension between queer and nationalist identities surfaces in his work. Increasingly critical of the hollowness of the nationalist rhetoric that once enthralled him, Behan states that “the first duty of a writer is to let his Fatherland down, otherwise he is no writer” (Confessions 84). Behan is a transitional figure between the Irish Revival and our contemporary Irish renaissance, for his writing signals what John Brannigan designates as a “crisis” in nationalisms’ representation which would only be intensified in the next decades (12).

Following Behan’s death in 1964, Ireland witnessed the lessening of film censorship, and, in 1967, a limit of twelve years was placed on the publications ban. This resulted in 5000 formerly banned titles being released at once (Hachey et al. 222-6) and coincided with the British passage of the Theatres Act of 1968, ending the Lord Chamberlain’s powers of censorship there as well (de Jongh 90). Most of the Irish texts at hand avoid staging explicit homoeroticism and sexual activity, preferring to keep it off-stage or implied between the lines. Jaime O’Neill is the one exception here.

When Eamon de Valera retired as Taoiseach in 1959, Sean Lemass lead the country in a new direction by opening the doors to foreign investment and industrialization. As well, the appearance of television throughout the Republic had the greatest liberalizing impact socially and politically. In 1965, Lemass met the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Terence O’Neill; the first time ever that the leaders of the two Irelands had done so. Tragically, O’Neill’s small steps towards reforms for Northern Catholics could not prevent the explosion of the “Troubles” as romanticized revolutionary nationalism re-materialized in the form of the Irish Republican Army, which lay claim to the Republican tradition of Easter 1916. In 1972, the Catholic Church’s special status in the constitution was repealed, and the next year Ireland joined
the European Economic Community, diminishing the country’s insularity and backward-looking cultural orientation of the de Valera years.

The last two decades in Ireland have witnessed an atmosphere of rapid legal liberalization as contraception and divorce have been sanctioned (though not abortion), the Censorship Act canned, and the Catholic Church’s hold on Irish society dramatically weakened, in large part, due to numerous sex scandals involving the clergy. Lately, Ireland has been experiencing an unprecedented economic boom generated by informational capitalism and the flourishing of new technological industries, earning the country the moniker the “Celtic Tiger.” Most Irish people, particularly younger generations, have jettisoned traditional notions of Irish culture and have sought further integration within the European Union in their desire to attain a thoroughly modern, cosmopolitan society. Irish critics of this dominant, neo-liberal consensus in Ireland, however, cite serious concerns such as the lack of control over international investment, the retraction of public sector spending, the revisionist historiography of the country’s discredited revolutionary past, the transmutation of that past into nostalgic tourist commodification, and the erosion of Irish identity within a globalized culture dominated by American values and representations (Kirby et al., “Introduction” 1-18). So too, the Irish and their government have repudiated militant violence emanating from the North, celebrating the recent unprecedented pace of change with the creation of a Northern Ireland Assembly, free democratic elections in the province, and the startling declaration by the I.R.A. ending all hostilities and the decommissioning of its armaments in 2005.

Amidst this remarkable transformation in Ireland, on 7 July 1993, through the efforts of human rights lawyers like former President Mary Robinson and feminist and gay and lesbian organizations such as the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (G.L.E.N.), founded in 1974, the British legal inheritance of Henry VIII’s act of 1533 and the Labouchère Amendment were struck down, and homosexuality was decriminalized. The Dáil established an equal age of consent of seventeen years and passed anti-
discrimination legislation; furthermore, gay and lesbian citizens are free to openly serve in the Irish armed forces, ironically, placing Ireland as a global leader, relatively speaking, in gay and lesbian equality rights.17

Queer ‘Troubles’ in Ulster

Ulster Unionism is the other great strand of political identity and allegiance for the mainly Protestant community of Northern Ireland. When it comes to issues of sexual diversity and women’s reproductive rights however, Catholics and Protestants alike are vociferously anti-abortion, and both communities opposed the decriminalization of homosexuality in Northern Ireland in 1982 following Jeffrey Dudgeon’s victorious human rights case against the British government (Belfrage 116). As for Sinn Féin’s official position on the matter, the nationalist political party has paid lip service to queer equality since 1996 (Quinn 264). Beyond the fickleness of politicians, Ulster Unionism is structured by a male homosocial cultural imaginary similar, I argue, to that which operates in romantic and other forms of Irish nationalism; moreover, this Protestant Unionist version of homosociality manifests itself in the street culture during the Loyalist marching season and within the fraternal organizations of the Orange brotherhoods and Loyalist paramilitary groups such as the outlawed U.D.A., U.F.F., and U.V.F. These terrorist factions, along with the nationalist I.R.A. and I.N.L.A.,18 have frequently

targeted and attacked gay men and lesbians for violating notions of moral and tribal purity, not unlike couples of mixed-religious backgrounds who have also faced related retributive violence (Quinn 263).

Clearly, the Ulster Protestant community remains as traditionally patriarchal as its Ulster Catholic counterpart as Edna Longley satirizes the homosociality shared by the cultures living in the province:

This tribe too has its cult of male chieftains: Carson, Moses, Paisley the ‘Big Man’ (compare Dev the ‘Long Fellow’, the Pope, the Boss). And the whole country abounds in Ancient Orders of Hibernian Male-Bonding: lodges, brother-hoods, priesthoods, hierarchies, sodalities, knights, Fitzwilliam Tennis Club, Field Day Theatre Company. (187)

Longley contends that the homosociality of Ulster is to blame for what she discerns as a thematic male death cult manifested in the martyrdom of revolutionary terrorism and Protestant expectations of Armageddon heralding their community’s last stand (192).

What’s more in Sally Belfrage’s monograph *Living With War: A Belfast Year* (1987), she observes the homosocial nature of a Twelve of July Orange march, which celebrates the 1690 defeat of Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne:

All men. The only women who marched were under twenty and with suitable thighs for short skirts. Along the edge an occasional older woman from the Ladies’ Orange Order jingled a collection tin for the Orange Widows. But it was a male thing. Or a boy thing. Protestant Boys from Glasgow, Apprentice Boys from everywhere. Why did they style themselves boys, even limping old gents of seventy-five or eighty? This
perverse insistence on their childishness seemed especially jarring considering the gravity of their expressions—but it’s an Irish tradition, from the Whiteboys and the Rightboys through the Peep O’Day Boys and the Oakboys and the Steelboys....As they were locked in step, so they were locked in an idea, and there were too many of them, far too many of them, to discount. What made it all stranger and the stronger was that this idea they were locked in was such a myth. They were patriots without a patria. (264, 265)

The marching season exudes male energy, pride, and, unfortunately, aggression and violence when a parade encounters either Catholic protestors or British soldiers there to enforce British government bans or the detouring of parade routes.

Orange parades are communal celebrations proudly displaying symbols of Unionist identity: fifes and lambeg drums, bands, banners, flags, the Orange sash, sham mock battles, ceremonial gunfire, and the painting of murals on city walls and of British and Unionist colours on street curbs. Sociologist Desmond Bell argues that the marches are more of a cultural practice than a specific loyalty to a political philosophy. In terms of actual active involvement, male working-class adolescents dominate this street culture of parades that are symbolic responses to the crisis of security within the homosocial Protestant community (Bell, “Contemporary” 94).

In a street interview in Londonderry/Derry, Bell records the remarks of 14-year-old Keith Hope who disagrees with girls directly participating in the marches:

Cause it’s too cissy lookin’. Some Bands got wee girls flutin’ an all but it doesn’t look right with wee girls in the band. A flute band was always
usually young fellahs like. If you’re goin’ te have a flag carrier you’d be better having a young fellah carrying it with dark glasses or something...better than a crowd of wee girls wavin’ the flag, disgrace themselves with that there. It looks more.

Bell: More?

Keith: More military.

Bell: Military?

Keith: Ye know more—more Protestant like! (Acts, 103-4; emphasis Bell’s).

Bell explains that the emphasis on sexual difference and the division of gender roles is increasingly an assertion of stylized masculinity and youthful bravado in the face of high unemployment for low-skilled youth in the province (104). Unionist cultural practices are “the specific means by which an exclusive Protestant identity is represented and renewed in the Protestant mind. Here primarily an embodied ideology is at work” (Bell, “Contemporary” 95; emphasis Bell’s). Specifically, it is the male body and its relationship with other male bodies that guarantees the Unionist cultural imaginary.

The exclusively fraternal Unionist organizations such as the Orange Order, Royal Arch Purple Chapter, and the Royal Black Institution are structurally similar to the Freemasons. F. S. L. Lyons estimates that two thirds or more of the adult male population possibly belongs to the Orange Order, and it is only recently that a man could become a politician without Orange credentials (Famine 720). These Loyalist organizations have taken men from different Protestant sects and classes and created a significant solidarity and cultural cohesion in the face of, what they perceive as, the
implacable threat of Irish nationalists. Furthermore, historian Anthony Buckley states that the initiation rites and upward movement within the ranks of these Orange institutions involve the retelling or re-enactment of prescribed Bible stories, most with similar themes: God’s chosen individual or group encountering wicked aliens and foreigners where the moral imperative is to remain true and faithful to God and community. By implication, Ulster Protestants replace the Hebrews as God’s chosen people\(^{19}\) (Buckley 264).

But this projection of a holy, virtuous image does not translate across Loyalist opinion as seen when Sally Belfrage interviewed a member of the U.D.A. in his local office in Belfast a few years before the 1992 government ban on the organization. The U.D.A. spokesman *slagged* the Orangemen by resorting to the discourse of effeminacy: “As for the Orange Order, ‘This society is full of perverts.’ Supposedly they stand by the philosophy of giving ‘not an inch’, but when the police reroute their marches they’re just ‘nice wee men who say ‘‘Yes sir,’’” and “‘You are absolutely right, sir: we are not marching up that street because we are too respectable.’” Respectability will kill them” (Belfrage 253). A rhetoric of masculinity and sexual “normality” function as distinguishing criteria within the litmus test of true blue Unionism. Another case in point of Unionism’s anxious repudiation of *homoeros* materialized in the long resistance for years by Unionist politicians to bring the Homosexual Law Reform Act of 1967 into force in Northern Ireland. The Democratic Unionist Party’s and Reverend Ian Paisley’s

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\(^{19}\) Ian Adamson, a Belfast medical doctor, has written two books on ancient Irish mythology and history which argue that the “true” inhabitants of Ulaid (ancient Ulster)—another chosen people—were the Cruthin, akin to the Picts of Scotland, and, therefore, not Gaels. To this end, Adamson appropriates the hypermasculine warrior hero Cuchulain from the Irish cultural nationalists for the descendants of the plantations (Buckley 269-70). Adamson’s importation, no less than that of the Irish Revivalists, inexorably bears the marks of *homoeros*. 
unsuccessful 1981 campaign to “Save Ulster from Sodomy,” which collected 70,000 petition signatures, was reprised in 1998 to fight the British government’s decision to equalize the age of consent to sixteen for both hetero- and homosexuals (Quinn 274-6; Rose, *Diverse* 38).

Vincent Quinn scrutinizes the ambiguous position of the city of Derry/Londonderry within this gendered cultural framework. The Northern Irish Tourist Board and local business associations initiated a campaign whereby the term “Maiden City” served as a circumlocution to avoid reiterating sectarian loyalties signified by the literal doubleness of the city’s name. Structurally analogous to Heaney’s poems in *North* (1975) but with a reversal of the political players, the “Maiden City” campaign underwrites a narrative of a vulnerable municipal virgin threatened with rape and despoliation by perfidious natives (read: Catholic nationalists). Innocent Derry/Londonderry shuts her gates just as she did in 1689, remaining unravished. Each year, the Protestant Apprentice Boys of Derry commemorate this victory over impending invasion and dissoluteness by defending the “Maiden City’s” honour and territorial integrity. Quinn reasons that these homosocial marching rituals annex public space for the prerogative of masculine ideals and displays of power, ironically, not only proffering protection from threats outside of their city, but also from threats of the feminine or dissident inside (264-5).

Within this hostile masculine environment, gays, lesbians, and progressive straights of differing faith communities confront a quandary. The discourses of identity in Northern Ireland remain so overdetermined by sectarianism that there exists little space to negotiate the perilous straits of Protestantism’s Scylla and Catholicism’s Charybdis.
"A deviant sexual identity is therefore doubly dangerous in Northern Ireland," states Quinn, "as well as being a rival identification it has also been actively proscribed by the discourses which shape sectarianism" (263). Homosocial Loyalist and nationalist communities perceive any efforts to circumvent religious polarities by envisioning a queer alterity, or even, apparently, any celebration of the feminine, as a treacherous betrayal of Ulster or Irish identity (Quinn 263-5).

What follows are three biographical case studies of queer Irishmen whose lives were inextricably bound up with homoeros and nationalism. James Chandler argues that case studies consist of more than a simple genre of representative samples embedded within interpretive schemas; rather case studies have a temporal dimension and a dramatic or performative character inasmuch as there remains a process of judgement or of weighing involved between the particular and the general. This performative judgement is posited against a contextual background where the current state of things is reflexively measured against a future state or order, carrying its own implicit normative framework that will replace present circumstances. "It is to compose a historical situation in one’s representation, and it is to act on that represented state of affairs in such a way as to transform it," posits Chandler (240). The historical conditions of a society become the “object of a ‘national’ or ‘general will,’” whereby determinations about the system of representations are made by the people (Chandler 208-9, 234-40, 245, 251). It is appropriate that the case study’s close affiliation with nationalism foresees change insofar as one my underlying purposes in the dissertation is to anticipate the birth of a far-

20 In contrast, progressive change has taken root as well here as Annie Courtney, the mayor of Derry/Londonderry, helped to proclaim Ireland’s first ever Gay Pride Week in June 1993. “In the Bogside, on the obverse of the wall bearing the ‘Free Derry’ mural, a new mural appeared,” reported Marie Smyth in *Fortnight*, “painted by two local (heterosexual) men, it [was] a large pink triangle with a logo in Irish and English” (45).
reaching queer dispensation, not just in Ireland, but elsewhere.
1.2. Case Studies: Quare and Irish

i) Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde (1854-1900)

On peut adorer une langue sans bien la parler, comme on peut aimer une femme sans la connaître. Français de sympathie, je suis Irlandais de race, et les Anglais m’ont condamné à parler le langage de Shakespeare.


...Wilde’s lifelong performance as a stage Englishman was a commentary on the hollowness of the stereotype of the stage Irishman as well, and an unmasking, as we have learned to say—ultimately from Oscar himself—an unmasking of the distinction between English and the Irish in the first place. And between heterosexual and homosexual.


Anyone who follows closely the life and language of men, whether in soldiers’ barracks or in the great commercial houses, will hesitate to believe that all those who threw stones at Wilde were themselves spotless. In fact, everyone feels uncomfortable in speaking to others about this subject, afraid that his listener may know more about it than he does.


Martyrdom was to me merely a tragic form of scepticism, and attempt to realize by what one had failed to do by faith. No man dies for what he knows to be true. Men die for what they want to be true, for what some terror in their hearts tells them is not true.


In Wilde’s last epigraph above, his anonymous narrator in “The Portrait of Mr. W. H.” has been on a fruitless quest for the identity of Willie Hughes, but after learning of Erskine’s death, he reflects on the futility of martyrdom, especially in the name of--of all things--a literary theory (Halpern 45-6). The narrator’s counter-intuitive observation makes an implied distinction between those motivated by zealous fanaticism of whatever stripe which leads to self-sacrifice and those who choose a different path. If belief must be forced or if recourse to violence against others is necessary to renew faith, then Wilde’s novella suggests that an error or a weakness surely exists within such convictions. People who are confidently assured of their ‘truth’ do not need to die for it.
“Early in his life,” writes David Alderson, “Wilde had come to a conviction that the realm of freedom was severely circumscribed and that the culture of self-sacrifice was both deluded and ineffective in terms of its purchase on the future” (48). The narrator’s words have striking implications for the myth of martyrdom and the cult of blood sacrifice in standard formulations of Irish romantic nationalism. Any belief system, ideology, or cause is founded, to a degree, on some falsehood, repression, or contradiction in order to constitute and define itself. This foundational lie haunts patriotic ideology as an “enemy within” and, as I have already suggested, identity formation as well. Wilde’s statement on martyrdom dovetails with my argument of a repressed homoerotic element in homosocially-structured nationalisms.

Oscar Wilde was born into a family of Irish nationalists: Sir William Wilde, his father, wrote books on Irish landscape, folklore, and mythology as part of the Celtic Revival; his mother, Jane Lady Wilde née Elgee (a.k.a. Speranza), wrote patriotic verse for the Nation newspaper (Ellmann, Wilde 6-7, 10-1). Wilde, his brother Willie, and Speranza joined London’s Irish Literary Society, which played a key role in promoting the Celtic Revival, and Wilde’s own texts influenced Yeats, Synge, and Joyce (Coakley 188; Ellmann, Wilde 121). Scholars such as Richard Ellmann, Declan Kiberd, Vicki Mahaffy, Jerusha McCormack, and Davis Coakley have assessed Wilde’s non-fictional prose: his letters, reviews, speeches, and essays, and they have clearly shown Wilde’s support for Irish Home Rule and, even more radically, republicanism. However, Wilde

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did not countenance brutality or bloodshed in the name of Irish freedom as an efficacious means of bringing about a just dispensation for the country, instead he preferred to call himself “a most recalcitrant patriot” (Coakley 195).

In a review of imperialist James Anthony Froude’s book on the British governance of Ireland, Wilde takes English attitudes to task: “If in the last century [Britain] tried to govern Ireland with an insolence that was intensified by race hatred and religious prejudice, she has sought to rule her in this century with a stupidity that is aggravated by good intentions” (qtd. in Kiberd, Inventing 37). During his North American speaking tour on the Celtic Revival in 1882, Wilde publicly insisted, “Yes, I am a thorough republican” to his Irish-American audience as “[n]o other form of government is so favourable to the growth of art” (qtd. in Ellmann, Wilde 186).

Apparently, Wilde made no other public remarks on Irish politics, except for a half-dozen impromptu comments to reporters before and after this tour (Pepper 18). Wilde also registered his support of Irish nationalism by his attendance at the Parnell Commission in 1889 with his brother Willie, who reported on the findings of the investigation into the Irish Parliamentary Party leader’s alleged ties to terrorism. Later, following Wilde’s disastrous legal battles, thirteen volumes of the Parnell Commission’s report were found in his library at the time of auction (Coakley 195).

The 1890s, the Irish Revival’s first major decade in terms of cultural capital and literary output, overlapped with Wilde’s own rising star as a writer; moreover, both Wilde and the Revival were contemporaneous with the historic emergence of the social

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22 Susan de Sola Rodstein examined Robert D. Pepper’s 1922 edition of Wilde’s lecture given on 5 April 1882 in Platt’s Hall, San Francisco, and she mentions that on page 36 Wilde used “the analogy of a patriot dying for the love of his country (in eerily prescient terms) to describe the love of boys” (151.n.13). However, in the 1972 edition of Wilde’s lecture that I examined in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, page 36 is blank, and the comments about the love of boys are missing.
construction of homosexual identity. Wilde became the stereotypical paradigm of the modern homosexual who combined decadence and aestheticism with sexual "deviance" and effeminacy, which until his trials in 1895 had not been widely linked in the public's perception according to Alan Sinfield (Wilde 1-3). After Wilde's outing and fall from grace, Ireland in its nationalism banished the writer from his own cultural heritage, in part, explaining the recurrent association between Wilde and England. Wilde was definitely never one of the boyos, but the scandal greatly increased the degree of estrangement between the public persona of Wilde and the image of the Irishman. Not only was hostile revulsion against Wilde routine in the British tabloids and the establishment press, but the Irish were not any more charitable. Frank Harris's biography on Wilde cites an Irish gentleman who expressed his abhorrence and suggested what, he believed, was a fitting punishment: "Oi'd whip such sinners to death, so I would...hangin's too good for them" (qtd. in Mahaffy 48). This disavowal of Wilde's achievements and identification with Ireland was part of the dominant logic of Irish culture, where one could not be both Irish and quare at the same time, nor would one desire to be. Wilde's disgrace foreclosed his access to a publicly acknowledged Irish identity until recently, for it has taken a century for Wilde to be officially honoured with Danny Osbourne's new bronze and granite statue unveiled in Dublin's Merrion Square in October 1997. In addition, Wilde has also earned his place in Poets' Corner in London's Westminster Abbey on Valentine's Day 1995 (Murphy 127-28, Heaney, "Oscar" 174).

Wilde's dramatic work was not completely ignored in Ireland however, for despite the antipathy towards the author personally, the Belfast's Grand Opera house served as the venue for Lady Windermere's Fan in 1900 and The Importance of Being
Earnest in 1901. The Abbey Theatre presented The Importance of Being Earnest in 1926, and, in Dublin, productions of other Wilde plays ran throughout the 1930s and 1940s, chiefly at Michael MacLiammoir’s\textsuperscript{23} and Hilton Edwards’s Gate Theatre. What’s more, MacLiammoir’s one-man play, The Importance of Being Oscar (1963), was very successful throughout the 1960s and 1970s, in part, because the production heterosexualized Wilde, offering a more palatable rendering of his personal drama to Irish theatre-goers. As of the late 1990s, nearly 150 performances from Wilde’s œuvre or about the playwright himself have been performed in Ireland (Walshe, “Wild(e)” 67, 74).

Terry Eagleton’s nationalist play Saint Oscar (1989), produced for Derry’s Field Day Theatre Company, endeavours to dramatize the overlapping nature of homosexual and Irish identities; both vectors of identity, however, are “used to present a timeless thesis about imperialist oppression,” according to Edna Longley (183). Wilde here describes himself as a racial and sexual hybrid, “Half man and half woman, part Paddy part Brit” (5), which tends to be an oversimplification of Wilde’s gender mixing and of homosexuality in general. During the libel trial in Saint Oscar, Carson probes:

CARSON: Sodomistic. You are a bugger, Mr. Wilde, are you not?

WILDE: Not at all, sir; I am Irish. There are no buggers in Ireland; the Church would not allow it. . . . Unlike the English, we tend to believe that one thing is true, but also its antithesis. It is not that we are illogical, merely economical. A belief in the unity of opposites is quite

\textsuperscript{23} Actor and writer Michael MacLiammoir assisted in rehabilitating Wilde’s dramatic reputation in Ireland. Along with his life partner, Hilton Edwards, MacLiammoir founded Dublin’s Gate Theatre in 1928, which offered a cosmopolitan alternative to the cultural nationalism of the Abbey Theatre. MacLiammoir and Edwards also have the unique distinction of being Ireland’s only public gay couple. Ironically and fittingly enough, MacLiammoir was born Alfred Willmore in Kensal Green, London in 1899. MacLiammoir left Britain because of conscription and “reversed Wilde’s own journey” by heading for Dublin, adopting a performative mask, and, thereby, refashioning himself as an Irishman (Walshe, “Wild(e)”, 73).
Eagleton’s clever ventriloquism of Wilde’s inverted logic and razor-sharp reversals implies that the English are, therefore, of course, the “buggers” here. Typical of Wilde to attribute stereotypes of the Irish, whether racial, gendered, or emotional, back onto the English, he questions the assumption that the structural relationship between the English and Irish is oppositional to begin with (Kiberd, Inventing 35, 39).

The figure of Wilde remains illustrative of the colonial subject’s complicit mimicry of hegemonic cultural and economic systems, where the subject’s mark of difference is constituted by the mandatory approximation of imperial and bourgeois norms: again, a case of “being more British than the British”. Through his mimicry, slippery wit and epigrams, Wilde undermined the values and ideologies of the Victorian middle class with their rapacious materialism and their hypocrisy surrounding sexual manners and behaviour. The epigram in Wilde’s hands is “a lethal weapon[,] for the epigram is the mind’s momentary triumph over the dead matter of conventional wisdom, a piece of linguistic deviancy, a sagacious saying gone suddenly awry” (Eagleton, Heathcliff 334).

Wilde’s inversion of gender in dramas such as The Importance of Being Earnest (1895) and An Ideal Husband (1895) creates “manly” women and “womanly” men. The contrived spectacle of Wilde’s own deportment, dress, and mannerisms directly challenged the age’s clear division of the sexes underpinned by a deterministic worldview and sexual repression. Even though Wilde unquestionably satirized the sexual double-standards of the English bourgeoisie and aristocracy, he necessarily depended upon them and basked in the support of the very classes whose social attitudes he had no qualms in
ridiculing, making him both brave and foolish in his provocation of a homophobic public (Bristow 11).

Moreover, Wilde’s effeminacy was in stark opposition to the British notions of empire and the masculinist nationalist’s notion of normative manhood (Bristow 9-10). Some of the condemnation leveled at Wilde curiously binds his “degenerate” effeminacy with a racial discourse of the inferiority of the Irish. Essayist and decadent poet Arthur Symons writes of Wilde:

Wilde’s vices were not simply intellectual perversions, they were physiological. This miserable man had always been under the influence of one of those sexual inversions which turned him into a kind of Hermaphroditus….Lautrec…shows Wilde, swollen, puffed out, bloated and sinister. The form of the mouth which he gave him is more than any thing exceptional; no such mouth ought ever to have existed: it is a woman’s that no man who is normal could ever have had. The face is bestial. (qtd. in Bristow 17)

Political cartoons of the day by men like Sir John Tenniel frequently depicted the Irish as apes or gorillas in publications varying from *Punch* magazine, to *Harper’s Bazaar* and *The Washington Post*. Wilde, himself, was simianized and effeminized simultaneously within their pages, coupling together two categories of Otherness vis-à-vis the British Empire (“Mr. Wilde of Borneo.” Cartoon. *The Washington Post* 22 January 1882; “The Aesthetic Monkey.” Cartoon. *Harper’s Weekly* 28 January 1882 both reproduced in Jerusha McCormack; Kiberd *Inventing*, 35). Celtic peoples were persistently associated with African inhabitants, not only in terms of tropes, but as biological fact, and both
groups were assigned to the bottom rungs on the ladder of racial superiority. At the peak of Celtophobia in the late Victorian period, the Irish were eventually consigned to being a species of ape (Cheng 26). Arthur Symons's hatred of Wilde and the cartoons depicting the man as a primate demonstrates how Wilde was the embodiment of many Victorian fears and prejudices in relation to a rage for respectability. Despite Wilde's own aversion to the self-serving mythology of martyrdom, ironically, "Wilde became 'a dishonored exile'," writes Richard Ellmann, "the type of the 'betrayed artist,' in fact a, [sic] a Christlike figure" (Joyce 275). The theme of the martyred artist betrayed and persecuted by his or her own community would become commonplace in Irish literary production as Joyce's dissemination of this trope, inspired by both his and Wilde's experience, had a far-reaching impact on writers worldwide.

Wilde's texts and his life story undermine any binary logic of identity as he continuously crosses boundaries and categories: a pseudo-aristocrat of middle-class Anglo-Irish Protestant origins, a superlative conversationalist, a deathbed convert to Catholicism, a husband, a devoted father, a perjurer, a lover of both aristocrats and working-class rent boys, an Irish nationalist, a femme, a socialist, a fly on the wall, a father of gay literature, and so on. Jerusha McCormack comments on the meaning of Wilde's life that "to be Irish is to have multiple, and divided, loyalties: to be both colonizer and colonized, native and official, within the Pale and beyond it: to inhabit a space where contraries meet and are transvalued into something else, a something which by definition escapes definition" ("Introduction" 3). Wilde's sheer complexity and proliferation of personalities evinces not only the instability of identity categories, but also highlights the torturous tightrope act Wilde performed as he struggled to navigate
rival and paradoxical discourses of identity at the *fin de siècle*.

For Wilde, the famous green carnations that he and other homosexual men in-the-know sported to identify one another symbolically unite the colour of Catholic nationalist Ireland, oppressed by the British, with an identical colour signifying, at the time and within a particular milieu, a homosexuality oppressed by everyone and everything else. Wilde’s writings as well as his triumphs and tragedy cast lengthy shadows over Irish culture and literature as he functions as a martyred artist and an “enemy within” who persists in haunting Dublin into the twentieth-first century.
We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them.


But Pearse's work is at times far more openly homoerotic than other works of the same time. His heroes are almost always young boys, occasionally young girls; he usually portrays adults as enervated failures confronted with virtuous and heroic youths. Thus his constant dwelling on the subject of boys in his work suggests that, despite the successful repression of his sexual feelings, he could not hide the fact that his desires were with boys.


MACDARA: ...One man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world. I will take no pike, I will go into the battle with my bare hands. I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on the tree!

He moves through them, pulling off his clothes as he goes. As he reaches the threshold a great shout goes up from the people.

--Patrick Pearse, The Singer (1915), The Literary Writings of Patrick Pearse, 125.

...in general, people do not have a difficulty with the knowledge that Pearse was a homosexual man who sublimated his erotic desire for the male body into his work, his writing and his politics. The question that dare not speak its name is whether or not Pearse was a paedophile. However, to be a homosexual man is not the same as being a paedophile. For older generations who grew up respecting the venerated status of Pearse within the Irish state the very conjunction of the words Pearse and paedophile may seem treasonable, yet today it is the unarticulated subject which continues to circle around any debate about Pearse's life.


On Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, nationalist revolutionaries seized the General Post Office and other strategic buildings in the Irish capitol. Patrick Pearse, a poet and schoolmaster, lead the insurgents and proclaimed the Poblact na hÉireann, summoning the Irish people to the tricolour flag of the new sovereign Republic of Ireland (Travers 104). The Easter Rising lasted for six days before Pearse and the other members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood surrendered to the British on April 29. Over the ensuing year and a half after the rebellion, changing political attitudes transformed Ireland as the
country promptly venerated the men of the Easter Rising as nationalist martyrs following their secret court-martials and hasty executions by firing squad, entrenching them as the latest generation of Irish freedom fighters within the historic pantheon. Pearse was the principal ideological architect of the Rising who had renewed the link between a mythology of blood sacrifice and apocalyptic national salvation. Today, Patrick Pearse remains the symbolic father figure of the modern nation.

As a Messianic Republican martyr, Pearse became venerated as an Irish saint, and his political and literary writings were infused into Irish society through both official educational policy and the nationalist milieu following formal independence in 1922. Irish nationalists quickly and unreservedly adopted the myth of sacred martyrdom, an extant ideal within the culture but exacerbated and brought to the forefront of nationalist orthodoxy by the events of 1916. Following Pearse’s death, street posters in Dublin represented him “reclining pieta-like on the bosom of a seraphic celestial woman brandishing a tricolour” (Kearney, “Myth” 75). Along with the crucifix, portraits of Pearse and other Easter heroes adorned Irish classrooms and homes throughout the country and within nationalist communities in the North (Walshe, “Oscar’s” 149-50). Pearse’s politics of a cult of redemption developed into a posthumous cult of personality persisting for decades up until 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, when revisionist historians and the media began to re-examine Pearse’s legacy and to debunk the mythology that had accrued around the man. Was he a visionary hero of great prescience, or was he a religiously-crazed warmonger? The hagiography of Pearse championed a sacrificial purgation in order to oust the British and to sanctify the nation,
viewing redemption through violence as not only acceptable but as a positive duty. The romantic nationalist ideology of sacrificial martyrdom appealed to a Christian symbology to account for the failed rising of 1916; however, with the fulfillment of the Irish revolution five years later, nationalists then could triumphantly appropriate the concept of resurrection to suit their ends.

In 1908, prior to the tumultuous events of Easter Week, Pearse founded St. Enda’s College in Dublin for the purpose of furthering bilingual and nationalist education for boys, and in 1910 established St. Ita’s for girls, which he played a minor part in managing (Quinn, “Fostering” 72). As an educational reformer and the headmaster at St. Enda’s, Pearse labeled the current British system of education as a “Murder Machine” in a 1912 essay of the same name; instead, he advocated an early version of what is now commonly referred to as a child-centred approach (Political Writings 21-2, 49). According to Elaine Sisson, in her recent groundbreaking monograph Pearse’s Patriots: St. Enda’s and the Cult of Boyhood (2004), just as Pearse departed from the pedagogical orthodoxy of the time, he also wished to resist the imperial discourses of feminization that Irish-Ireland advocates like D. P. Moran railed against. To accomplish this, Pearse desired to establish a model of Irish masculinity that was “both pagan and Christian, warrior and scholar” for Irish boys to imitate (Sisson 14). Pearse’s “cult of boyhood” intersected with the cultural nationalist project by not only training boys in Gaelic language, literature, and drama as

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24 Irish historian J. J. Lee critiques Pearse’s wholehearted espousal of bloodshed and the glorification of war. Lee catalogues Pearse’s abhorrence to violence: he opposed capital punishment; in 1916, he refused to distribute and to use explosive bullets that were available to his men; he refused to execute looters during the Rising; and he surrendered to the British, in his own words, “to prevent the slaughter of unarmed people and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers” (Pearse, Letters 375; Lee 133-4). Lee posits that the verdicts passed on Pearse are based primarily on the violent nationalist rhetoric of some of his rather belligerent passages in his writings, yet Pearse’s actions reveal a more cautious and sensible man.

25 Out of the Easter martyrs shot by the British, five of them taught at St. Enda’s College, and over thirty boys from the school both past and present participated in the rebellion (Sisson 4).
well as in ancient Irish sports such as hurling and Gaelic football, but also by offering instruction in military drilling, scouting, marching, and the wearing of uniforms. The ultimate goal was the creation of a class of young warrior scholars—the macaomh—defenders of Celtic Christian purity and truth who would lead the nation (Sisson 63).

The boys of St. Enda's earned fame by performing seven Irish language plays—penned by Pearse—at the Abbey Theatre as well as six outdoor pageants of Irish history within the first four years of the school's opening. Dublin's cultural elite, including Yeats, Martyn, Hyde, and O'Grady among others, were generous with their praise of Pearse's productions (Sisson 8; Ó Buachalla, "The Literary Works" 16). After the Rising however, some condemned Pearse for training revolutionaries at the school (Edwards 204). At St. Enda's, Pearse's plays and addresses constantly fed the boys revolutionary ideals, and military arts, taught by Con Colbert, further linked Irish pride to anti-imperial sentiment. A branch of the Na Fianna Éireann, an organization not unlike the Boy Scouts in appearance but with an ideological agenda of Irish independence, was formed at St. Enda's in 1910, and Colbert was a key force in recruiting older boys into the I.R.B. (Sisson 123, 126). Pearse addressed the Na Fianna Éireann in a 1914 article entitled "To The Boys of Ireland", emphasizing that the rationale of the organization was to "train the boys of Ireland to fight Ireland's battle when they are men" (Political Writings 112). Pearse challenged his young audience to assist in building "a brotherhood of young Irishmen strong of limb, true and pure in tongue and heart...and ready to spend themselves in the service of their country" (Political Writings 116). Under Pearse's supervision, St. Enda's groomed future Irish nationalists in a homosocial environment that stressed honesty, faith, physical fitness, and a revitalized version of respectable Irish
manhood.

Pearse’s personal life and sexuality remain a flashpoint as his physical attraction to boys, as inscribed in his stories and poetry, has generated rancorous controversy in Ireland in the past few years. One manifestation of Pearse’s sexual/gender “irregularity” in his poetry is his adoption of a woman’s voice, who praises her beloved man or male child as in “I am Ireland,” “The Mother,” “A Mother Speaks,” “Lullaby of a Woman of the Mountain,” and “A Woman of the Mountain Keens her Son” (Pearse, Literary 27-35). In the mournful “A Woman of the Mountain Keens her Son”, for example, the poet cries, “And O gentle little son, what tortures me is/ That your fair body should be making clay!” (Pearse, Literary 31) and, in a lighter vein, in “Lullaby of a Woman of the Mountain,” the mother focuses on the physicality of her small child’s anatomy: “Little gold head”, “Little soft mouth”, “Little round cheek” (Pearse, Literary 30). These rather innocent seeming phrases, however, reoccur throughout Pearse’s creative work in surprising contexts. The poetic strategy of employing a woman’s persona is far from unique to Pearse as it is found in Gaelic verse and in the poetry of the Irish Revival including Yeats; however, this device permits the male poet to express passion for a man or boy without opening himself up, on the surface, to the charge of sexual “peculiarity”. This is not, by any means, the only possible reading of this technique, but it is appropriate here given Pearse’s blending of the homoerotic with Christian symbolism elsewhere.

Furthermore, Seán Farrell Moran and Elaine Sisson cite intriguing evidence of Pearse’s early transvestism as both he and his brother, William, wandered around the streets of Dublin’s notorious red light districts dressed as poor women. Sometimes Pearse dressed in his mother’s nightdress and pretended to say Mass. According to
Pearse’s sister Mary Brigid, these cross-dressing masquerades lasted until Pearse was in his late teens (Moran 48-9; Sisson 151, 211n.32). Pearse’s adoption of female dress and poetic personas in turn of the century Ireland, if widely known, would have raised concerns among his contemporaries.

Given the relative obscurity and lack of familiarity with Pearse’s poetry outside of Ireland, I have reproduced three other of his lyric poems in their entirety below, where he does not resort to utilizing a woman’s voice but does clearly illustrate the conflicted homoeroticism and abnegation of the speaker:

1) Little Lad of the Tricks

Little lad of the tricks,
Full well I know
That you have been in mischief:
Confess your fault truly.

I forgive you, child
Of the soft red mouth:
I will not condemn anyone
For a sin not understood.

Raise your comely head
Till I kiss your mouth:
If either of us is the better of that
I am the better of it.

There is a fragrance in your kiss
That I have not found yet
In the kisses of women
Or in the honey of their bodies.

Lad of the grey eyes,
That flush in thy cheek
Would be white with dread of me
Could you read my secrets.

He who has my secrets
Is not fit to touch you:
Is not that a pitiful thing,
Little lad of the tricks? (Pearse, Literary 32-3)

2) To A Beloved Child

Laughing mouth, what tortures me is
That thou shalt be weeping;
Lovely face, it is my pity
That thy brightness shall grow grey.

Noble head, thou art proud,
But thou shalt bow with sorrow;
And it is a pitiful thing I forbode for thee
Whenever I kiss thee. (Pearse, Literary 34)

3) Renunciation

Naked I saw thee,
O beauty of beauty,
And I blinded my eyes
For fear I should fall.

I hear thy music,
O melody of melody,
And I closed my ears
For fear I should falter.

I tasted thy mouth,
O sweetness of sweetness,
And I hardened my heart
For fear of my slaying.

I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart
And I smothered my desire.

I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped,
And to this road before me
I turned my face.

I have turned my face
To this road before me,
To the deed that I see
And the death I shall die. (Pearse, Literary 36)

This representative sample from Pearse’s poetry illustrates the homoerotic impulse, the youth of the object of desire, and the emotional torment and recurring melancholy of the speaker common to much of his literary writing.

Eibhear Walshe argues that Pearse was not “blind to the instincts reflected in his poetry” (“Introduction” 5), particularly the unsettling “Little Lad of the Tricks”, first published in Irish as “A Mhic Bhig na gCleas” in 1909 without comment. But after Pearse translated it into English in 1914, “Little Lad” caused great consternation amongst Pearse’s friends, especially fellow writers and I.R.B. men, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, who were scandalized by the poem’s revelation of paedophilic desire and who worried about the impact upon Pearse’s reputation: “a decadent poem unsuitable for the unmarried head of a boys’ school” (Böss 285). Since that time, many attempts have been made to explain away and to contain the sexually self-conscious nature of this lyric (Walshe, “Introduction” 4; Edwards 127). In the poem “Renunciation,” the speaker, more remarkably, asserts the necessity of sexual sublimation in the service of a more pressing nationalist sacrificial martyrdom as the poet “reaffirms the sexual tension at the core of the nationalist commitment to Ireland” (Moran 154).

In Pearse’s dramas, Irish patriotism intermixes with nostalgic boyhood in equal measure as boy actors predominantly performed the roles in these plays at St. Enda’s or at the Abbey Theatre. Pearse’s The Master, written and produced for the Irish Theatre in 1915, dramatizes the conflict between Christian religion and Celtic druidism as typified by the debate between the schoolmaster, Ciarán, and his erstwhile boyhood friend, Daire, the pagan king. The apple of Ciarán’s eye, in any event, is his student Iollann as
 acknowledged in the following conversation amongst the other pupils:

BREASAL: He is fond of little Iollann.

MAINE: Aye; when Iollann is late, or when he is inattentive, the Master
pretends not to notice it.

BREASAL: Well, Iollann is only a little lad.

MAINE: He is more like a little maid, with his fair cheek that reddens
when the Master speaks to him.

ART: Faith, you wouldn’t call him a little maid when you’d see him
strip to swim a river.

RONAN: Or when you’d see him spring up to meet the ball in a hurley
match.

MAINE: He has, certainly, many accomplishments.

BREASAL: He has a high, manly heart.

MAINE: He has a beautiful white body, and, therefore, you all love
him; aye, the Master and all. We have no woman here and so we make
love to our little Iollann.

RONAN (laughing): Why, I thrashed him ere-yesterday for putting
magories down my neck!

MAINE: Men sometimes thrash their women, Ronan. It is one of the
ways of loving. (Pearse, “The Master”, Literary 82)

This bizarre exchange underscores Pearse’s fixation on the beauty of young male bodies
and the interplay of concepts of manhood and effeminization in much of his drama. By
way of explanation, Elaine Sisson comments that Irish nationalism “made available a
discourse of male heroism and sporting camaraderie in which it was possible for men to praise other men’s bodies, to admire their prowess and skill and to express love for them as comrades and friends” (137). This homosocial camaraderie, subtended by homoerōs within a nationalist culture, is not unique to Pearse however.

Pearse’s epigraph, cited above, from the ending of his best known play, The Singer, reveals his jingoistic hero, MacDara, confronting the English and intending to sacrifice himself, in full imitation of Christ, for the collective salvation of his people and their mutual redemption. Pearse intermingles homoeroticism and Christian martyrdom as MacDara’s final sublime act—the tearing off of his own clothes—involves Christ’s public nudity. As Pearse places great weight upon Christ’s nakedness on Golgotha, this iconographic image should be considered more closely:

...[T]he main impact of Christianity on men’s desire for the male body—and the main stimulus it offers to that desire—is prohibitive....And presiding over all are the images of Jesus. These have, indeed, a unique position in modern culture as images of the unclothed or unclothable male body, often in extremis and/or in ecstasy, prescriptively meant to be gazed at and adored. The scandal of such a figure within a homophobic economy of the male gaze doesn’t seem to abate: efforts to disembody this body, for instance by attenuating, Europeanizing, or feminizing it, only entangle it the more compromisingly among various modern figurations of the homosexual. (Sedgwick, Closet 140)

As Sedgwick argues, the identification with Christ is not without homoerotic undertones, particularly as an object of worship. A tension between sexual passion for the same
gender and religious purity exists within Christian cultures, including Ireland’s. I term this tension—this classic double-bind—*hieratic homoeroticism*. A sublimated and displaced yearning for the flesh from afar and a disavowing self-hatred that demands celibacy characterizes this paradoxical set of opposing longings. “Lured and stopped by the same desire,” as Anthony MacMurrough puts it in Jamie O’Neill’s *At Swim, Two Boys* (260).

The dilemma for Pearse, then, is this imbrication of patriotism and *homoeros*, especially the sacrifice of homosexual desire for the principle of a fraternal nationalism. For Pearse, Ireland required the banishment of the English element in order to overcome emasculation and to restore authenticity to the nationalist community. “Pearse’s nationalism got its peculiar emotional and religious colouring because he unconsciously associated his own unresolved personal traumas with what he regarded as the problems of the Irish nation,” writes Michael Böss (274); yet, Böss’s analysis, although acknowledging Pearse’s internal demons—here construed as the logical endgame of a “sacrificial ritual performed by a man who was seeking deliverance from the “foreignness” within himself” (274)—exhibits its own heterosexual anxiety in refusing to call a spade a spade.

Other historians and biographers of Pearse similarly have chosen either to remain mute and to avoid the topic of Pearse’s sexuality entirely or to maintain his sexual innocence. Given the centrality of the national mythology surrounding Pearse, it is not surprising that the Irish have not wanted to examine too closely this sexually-conflicted Irish hero. Ruth Dudley Edwards’s classic biography, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (1977), attempts to mitigate any queer appraisal of the man; however, the more
Edwards tries to extricate her subject from claims of homosexuality, the more Pearse becomes entangled. Edwards defends Patrick’s sexual innocence thus:

Pearse found boys physically attractive: this emerges from many similar passages in prose and verse. As the tone of his later writings show, this taste becomes more pronounced as he grew older, while remaining wholly innocent of lasciviousness. He never had an inkling that there was anything sexual behind it, and indeed no man of his reticence and obsessional purity of thought and deed could have written as he did otherwise. In the social sphere in which Pearse moved, relations between men and women could be viewed in a sexual light; homosexuality was so aberrant as to be almost beyond comprehension.... (52-53)

Edwards’s consistent and, at times, credulous explaining away of the sizeable evidence continually begs the question throughout her otherwise excellent biography.26

Elaine Sisson’s recent study offers the most persuasive case of Pearse having sublimated his homosexual desires for young boys and adolescents, yet she rightly resists affixing a sexually-determinate label on the man. Sisson fails to account, however, for the impact of the closet and its relation to Pearse’s sacral nationalism and Messianic desires, his own tortured literary texts, and, more broadly, the homoeros at the heart of a homosocial Irish Catholic culture. In a containing maneuver, Sisson furthermore minimizes the magnitude of Pearse’s sexual identity by stating, “it is questionable why

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26 Edwards further exhibits her defensive anxiety when describing some of Pearse’s leading women colleagues in the Gaelic League as “either mannish or odd...unfeminine...in dress and manner” (55). She further recounts that “Norma Borthwick was fractious, even venomous, by nature. Mary O’Reilly, who lived with her, was unhinged, and died in a lunatic asylum” (55). Although the hoary weariness of Edwards’s lesbian stereotypes vexes, this strongly suggests the presence of queer people at the centre of Irish cultural production and in close proximity to Pearse himself.
such information is so keenly sought after” and that Pearse’s “sexual behaviour seems secondary to his larger legacy” (139), which translates as: Does it really matter? What difference does it make? Who cares? Sisson’s apparent lack of understanding of minority identity politics, especially in a country like Ireland, by basically dismissing the critical importance of the question remains problematic. Curiously, Edwards and Sisson ‘revised’ some of their assertions about Pearse’s sexual identity for a 2001 documentary for R.T.É. Irish television, entitled *Pearse—Fanatic Heart* by Stephen Carson, where both scholars were “in agreement as to Pearse’s sublimated homosexuality and the homoerotic tendencies of his work” (Sisson, 224n.65).

Seán Farrell Moran, the only other scholar to substantially tackle Pearse’s sexuality, employs a conventional Freudian lexicon for his analysis and views Pearse’s attraction to boys as a “lack of maturity, a kind of stunted sexuality” (125). Yet this approach reinscribes the standard normativizing homophobic psychoanalytic paradigms of homosexuality as a form of ‘arrested development’ and the irresolution of Oedipal relations, again fudging the distinction between paedophilia and homosexuality. Where Moran is closer to the mark metaphorically is when he draws upon Brigid Brophy’s work to analyze men’s motivation in retributive violence within Irish nationalism, noting that,

the attraction of violence lies in one’s potential homoerotic experience of penetration...Because the weapons of death happen to be those able to pierce the body, violence can fulfill the human desire for sexual penetration and union. Death can thus be eroticized into a desirable experience that has the potential to beatify the individual: it allows in death what has been denied and repressed in life—union with one’s
forbidden sexual object. The process of eroticization makes death legitimately desirable on its own. (99, 100)

The Republican tradition of atoning for guilty feelings of powerlessness for Ireland’s sorry state through self-destructive violence transforms and reifies this sacrifice into a paradigm of homosocial Irish masculinity (Moran 99, 100).

Edwards, Sisson, Böss, and Moran dismiss, equivocate, or normalize, at times, their readings of Pearse’s enigmatic sexuality, assuming that Pearse’s religiosity largely fuelled his ideology, writings, and participation in the Easter Rising. These biographers reproduce the conservative nationalist impulse of containment, on the one hand, and the conservative scholarly struggle on the other in how far revisionist projects can go in demolishing carefully managed and sanitized reputations. Of the three case studies, Pearse remains the figure most closeted, where, unlike Wilde or Casement, there has never been an official public acknowledgement of Pearse’s ambiguous sexuality. There is also considerably more at stake in controlling Pearse’s legacy because of his pre-eminent centrality to Irish nationalism as a founding father, one who re-asserts the Irish masculinity of the nation.

The biographers curtail the possibility that Pearse’s sexuality might be far more crucial to an enhanced understanding of the man, his motives, and actions than previously thought. For alternatively, obsessive forms of religiosity and Messianism may be productively read as symptomatic effects of the closet, of an internalized homophobia, of homosexual panic, or of a drive towards the “sacred” as a countervailing antidote to the “sinful”, non-normative desires of the human heart and body. Pearse’s life may be read as a case of the epistemology of the closet’s “open secret”. Kieran Rose, Eibhear
Walshe, and Vincent Quinn have already claimed and problematized Pearse as a gay Irish forefather (Rose, *Diverse* 9; Walshe, “Oscar’s” 150; Quinn, “Fostering” 76-9) based on the considerable evidence published by eminent historians and commentators that strongly indicates that the most venerated hero in the modern Irish nationalist pantheon was *quare*. And that matters a great deal.
iii) Roger David Casement (1864-1916)

In the psychology of political commemoration, the relationship between Pearse and Casement is intriguing. There was no denying official perfidy in circulating—especially in America—evidence about Casement’s sexual life....Prompted by the very elusiveness of that evidence after 1916, did something work to siphon off domestic anxiety about Pearse, anxiety which could never be (even privately) expressed? Casement was both saint and scapegoat. His utility to the cause he had served lay in sustained ambivalence.


After they hanged him, they had a doctor examine him, who said that he had ‘found unmistakable evidence of the practices to which it was alleged the prisoner in question had been addicted’. In all the images we have of Anglo-Irish relations over the centuries, perhaps this one is the saddest and the most stark: a prison doctor examining Casement’s arsehole a short time after he had been hanged, on the orders of the British Government.


...the question of whether or not Casement was a homosexual is not directly relevant to the part he took in the Irish revolution—or rather it would only be relevant if anything in his conduct had suggested that his private life was influencing his public actions. Since there appears to be no firm or clear-cut evidence that was actually the case, the question of homosexuality loses much of its historic importance, except, of course, to those who subscribe to the doctrine that every patriot must be like Caesar’s wife.


Author: If Ireland would undo the damage the British have done to Casement’s name, then let her look this Casement square in the eye, and defiantly wave his sodomies at England like a flag. They are integral to Casement’s triumph. And triumph, his was....What is his triumph? This. Through horror, sickness, danger, sodomy, farce, he hacks out a new definition of himself. For that, is he a hero: and not for Ireland only....But Casement has a relevance to all mankind. He recreates himself in terms of his own inner truth. That act, courageous, at times humiliating and absurd, transcending poetry and lust and death, make Roger Casement a hero for the world--


Roger Casement, today the most famous and recognized of the Irish martyrs of 1916, remains a contentious figure responsible for spawning a national debate over his sexual identity and patriotic credentials that has lasted for eight decades. Casement was born into an Ulster Protestant family from Co. Antrim and was orphaned at age twelve in 1877. Through extended family connections, the young Casement went to the Belgian Congo in 1884 to labour for the International Association in its mission to “civilize” the region and, subsequently, to carry out survey work for the Congo Railway Company. Four years later, he served as an agent of the British Consular Service in other African
colonies, returning to Congo in the pay of the British Foreign Office in 1900. In 1903, Casement investigated and documented the colonial rubber industry’s systemic violence, including murder, sadistic torture, and starvation against an enslaved native population. Likewise, less than a decade later, he exposed strikingly similar atrocities against the indigenous people of the Putumayo jungles of Peru for which Casement was knighted in 1911 as a celebrated humanitarian (Sawyer, 27-32; Weale 26-7, 50-2).

In spite of this achievement and renown, Casement’s contact with imperial European excesses and the exploitation of colonial subjects sparked his growing interest in Ireland’s state as he began to discern parallels between the Celtic Irish and Africans. Accordingly, under the influence of historian Alice Stopford Green and her social circle of Irish patriots, Casement became a strident critic of imperialism. Part of Casement’s disillusionment with the British state lay in the Foreign Office having dragged its feet on the Congo file, and more scandalously, the government’s awareness of what was happening in Africa for years yet failing to act upon this knowledge (Weale 52-6). After retiring from the Consular Service in 1913, Casement wholly converted to Irish Republicanism and resolved to aid the nationalist cause by embarking on missions to Germany for the purposes of securing troops, arms, and ammunition as well as recruiting an Irish brigade from prisoners captured by the Germans. Returning from his final expedition to Berlin on 21 April 1916 with a handful of weapons, Casement found himself alone, literally washed up on the shore of Banna Strand, Co. Kerry. Irish locals betrayed Casement (not to mention his Norwegian lover, Eivind Adler Christensen, who had regularly informed on him), turning him into authorities, and, unlike his fellow Easter conspirators, was sent to England where he was tried for high treason, stripped of his
knighthood, and executed on 3 August 1916.

Before his execution however, the British privately circulated, to members of the press and to powerful politicians in England, Ireland, and America, Casement’s confiscated personal diaries that revealed his sexual taste for men (Fry 282-4). This homophobic strategy of blackmail prevented any successful reprieve in sparing Casement’s life. As the legal advisor to the British Home Office wrote to the Cabinet, “it would be far wiser from every point of view to allow the law to take its course and, by judicious means, to use these diaries to prevent Casement attaining martyrdom” (Tóibín, Love 98). Naturally, Irish nationalists, most of whom were raised within a prevailing conservative Catholic ethos, have claimed that the “Black Diaries” are counterfeit, and this was yet another malevolent recurrence of the forgeries that very nearly brought down Parnell in 1889. The British government has always maintained that the five diaries and ledgers attributed to Casement are genuine, but many Irish have seen them as an element of a smear campaign designed to discredit the Irish revolution and the memory of its leaders. In 1994, the British government allowed access to all of the documents relating to the Casement diaries under the Open Government Initiative, and, subsequently, the Royal Irish Academy held a symposium in May 2000 where forensic and handwriting experts examined the materials. Audrey Giles published the results which concluded that the diaries were written by Casement, generating wide, but not universal acceptance (Cronin 41).

From a contemporary perspective, the sexual material in these texts is rather tame if not innocuous. The entry for Wednesday, 2 March 1910, for example, reads, “Breathed & quick enormous push. Loved mightily. To Hilt Deep X” (Sawyer 43), or on 29 May
1910, Casement writes of an encounter with Joseph Millar Gordon in Belfast, “First time—after so many years & so deep mutual longing. Rode gloriously—splendid steed. Huge—told of many—‘Grand’” (Sawyer 53). What mortified everyone who read these diaries, or, more accurately, accounts of these texts early on, were the laundry lists of the author’s homosexual liaisons with men in Africa and South America. As Wilde had betrayed his social class through contact with working-class youth, Casement’s crossing of cultural and class lines compounded his violation of Edwardian sexual/gender taboos. Nevertheless, in an emotionally moving note to a friend concerning the freedom of the heart, Casement discloses,

I love Naples. It has all its sins and all its beauties upon its face; it hides nothing; it is the most human town in Europe. People there do what they think and as they are in the privacy of their own room...so they are in the streets....Whether it is better to hide our hearts to muffle up our lives and to live the truer part of our lives in secret as we do today, the future only knows. (Dudgeon 594)

Casement’s dilemma serves as a pertinent description of the inner debate he faced over the unthinkable prospect of “coming out” and honouring a vital ingredient of his personal, yet politicized, identity.

In Roger Casement in Death or Haunting the Free State (2002), W. J. McCormack focuses on Casement biographer and medical doctor, W. J. Maloney, who collated and disseminated the conspiracy theory of forgery in his 1936 book The Forged Casement Diaries. Maloney, an American of Scottish origin, was a shell-shocked veteran of the Gallipoli campaign. Maloney never had access to the “Black Diaries” as
the British government brooked all requests at that time, but this did not prevent him from defending Casement by denouncing the journals as phony nonetheless (McCormack, Casement 30-1, 155-6). McCormack thoroughly critiques Maloney’s inadequate scholarship and his incoherent claims about Casement’s alleged “investigation” into the sadistic and depraved behaviour of Armando Normand, a manager for the Peruvian Amazon Rubber Company.

Based on interviews with Casement’s family, Maloney constructs a narrative where Normand was the source of the offending sexual “abominations” within the “Black Diaries” since Casement was supposedly “translating” Normand’s own sexual exploits to be used as evidence in some future prosecution. McCormack crucially observes that Normand was heterosexual and that Casement’s grasp of Spanish and Portuguese was abysmal (Casement 37-8). McCormack characterizes Maloney as a partisan zealot, revealing the ideological requisite generated by Irish nationalism in the wake of the Casement controversy to sanitize the lives of its martyrs following independence.

Significantly, Maloney’s indignant tone in The Forged Casement Diaries is compounded by the virtual absence of the words “homosexual” and “homosexuality”, for it seems impossible for Maloney to even articulate the accusation laid against his idol, bringing to mind the presiding judge’s reticence at Wilde’s trial to name that “crime” (McCormack, Casement 35). Equally fascinating is the effect that Maloney’s book had in marrying Irish public opinion to the conspiracy theory; even W. B. Yeats’s ballad, simply entitled “Roger Casement,” acknowledges Maloney’s influential position (Poems 423-4). Initially, this public relations campaign succeeded in affirming British treachery and Casement’s pristine saintliness, but this did not last. Lucy McDiarmid reminds us that
rumour functions as a “corrective to ‘official’ information in Irish public life” (129), reflecting a legacy of distrusting authority and partially justifying a willingness to embrace Maloney’s assertions without solid evidence.

Patrick McCartan, an Irish government TD, was upset when prominent men such as Trinity College science professor Joseph Warwick Bigger, landlord Sir John Randolph Leslie, and novelist Francis Hackett made it clear in a private statement that it was well-known that “Casement was a homo” (McCormack, Casement 77). McCartan, in contact with the I.R.A. and Fenians in America, wrote to I.R.B. man and close associate of Casement’s, Bulmer Hobson, in April 1937:

It seems there is but one way to stop this—it is a rotten way but still—I shall pass the word to the I.R.A. to give Bigger or any other Irishman found preaching this yarn one warning....If [Shane] Leslie or any other Irishman help [sic] to substantiate the charge against Casement Maloney will have a lot more to say. Others who will say nothing may act. Some of the men involved in shooting [Sir Henry] Wilson on his own doorstep are yet alive & they will get all the facts from me. (McCormack, Casement 79)

McCartan’s chilling threat of I.R.A. reprisals of blackmail or murder against anyone dissenting from Maloney’s theory of forgery underscores how high the stakes were in preserving Roger Casement’s presumptive heterosexuality. Furthermore, McCartan advised Hobson, “If you can, advise any Irishman who may be asked to keep off that Committee of Investigation. Let it be a purely English Committee. I hope Shaw won’t let himself be dragged in. Yeats took the wise course” (McCormack, Casement 80).
McCartan and the threat of violence stifled questions from being asked, Irish public opinion was manipulated, and the truth about Casement’s sexuality and the authenticity of the diaries was quashed. Irish nationalists like McCartan exerted pressure for years to keep the diaries suppressed so as to save Casement’s standing as an Irish martyr (Sawyer 11-2).

Despite Yeats’s public ballads about Casement functioning almost as a proxy for the Irish Free State’s position on the “Black Diaries,” Yeats’s private correspondence with lesbian friend Dorothy Wellesley reveals that the Nobel Prize-winning poet hoped that the Casement’s diaries proved to be authentic:

Public opinion is excited & there is a demand for a production of the documents & their submission to some impartial tribunal. It would be a great relief to me if they were so submitted & proved genuine. If Casement were a homo-sexual what matter! But if the British Government can with impunity forge evidence to prove him so no unpopular man with a cause will ever be safe. (Wellesley 126)

Yeats’s hypocritical ambivalence or Realpolitik shines through as a case in point of the differing masks he wore in public and in private. Additionally, in the Dail, Eamon de Valera refused to launch an impartial investigation into the diaries, but, curiously, he did not fail to name one of his sons after Casement; however, de Valera chose the Gaelic version, Ruaidhri (McDiarmid 136; Dudgeon 22). Other than the outstanding emotive issue of Casement’s physical remains then still buried at Pentonville Prison in England, the Irish government, for its part, preferred to let sleeping dogs lie, and as for the British, they had no interest in releasing some of the diaries for examination and publication until
1959, forty-three years after their discovery.

Nevertheless, many refused to either believe in the conspiracy theories or to remain silent in the face of a broad national consensus and threats of republican violence. Casement's personal life was seen as a political liability as far back as 1917 when John Dillon Nugent objected to his homosexuality (McCormack, *Casement* 6). At the time of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, Irish negotiators Eamon Duggan and Michael Collins were allowed to read the diaries, and Collins confirmed that the sexual escapades were indeed in Casement's handwriting (Tóibín, *Love* 92). Monk Gibbon, a second-cousin to Yeats, sent a letter to the *Irish Times* in 1956, following the publication of yet another Casement biography. Gibbon courageously suggested homophobia was the problem, not Casement's sexual activities. After referring to one of Roger's homoerotic poems, Gibbon writes somewhat satirically that,

> [i]t is a remarkably fine sonnet, and I suppose I am starting another argument now which can be carried on till doomsday. I can only say that in my opinion that sonnet was written by a homosexual....A man is a great patriot; at all costs it must not transpire that he was also a homosexual!

Ireland, presumably, would not still want his bones if he were? (Gibbon 9)

Dissension from nationalist orthodoxy or the expression of a progressive view on Irish sexuality arose with each new published biography and controversy. What is also clear is that many of the elite in the new Ireland personally believed that the diaries belonged to Roger Casement. By the mid-1960s, historians had been granted access to some of the "Black Diaries" for a few years, furthering the case for authenticity in the public's mind,
which also coincided, perhaps fortuitously, with the waning of the I.R.A. as a discredited force in Irish politics prior to the explosion of the “Troubles” in the North.

The relentless deluge of material about Casement, more than any other participant of 1916, comprises six plays, memoirs, poetry, songs, three monuments, two ballads, paintings, orations, jokes, legends, anecdotes, three documentaries, film-scripts, a novel, and thousands of letters-to-the-editor (McDiarmid 131). In 1965, Casement’s remains were exhumed and re-interred in Dublin—the occasion reimagined in David Rudkin’s radioplay *Cries from Casement as His Bones Are Brought to Dublin* (1974). Rudkin’s apt phrase “a public orgy of morality” (39) to describe Parnell’s fall from grace equally applies to the state and church hierarchy on hand to sanctimoniously receive Casement’s body. When Casement’s ghost realizes he is to be buried in Glasnevin Cemetery rather than his home plot in Co. Antrim, he refuses to be dead and have his true legacy whitewashed. In response, the attending Catholic Cardinal berates him, “I’m disgusted at you. Lie down. Be a good hero, shut your mouth. Be a good patriot. Lie down” (Rudkin 76). All of this cultural production, including Rudkin’s text, elicits the question: why does Roger Casement refuse to “lie down”? Why does he still haunt Ireland? Why has there been such a prurient interest in the sexual details of the diaries and their authorship? Why have so much time, energy, and resources been used to debate, refute, and impose an answer to the question?

Some answers, I argue, to Ireland’s psychological and ideological obsession with Casement lies, to a certain degree, in the homosociality and sexual ambivalence found within Irish nationalisms. There is a “perverse” pleasure, for some, to be had in denying Casement his sexuality and, thereby, disavowing that emblematic “homosexual” figure
from within. This fascination with Casement is also a testament to the psycho-sexual process functioning underneath the surface of nationalist communities that have been dominated by a repressive homosocial Catholic Church—an intense site of homoerotic desire to boot—and by nationalisms defined and shaped by a reactionary type of heteronormative masculinity. Moreover, *contra* to F. S. L. Lyons's dismissal of homosexuality's significance in his epigraph above, W. J. McCormack suggests the controversy over Casement drew attention away from a close examination of the (homo)sexuality of the other great Irish hero of 1916, Pearse, thereby providing an outlet for anxieties and phobias to vent even as many defended a man whom they knew was 'guilty' as charged.

In the figure of Roger Casement, the necessity of fighting for national liberation and the parallel need for resistance to sexual oppression is evident, particularly since British imperialism and its Irish nationalist counterparts speak in homosocially-laden discourses. The politics of sexuality generally has been underestimated by those working in Irish Studies, for the task of demythologizing Irish nationalisms involves grasping the coexistence of dissident sexual and patriotic identities. As Lucy McDiarmid argues the Casement controversies became "a site for Irish thinking about sexual behaviour, and more generally, about the taboos that Free State social legislation linked with the State's definition of itself" (143); nonetheless, Michael Cronin adds that lately Casement is being harnessed by the Irish state to "symbolically reconcile contemporary southern Ireland to its revolutionary past while also embodying the liberal conception of the society as modern, diverse and pluralist" (48). Casement's life and death clearly speaks of the value of transgressions, cosmopolitan solidarity with outcast peoples, the expansion of the
parameters of Irishness, and the limited horizons of prejudice.

Roger Casement, Patrick Pearse, and Oscar Wilde defied the social and political conventions, understandings, and dispensations of their time and were tragically punished and put to death for doing so—Wilde being served a slower demise. Wilde and Casement were publicly *outed* in their lifetimes, but Pearse officially remained off the public’s radar of sexual difference. Wilde’s fate and Pearse’s *hieratic homoeroticism* however, like Edward Martyn’s, converge with the sacrificial artist/leader so prevalent in Irish literary texts. The diversity and “truth” of experience amongst these men and their differing public personas confound nationalist categories and boundaries through their negotiation of contending contradictions of identity and demands of allegiance. These case studies of three *quare* Irishmen compel us to interpret Irish history and culture afresh by revising the role played by sexual minorities in seminal national events and by acknowledging the crucial role that sexualities play in constructing a nation-state’s imagined definition of itself.
II

Edward Martyn’s Hieratic Homoeroticism

...it is none the less true that Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life.


No other Irishman, in the various movements which together may be generally described as the ‘Irish Revival’—between the eighteen-nineties and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921—occupies the same prominent place as Edward Martyn as a connecting link between so many intellectual activities.


What drove him to those long prayers, those long meditations, that stern Church music? What secret torture?


Did you hear Miss Mitchell’s joke about Moore and Martyn? That Moore is Martyn’s wild oats?


An incongruent mystery exists between Denis Gwynn’s assertion of Edward Joseph Martyn’s position as a founding member of Ireland’s national dramatic movement and Yeats’s and Joyce’s questioning of the playwright’s private life. The public image of Martyn’s involvement with a myriad of Ireland’s most significant cultural activities contrasts with the muted exclusion of *homoeros* in shaping the writer’s austere celibacy, suggestively inscribed not only within the literary portraits of Martyn by fellow Irish Revivalists George Augustus Moore and Yeats, but also within his own writing for the theatre. Both Martyn’s dramatic work and his life story convey an ironic, yet fitting, case in point, for *The Heather Field* (1899), as one of the premier productions of a national theatre for an Irish people, introduces ciphers of *homoeros* into the modern Irish theatre at its inception. The question is not whether one can prove the *truth* of Martyn’s sexuality—an elusive and futile venture—but rather the salutary effects of others’ perceptions of
Martyn's work. Adrian Frazier, the only critic to engage with Martyn's "queerness", states that "Moore provided a way to read Martyn's plays as involuntary coming-out stories" (27). This chapter serves two purposes: first, to flesh out the ways in which the writings of Moore and Yeats as well as that of biographers and literary critics consciously colour their representations of Martyn with suggestions of closeted homosexuality; second, to contend that this textual construction of the author enables a crucial understanding of how homoeros operates in his plays within the cultural nationalist enterprise of the Irish Literary Theatre. For Martyn's principal characters, torn by thinly concealed queer desires, suffer comparable sacrificial fates for the sake of Ireland in one formulation or another.

According to Frazier, "cultural nationalism was an offshoot of London 'Decadence' as much as of the Dublin 'Irish Party'; begotten by an inflow of Wilde upon an upwelling of John O'Leary" (9). The artistic incursion of the Irish movement was known to men like D. P. Moran, who spoke disagreeably of the "effeminate character of the new Irish literature" with its lisping and crooning poets (Frazier 9). This acknowledgment of queer elements circulating within the Literary Revival by Moran and others, may be considered an instance of what Sedgwick labels the epistemology of the closet and its complement the "privilege of unknowing". "'Closededness' itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence," writes Sedgwick (Closet 3). In other words: don't ask, don't tell; one should not know. But this privilege of unknowing frequently exposes itself when someone comes out of the closet; "it can bring about the revelation of a powerful unknowing as unknowing, not as a vacuum or as the blank it can pretend to be but as a weighty and occupied and consequential epistemological space" (Closet 77; emphasis Sedgwick's). Frequently, coming out of the closet confirms others' suspicions and intuitions which may have existed for years. "After all, the position of those who think they know something about one that one may not know oneself is an excited and empowered one" (Closet 80; emphasis Sedgwick's).
In these circumstances, the closet operates as if made of glass where individual sexuality becomes an open secret; with Martyn, one discerns the Irish Renaissance’s own instance of the epistemology of the closet. Perhaps, as his critics and the Revivalists suggest, everyone knows about Martyn’s sexual yearnings even before he does, reflecting the transparent structure of the closet and the crucial role ignorance plays in identity construction. Martyn’s intense piety can easily be read as a compensatory reaction to the horror of his own alterity and the very real fears of degeneracy, effeminacy, and sin so much embedded in the Victorian public’s mind through a combination of the spectacular falls of Parnell and Wilde in the 1890s and Roman Catholic doctrine.

Amidst the cultural veil of knowing silence however, abundant references in memoirs, biographies, collections of letters, pages of literary criticism, theatre reviews, and in Martyn’s own hand, reveal a consistent and provocative pattern of homoeros. Typically, Martyn’s dramas are marked by overwrought, suggestive dialogue between male figures, sexually ambiguous diction, and the presence of inverted love triangles, whereby the woman ceases to be the desired object vied for by male rivals but becomes the impediment between two men’s ties with one another. Homosocial/erotic desires register in the disembodied symbols of the heather field, the sea, Greek marble statues, and, even, Maeve’s ethereal (and never seen) “Prince of the hoar dew” (Martyn, Maeve 294). Specifically, in Martyn’s texts a double movement unfolds whereby characters valourize a philosophy of aesthetic idealism, specifically coded as masculine/male, in contrast to the traditional configuration of the Irish national ideal as feminine/female, while simultaneously shunning direct engagement with this idealism’s homoerotic ramifications. Restrained desire functions as a source of torment that haunts the quotidian lives of the playwright’s protagonists. This oppositional tension between passion and asceticism or, as I call it—hieratic homoeroticism, underwrites the topos of the conflicted interaction between religious belief and the demands of the flesh, epitomizing Martyn’s dialectical dance of (homo)sexuality and cultural nationalism
within Ireland’s embryonic theatre.

Born in the west of Ireland in 1859 to an aristocratic Catholic landowning family, Martyn remained an anomalous figure in his own country during the twilight years of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. In the late 1870s, Martyn attended Oxford, becoming interested in the aestheticism of Walter Pater and John Ruskin, but he did not finish his degree. Returning to his estate at Tillyra, Co. Galway in the 1880s, after living in Paris and London with his distant cousin and tutor George Moore, Martyn assumed the position of landlord, managing his estate with an unsympathetic disposition towards his Catholic tenants.\(^{27}\) Stringently adhering to the values of his social class, Martyn possessed a reputation as a severe landlord—his land agent having been the target of assassination; however, later in his life, Martyn’s politics became increasingly nationalistic, serving a term as president of Sinn Féin from 1904-1908 (Gwynn 54-5; Hall 117-20). Martyn was involved with inciting minor agitations such as protesting Edward VII’s visit in 1903 as well as backing the Gaelic League’s promotion of the Irish language (Eakin and Case xix). Along with Lady Gregory, Yeats, and, later, Moore, Martyn founded the Irish Literary Theatre\(^ {28}\) (1899-1901), contributing three plays and substantial finances to the fledgling venture.

In the movement’s initial days, a struggle for artistic direction ensued: what types...

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\(^{27}\) As Kevin Whelan’s research has shown, the survival of Catholic or pseudo-Catholic landowners challenges the common belief that almost all Irish landlords from the eighteenth-century onwards were Protestant (5-6). The year 1879 marked the beginning of the Land War (1879-1882) as Irish peasants, attempting to secure fair rents and proprietorship of the land, resorted to violence against the landed gentry particularly in western Ireland. Historians cite a host of contributing factors to the outbreak of agrarian unrest: agricultural recession, crop failures, decreasing emigration, rising expectations of tenant farmers, and the alliance between the parliamentary nationalism of Parnell and the physical force republicanism of the Clan na Gael under the banner of the New Departure. In the 1880s, Martyn had been opposed to the Land League and the Irish Parliamentary Party (Gwynn 56; Fitzpatrick 178-81; Vaughan; 208-16).

\(^{28}\) In 1899, Patrick Pearse was severely critical of Yeats, Martyn, Moore, and Gregory for establishing the Irish Literary Theatre as he wrote in a letter that the new theatre was "more dangerous, because glaringly anti-national, than Trinity College....Let us strangle it at its birth. Against Mr. Yeats personally we have nothing to object. He is a mere English poet of the third of fourth rank, and as such he is harmless. But when he attempts to run an 'Irish Literary Theatre', it is time for him to be crushed" (Ó Buachalla, Letters 9). However, Pearse later cozied up to Martyn in 1908, soliciting financial support for St. Enda’s through a series of letters (Ó Buachalla, Letters 121-4).
of plays should be produced? Which representations of Irishness would be most efficacious in developing a cultural renaissance as the country increasingly assumed a distinct national consciousness? A stalwart champion of the dramatic realism of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, Martyn opposed Yeats’s vision of producing only heroic, folk, or peasant pieces for the new theatre informed as it was by Yeats’s inveterate rejection of the emerging bourgeois Catholic culture; conversely, Yeats was hostile to Ibsen’s social politics and disliked modern drama (Nolan, Jerry 90, 92). Common ground lay in the belief that “authentic Irish experience might be cast as vision, the dream of an alternative reality,” finding expression in both Yeats’s and Martyn’s symbolist-poetic dramas (Murray 3). Politically, both nationalists and constructive unionists agreed that “an Irish national theatre was a highly desirable sign of modernization” (Pilkington 9), which addressed the need for Ireland to demonstrate the existence of a civilized public sphere associated with a respectable theatre and an opportunity to present the Irish character in a popular and favourable light (Pilkington 15-6).

In contrast to his public persona, Martyn’s personal life involved a celibacy practised with an ascetic vigour, displaying an aversion to physical comforts. The playwright’s bedroom resembled a bare white-washed cell with a narrow bed and no upholstery according to Moore (Hail 186); more significantly, however, commentators register the fact that Martyn was afflicted lifelong with some unexplained psychological anguish (Ellis-Fermor 118; Courtney 49; Gwynn 83-4). Martyn’s perplexing and enigmatic personality persuades Yeats to posit a conflict between the man’s spiritual life and his bodily desires. In his memoirs, Yeats observes that

Martyn has a good intellect, moderate and sensible, but it seems to me that this intellect has been always thwarted by its lack of interest in life, religious caution having kept him always on the brink of the world in a half-unwilling virginity of the feelings imaging the virginity of his body. He had no interest in women, and Moore would accuse him of a frustrated
passion for his own sex. 'I believe,' he said to him once, 'you think sexual intercourse between men more natural than between women.' I wonder if Moore invented the answer, 'Well, at any rate it is not so disgusting.' (Memoirs 118-9)

Well-known as a misogynist and critic of marriage, Martyn "hat[ed] all women with an instinctive, almost perverted antipathy" as his biographer Gwynn phrases it (18), steadfastly refusing female company in spite of his mother, Annie Martyn's (née Smyth) attempts to find a wife for her son by inviting young women to the Tillyra estate. Out of Martyn's voluminous lifetime correspondence, he preserved only one woman's letters belonging to his cousin, a Benedictine nun living in Worcestershire, who wondered where he had inherited his "monastic tastes" (Gwynn 51-2).

Given Martyn's privileged position, his celibacy is not easily explained away as yet another instance of Irish Catholic familism that circumscribed the life of tenant farmers. His socio-economic status allowed Martyn the freedom to marry whichever woman he had wished, but he consciously chose not to, preferring the company of men - to what degree exactly will probably never be known. For Martyn's private unpublished papers, accumulated over thirty years and arranged prior to his death, to which he had given the prospective title "Paragraphs for the Perverse", were entrusted to the Carmelite Order in Clarendon Street and allegedly have been lost or destroyed during the Nazi

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29 The typescript version of Yeats's Dramatis Personae includes the following additional sentence in this passage on Martyn: "He once said the majority of lost souls are lost through sexuality, had his father's instincts through repression or through some accident of birth turned, as Moore thought, into an always resisted homosexuality" (Yeats, Memoirs 118-9 n.3.).

30 In her distress, Martyn's mother turned to the local priest to persuade Edward to marry and to continue the family name. Martyn responded by declaring that he would rather become a monk than marry. "And you know well," he added, "how much I would hate to be one" (Gwynn 84). During this period of maternal matchmaking, Martyn, in a possible case of sublimation, threw himself into the hiring of architects--sparing no expense--to design a spacious modern mansion adjoining Norman-built Tillyra Castle (Gwynn 49).

31 "What is sufficiently interesting and worthy of study," suggests Frazier, "is the way in which Martyn took pleasure in travelling with men, in having men of a certain kind pay long visits to Tillyra, in listening to opera with men, [and] in collaborating with men on plays about his own frustration of desire" (37n.63).
blitzkrieg of London (Courtney 167; Gwynn 30). Before this, the Order had Gwynn, to
date Martyn’s only biographer, write a biography published in 1930, “sanitized of names,
dates, and, as much as possible, facts” (Frazier 12).

Gwynn portrays Martyn’s early life as being decidedly unhappy, characterized by
psychological anxiety but also by an “intense love of boyhood” (325) illustrated in some
of Martyn’s untitled poetry:

He passes, like an apparition, white,
And stepless through the sanctuary’s space,
As if he came from statelier spheres. Such grace
Of shape and movement haunts this acolyte.
And while he wafts the thurible, its bright
Embers alight and colour his pale face
Pink, as a flaming angel’s limners trace
In minster lancet jewelled to joy our sight.

‘Child of the earth or heaven, mysterious child,
Oh would thou could’st live on undefiled!
Gross manhood with such angel genius wars.
Thou’lt change-- alas! Yet thy boy memory
Fair-haired and white, will flutter to the sky--
A beauty among the children of the stars!’

and:

‘Oft in the sad and wayward youth of man
Come moments full of pure unearthly peace,
Like frankincense in stillness sweet! Who can
Describe its short, yet exquisite release
From mental anguish luring to despair
The heart for all the troubles that attend
Toiling youth thwarted from each wished-for end,
And make it loathe this fair earth, sea and air?’

‘It is as if some all-defying charm,
Seizing possession of the human soul,
Strips it stark naked of this writhing swarm
Of cares, then calmeth anger’s fierce control,
And leaveth longing for some lonely life,
Mayhap by peak or cave or fragrant shore,
Where thunders of the sea through mountains roar,
And Nature healeth souls in spirit strife.’ (quoted in Gwynn 323, 325)
The idealization of the young male figure with its concomitant homoerotic undertones haunts the speaker of the first poem, who expresses interest in the boy’s bodily purity and laments the advent of his entry into sexual knowledge, echoing the fin de siècle Uranian school of poetry.32

Sister Marie-Thérèse Courtney designates Martyn’s chronic struggle as a conflict between what she terms his religious faith and his Hellenic aesthetic theories acquired at Oxford—a site of the “uncanny convergence of Catholic and homosexual interests late in the century” (Morgan 133). During Martyn’s time there, the presence of Walter Pater was keenly felt through his admiration for Catholic ritual and “the celebration of Greek ideals of male beauty and Greek relations between men” (Frazier 23). At Oxford, Martyn also began a close friendship with Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock, an Estonian homosexual and fellow student, which lasted until Stenbock’s death in 1895. Martyn toured Greece, collecting replicas of Greek statuary, and waxed lyrically that Greek was the most beautiful of the world’s languages (Frazier 23, 24).

In 1885 Martyn burnt his collection of poems fashioned after Greek models and written over a period of years because the writer considered them “dangerous to faith and morals” (Frazier 25). Martyn’s ensuing cancellation of newspapers and magazines that possibly contained material contrary to Catholic teachings and his application to his bishop to read works banned under the Index Expurgatorius indicated his new adherence to doctrine (Courtney 46-7). As Martyn remarks to Moore in Hail and Farewell (1911), “If it hadn’t been for the Church, I don’t know what would have happened to me” (596);

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32One year after Martyn left Oxford in 1879, a pamphlet entitled Boy Worship by Charles E. Hutchinson was published in April 1880, generating a scandal in the Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduate Journal for over three weeks before the university intervened (Ellmann, Wilde 58).
nonetheless, Frazier interprets the incineration of the poems virtually as evidence "he
tried to burn himself at the stake: the good celibate Catholic punished the bad
homosexual pagan" (25).

Five years after burning his poetry, Martyn published his only novel *Morgante*
*The Lesser: His Notorious Life and Wonderful Deeds* (1890) under the pseudonym
'Sirius'. Wayne Hall views the novel as a satirical stab aimed at Moore because
Morgante's philosophy is admired most in Paris, especially among those artists who
patronize the *Café de la Nouvelle Athènes* (116). Martyn contrives his own personal
vision of a Catholic utopia: the island-city of Agathopolis, "a country without women,"
modelled after Greek and Byzantine civilization (*Morgante* 269). Regarding the subject
of literature in Agathopolis, Martyn writes:

...our books are completely free from that abominable lewdness, which
pollutes the work of some of the greatest writers, and which smaller men
are apt to consider the essence of literary excellence. Nor are our authors,
on the other hand, affected by a false modesty which hinders their
approaching, when necessary, certain moral questions in the outside
world, through fear of endangering the purity of the young. For in
Agathopolis, as you know, there are happily no young girls to create
difficulties of this and other kinds; and the character and education of the
youths are such as to prevent their being corrupted by works which are in
no way immoral. Thus I may boast with perfect truth, that our literature is,
in the very highest sense, strong, healthy and pure. (*Morgante* 175)

The novel's narrator foregrounds the issues of sexual purity and the corruption of youth
in this all-male environment. Martyn's repeated anxiety over *abomination*, which circulates in his texts, evokes the Biblical prohibition against male-male relations in Leviticus. In Courtney's criticism of Martyn's novel, she remarks, "Edward's ideal world,—to George Moore, magnificent; to Sir William Geary, nonsense—is a suppression not a solution of problems and as such is unhealthy and unsound" (27). Not surprisingly, as a Catholic nun, Courtney repeatedly avoids directly engaging with the sexual subtexts of Martyn's words and imagery, preferring to circumvent the whole issue.

Throughout Moore's career, his various statements concerning homosexuality and his portraits of his cousin construct Martyn's sexual abstinence as an index of repression. Numerous critics link Moore's and Martyn's fictional creations to biographical and autobiographical materials, a practice common to the writers involved in the Irish Revival. The veracity of the portraits of Martyn and Moore in each other's work remains problematic, and they cannot represent the authors themselves without qualification. As Moore tell us in his ruminations on bachelorhood, "there is a tendency in us all to look askance at the man who likes to spend the evening alone with his book and his cat" (*Hail* 144), instead of pursuing the charms of women. Frazier asserts, however, that "Moore was famously indiscreet: he left behind confession after confession, in which he outed himself, then outed Martyn, and finally made intriguing insinuations about Yeats" (11). The relationship amongst Moore, Yeats, and Martyn is one of homosocial and homoerotic desire according to Frazier, where artistic rivalries and

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jealousies surface as an imitation of each other’s texts and an emulation of each writer’s “male” style; “[l]ove of the man led to imitation of the work: the imitation revealed to the beloved one’s love” (22). Martyn, for instance, collects Degas and Corot as Moore had done, and then composes plays after Moore has written for the stage; conversely, Martyn reciprocates by teaching his cousin about music and taking him to his first Wagner concert (Frazier 21).

In Moore’s satirical masterpiece *Hail and Farewell* (1911), Martyn declares, “as you well know, my interests are in public life. I have no private life,” to which Moore quips, “Oh yes, you have, Edward; I’m your private life” (336). Apparently, one of Martyn’s favourite long-standing jokes with Moore involved the repeated uttering of the French pun “*Mon ami Moore, Mon ami Moore!*” (337). The life of “dear Edward,” as Moore affectionately and condescendingly refers to Martyn throughout *Hail and Farewell*, is too ripe an opportunity for Moore not to tacitly question Martyn’s sexuality:

> The oddest of all animals is man; in him, as in all other animals, the sexual interest is the strongest; yet the desire is inveterate in him to reject it; and I am sure that Christ’s words that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage have taken a great weight off Edward’s mind, and must have inspired in him many prayers for a small stool in heaven. If by any chance he should not get one (which is, of course, unthinkable) and finds himself among the damned, his plight will be worse than ever, for I suppose he will have no opportunity for correcting his natural disinclination, and I believe no theologian has yet decided that the damned do not continue to commit the sins in hell which they were damned for
committing on earth. (160-1)
Since celibacy is not considered sinful nor a “natural disinclination,” Moore, thus, strongly insinuates that the cross Martyn must bear pertains to homosexuality. One of Moore’s early biographers, Susan L. Mitchell, is critical of what she terms Moore’s “malicious portrait” of Martyn, fashioning him into a “scapegoat for his own personal antipathies, castigating him for sins he never sinned” (94). No doubt Moore’s satirical treatment of his cousin is highly prejudiced, but Mitchell’s assurances aside, Moore introduced Martyn to his decadent circle of erotically-ambiguous artists living in London and Paris: personalities including Arthur Symons, Max Beerbohm, Villiers de l’Isle Adam, Henry James, Walter Pater, and Aubrey Beardsley.

Moore’s sketch of Annie Martyn and her relationship with her son reveals a compassionate side to the narrator in Hail and Farewell. The topic of discussion here involves the expansion of Tillyra Castle and Mrs. Martyn’s hope that, once finished, Edward will marry:

This hope often transpired in her talks about Edward, and she continued to cherish it during the building of the house, in spite of her suspicions that Edward’s celibacy was something more than the whim of a young man who thinks that a woman might rob him of his ideals. She could not admit to herself any more than you can, reader, or myself, that we come into the world made as it were to order, contrived so that we shall run down certain lines of conduct....Edward was a bachelor before he left his mother’s womb. But how was his mother to know such a thing--or sympathise with such an idea?....[B]ecause Edward never tried to hide his real self, wearing
always his aversion on his sleeve....[Mrs. Martyn] has begun to understand that there are certain natures which cannot be changed....She understands in her subconscious nature already, soon she will understand with her intellect, that he, who lies in that bed by choice, will never leave it for a bridal chamber. (*Hail* 185-6)

In this rather extraordinary passage Moore not only suggests a biological origin for sexual orientation, but also the operation of an open secret which Mrs. Martyn enters into with silence, graduated denial, and illusions about her son. Moore signifies the active participation by Mrs. Martyn and his own narration in the necessary maintenance of Martyn’s open secret. This secret, as the lives of Wilde, Pearse, and Casement clearly corroborate, remains an epistemological structure germane to the maintenance of *homoeros’s* suppression within Irish and British cultures.

Yeats further incorporates this notion of a circulating open secret when he imputes a degree of psychosexual irregularity between the two cousins in his allusion to Moore and Martyn in *The Cat and the Moon* (1924). In the notes accompanying Yeats’s revised 1926 version of the play, he explicitly states the two beggars’ discussion of the voyeuristic connection shared by the holy man and the old lecher was “meant for Edward Martyn and George Moore, both of whom were living when the play was written” (*Cat* 808):

Blind Beggar. Do you mind what the beggar told you about the holy man in the big house at Laban?^{34}

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^{34} In alternative dialogue listed in the variorum edition of the play, the Blind Beggar asks the Lame Beggar: “Did you ever know a holy man but had a wicked man for his comrade and his heart’s darling?” (*Cat* 797).
Lame Beggar. Nothing stays in my head, Blind Man.

Blind Beggar. What does he do but go knocking about the roads with an old lecher from the county of Mayo, and he a woman-hater from the day of his birth! And what do they talk of by candle-light and by daylight? The old lecher does be telling over all the sins he committed, or maybe never committed at all, and the man of Laban does be trying to head him off and quiet him down that he may quit telling them.

Lame Beggar. Maybe it is converting him he is.

Blind Beggar. If you were a blind man you wouldn’t say a foolish thing the like of that. He wouldn’t have him different, no, not if he was to get all Ireland. If he was different, what would they find to talk about, will you me that now? (Cat 797)

The beggars’ dialogue, situated within a framework of gossip, implies that the lecher and the holy man remain dependent upon each other for their own abnormal functioning and are duplicitous in constructing one another’s ineffectual camouflage of both the pious abstainer and of the Don Juanesque paramour.

Several of Moore’s characters, who bear a striking resemblance to Martyn, are either clearly homosexual or suspected of being so. Moore’s story of John Norton in _A Mere Accident_ (1887) “provides a clue to the psychological riddle of Edward” (Courtney 49). In the text, John Norton is a young aristocrat, a misogynist, an ardent Catholic, a collector of Impressionist paintings, an admirer of Pater, Wagner, and Palestrina\(^{35}\), and

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\(^{35}\) In 1900 Martyn launched a campaign in the _Leader_ to eliminate all female choir members from the Catholic churches in Dublin. Martyn considered the inclusion of women as “unecclesiastical and unaesthetic”; “only boys had that ‘short-lived,’ ‘evanescent’ beauty in their voices that gives the listener ‘cerebral fervour exalted above earth’” (qtd. in Frazier 27). Martyn received full support from Archbishop
one who is beset with psychological anxiety in connection to his sexuality. Norton’s obsessive celibacy breaks his mother’s heart as she discloses her worries to a priest: “Why does he not take up his position in the county?...Why does he not get married?...He is the last; there is no one to follow him. But he never thinks of that--he is afraid that a woman might prove a disturbing influence in his life” (Accident 36). Addressing his mother’s apprehensions and his own desire for personal physical purity, John Norton asserts

I don’t think I could live with a woman; there is something very degrading, something very gross in such relations. There is a better and purer life to lead...an inner life, coloured and permeated with feelings and tones that are, oh, how intensely our own....To keep oneself unspotted, to feel conscious of no sense of stain, to know, yes, to hear the heart repeat that this self--hands, face, mouth, skin--is free from all befouling touch, is all one’s own. (Accident 103-4)

Moral and sexual virtue manifests itself as the search for an ideal state of cleanliness, free from the contamination of bodily appetites. But John Norton’s emphasis upon his own body underscores the theoretical construction of the ideal as never sexually neutral but gendered as masculine in not only Moore’s texts but also repeatedly in Martyn’s plays.

John Norton is not an anomaly in Moore’s fiction, either, for similarly sexually enigmatic eccentrics inhabit his pages as the author returns to the question of how sexual identity moulds personality. Between 1885 and 1927 Moore sympathetically depicts at

William Walsh in this endeavour. By November 1901, Martyn had set up a £10,000 trust for a Palestrina choir in Dublin with the stipulation that “on no occasion shall females be employed” (qtd. in Frazier 27). Unhappy parishioners, in response, withhold donations from the weekly collection plate (Frazier 27; Morgan 132-3).
least ten major characters who are either celibate, homosexual, or heterosexually promiscuous; John Norton, Hugh Monfert, and Albert Nobbs remain stifled and oppressed by social mores (Grubgeld 65, 68). The figure of John Norton metamorphoses into Hugh Monfert in Moore’s 1922 collection *In Single Strictness* republished in 1927 as *Celibate Lives*. Courtney accuses Moore of decadence in his having written a story that probes the “remoter corners of pathology in stigmatis[ing] the hero with homosexuality” (61). “I know, I feel all the time, that I am different from other men,” claims Hugh Monfert (*Strictness* 113). Monfert’s fixation upon celibacy and the recurring refrain of a life doomed to isolation and loneliness parallel Martyn’s personal circumstance:

> I prayed God might put the world back and that I might live again as a knight, riding in the lists, and of all, practising chastity. Chastity has always been the centre of my thoughts....On those nights I was Sir Galahad, and Sir Galahad was I, and a something more than an earthly chastity was our quest together....Loneliness perhaps tells the story of my life better than any other word. (*Strictness* 74)

Moore’s realistic and, for his time, subversive handling of sexual repression across his œuvre, underscores another concern--power--which arguably eclipses his authentic empathy for Others: “[t]he battle between authority and desire, which is one of Moore’s master themes, is that between the false and realized self” (Foster, *Fictions* 275). The clash between Irish Catholicism and sexuality incorporated into Moore’s writing is motivated by, as one critic states, Moore’s “desire to shock, to cause an explosion. The sexual method was the surest....George Moore was an Irishman ahead of his nation in that respect,” paving the way for the treatment of sexuality in the literary achievements of
Joyce and Yeats’s later poetry (Howarth 52).

Helmut Gerber, editor of a collection of Moore’s letters George Moore in Transition (1968), notes that like Martyn, Moore fixates on the subject of celibacy.

Gerber then problematizes Moore’s own personal mythology:

His relations with women always seemed to be carried on at a distance, often by correspondence, or he chose as his objects of affection women who were for various reasons unattainable. When they became attainable or when the relationship threatened to become permanent and demanding, as perhaps was the case with Mrs. Craige, then he seemed always to find a way to bring it to an end. (111)

Provocatively, Moore offers contradictory descriptions of his own sexuality both in and out of print, circulating stories of his own impotence and rumours of his preposterous affairs with women (Grubgeld 130). “I never believed that your life is anything else but pure; it is only your mind that is indecent,” asserts Martyn (Moore, Hail 309), puncturing his cousin’s inflated reputation as a ladies’ man.

Moore’s fiction repeatedly insinuates that Martyn’s obesity, his misogyny, his

36In a hilarious exchange in Oliver St. John Gogarty’s memoir As I Was Going Down Sackville Street (1937), Yeats and Gogarty discuss Moore’s alleged love affairs. “Do you think George Moore is impotent,” asks Yeats? Gogarty responds “He had the pelvis of a woman, as artists are said to have.” Yeats prods, “Well, go on.” “Take the evidence of women,” says Gogarty, “Susan Mitchell sensed something lacking. Women are like that. She wrote ‘Some men kiss and do not tell, some kiss and tell; but George Moore told and did not kiss.’ Kiss may mean...Well she was hardly likely to say more” (Gogarty 110). Moreover, in the 1889 French edition of Confessions d’un Jeune Anglais, Moore, describing his interest in women, writes

I wanted to be with this sex, like a shadow with its object. Never previously had the soul of a man been so intermingled with that of woman; and to explain the abnormality of this sexual sympathy, I can only imagine that before my birth there had been some hesitation as to my sex. Nevertheless, I was a joyful boy, enamoured with adventure and an excellent sportsman; once I had a horse between my legs or a gun in my hands, I gave up all such morbid fantasies, all strange desires to dress up like women, to wear their little boots and dressing gowns. (qtd. in and trans. by Grubgeld 87-8)

This passage was edited from all subsequent editions and translations of Moore’s book.
denial of physical comforts, remain “traceable to a severely repressed homosexuality and an inconsistency basic to Catholicism’s rejection of the world it nevertheless seeks to govern” (Grubgeld 122). Gwynn records that in the playwright’s last will and testament, Martyn stipulated that upon his death he was to be dissected by medical authorities, and his remains were to be buried in an anonymous pauper’s grave. Gwynn interprets such an eccentric request as a “supreme gesture of indifference to the vanities of human life, the last act of relentless discipline over his body which he had rigorously controlled....Martyn had been determined that his last action, even after death, should bring his body into absolute subjection” (343). This extreme determination to control the flesh, the body, desire and self-expression is a psychological indicator of a man at war with himself.

Turning to Martyn’s dramatic work, one senses that a private conversation operates underneath the dialogue between the men on-stage: a language striving to settle some unarticulated dilemma, or a palimpsest where Martyn’s encoding of psychosexual relations remains overlaid with Irish nationalist themes and rhetoric. Martyn’s plays attempt to elucidate the life of the bachelor by rending its problematic status from any suspicion of deviance as a technique of interpreting his own experience. Granted the sexually repressive streak within Catholicism, masculinist nationalism’s own homosociality, the Revival’s fascination with hypermasculine heroes; all combined with the formidable psychological mechanisms of denial, shame, and projection, a more plausible reading of the unconventional features of Martyn’s writing necessitates an understanding informed by the dynamic operations of the closet. This idea of passion held in check accounts for the indirection, the coded subtexts, and the layers of sexual
suggestion within many scenes. Although none of Martyn’s characters is explicitly
construed as a dandy, his representation of male relationships remains reminiscent of
those in Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and *The Picture of Dorian
Gray* (1891); furthermore, Gothic elements tint Martyn’s texts including madness, remote
overpowering landscapes, mystery, obsession, the supernatural, ghosts, and hints of incest
in the unsettling homosocial triangulation amongst Kit, Miles, and Ussher, revealed in
Carden Tyrell’s melding of their identities (Martyn, *Heather* 25-6, 39, 63).37

The charged emotional dynamics between Martyn’s men predictably produce a
tragic melancholic atmosphere. The writer’s desire to depict psychological realism,
dramatizing to varying degrees the battles within the male psyche, poignantly results in
revelations of weakness, vulnerability, despair with the material world, and emotional
disturbance; in other words, the male protagonists suffer from symptoms strikingly
similar to late nineteenth-century conceptions of “feminine” hysteria. In these diagnoses,
the apparent reversal of gender inscription suggests that repressed erotic desire is an
avenue to understanding the characters’ self-destruction, melancholy, and alleged charges
of madness.

Along with Yeats’s *The Countess Cathleen*, Martyn’s *The Heather Field*
inaugurated the first season of the Irish Literary Theatre in the Antient Concert Rooms in
Dublin on 9 May 1899. Because of his technical and practical experience in the theatre,
Moore had overseen the rehearsals of both plays, changing cast members and stage
managers (*Hail* 92-6). Taking cues from Ibsen’s dramaturgy, Martyn eschews spectacle
but instead crafts scenes where the subtle problems of characters’ psychology,

37 Hereafter, all citations to *The Heather Field* will be specified by page number only.
emblematic of the contest between illusion and reality, are explored on-stage. The playwright essentially situates The Heather Field within the world of realism, the standard genre that dominates twentieth-century Irish drama, rather than modernist or more experimental modes. Generally, the realist form tends to be “ideologically restrictive” in maintaining notions of fixed identity and preventing a more far-reaching interrogation of nationality and gender although Martyn’s plays demonstrate some resistance to this tendency in the inversion of gender stereotypes (Jones 117).

As Martyn exercised relentless discipline over his own body, he rigorously controlled how he wished his plays to be performed through his writing. In the published introduction to the play, Moore claims Martyn wrote plays that are “perfectly constructed; they could be acted as they are written”; furthermore, Martyn composed “with strict regard for the stage, because it is impossible to write good plays without the actors and actresses who will never interpret them” (xxvii). Moore points out the “strange irony…that the plays which lend themselves to interpretation are the plays which are neglected on the stage and cherished in the study” (“Introduction” xxviii). Moore’s counter-intuitive comments overturn the notion that more literary closet dramas are failures on the stage in comparison to dramatic texts which lend themselves to performative interpretation.

Martyn saturates The Heather Field’s script with precise stage directions explaining how the actors are to punctuate their lines with the frequent action of ‘looking’, which is a substitution for all that is not being articulated: “with a frightened look” (19), “with a baffled look” (19), “averts his look” (20), “with dejection” (20), “with a swift shy glance” (21), “with anxious intensity” (26), “with a penetrating look” (30),
"looking at her with a sort of wonder" (31), "looks significantly" (44), "with suppressed anger" (50), "looks at her for a moment with vague alarm" (51), "a quick look at Tyrell" (54), "looks out in reverie" (56), and "with a look of humiliation and despair" (60).

What's more, Tyrell frequently stares out the glass doors at the field in the distance (27, 56). All of this "eye-play" remains indicative of the intense emotional barriers between the performers within their roles and is symptomatic of hieratic homoeros.

Martyn's friends felt The Heather Field was an original drawing-room drama, even exotic, very unlike plays then being produced in London (Setterquist 28-40; Gwynn 119, 142-4). Theatre reviews and the reaction to The Heather Field were generally laudatory. The play was well received in the nationalist Freeman's Journal, Independent, and United Irishman, and there were no objections from the audience to the drama's preoccupations with the troubles of the Ascendancy class (Pilkington 19). While watching the play, Yeats curiously claims to have thought of Martyn's personal life; "Mrs. Martyn's attempts to find a wife for her son came into my head," notes the poet (Dramatis 253). James Joyce also liked The Heather Field for its unique Ibsenesque qualities and, later in March 1919, Zurich's English Players would revive it (Critical 68, 251-2; Feeney, "Martyn" 207). Joseph Holloway, Dublin's eccentric theatre commentator, wrote in his journal an enthusiastic review of the performance:

A more absorbing play...I have not witnessed for a long time...One cannot give any idea of the amount of pathos and tenderness the dramatist has worked round the incidents leading up to the tragedy of this dreamer whose mind gives way....His love for his brother, son, and friend were beautifully indicated, and his utter hopelessness in trying to make his wife...
understand him one little bit was also admirably hit off. (8, 9)

In an unsigned review of another one of Martyn’s plays in *Sinn Féin* (3 February 1912), this pathos which Holloway refers to comes under criticism: “We tire...of Mr. Martyn’s weak men and strong women....Martyn can do large things in drama, and does not do them because he lets a little devil compounded of perversity and sentimentality run away with him” (qtd. in Feeney, *Drama* 171).

Courtney comments that Ussher’s “reprehensible” inability to dedicate himself to idealistic philosophy indicates that “something evil, therefore, must be at the heart of it, an evil of which he is aware, and this idea was not lost on spectators outside of Ireland, some of whom sensed that ‘a certain sort of unhealthy pathos pervades the whole’” (86).

The day after the premiere *The Freeman’s Journal* mentioned, “here...is a play that reveals a tragedy of social and domestic life although there is *not the remotest suggestion in it from beginning to end of the disordered eroticism* which is responsible for so many stage successes in London and Paris during recent years” (Hogan and Kilroy 46; emphasis mine). The rhetorical strategy of containment with this manoeuvre of indubitably asserting what is not suggested on-stage remains even more suspect, while ostensibly assuaging any hint of sexual “immorality”; after all, this production remains part of the launching of an *Irish* theatre for an *Irish* people.

Martyn utilizes a single setting throughout the production—Tyrell’s library/study situated in the West of Ireland in 1890. The setting generates an atmosphere of increasing confinement, metaphorically similar to that of the closet, as Tyrell’s world falls apart in the course of events, especially in Act Three where Tyrell is imprisoned inside his home because of the threat of angry evictees (56). Act One, however, opens
with a visit from bachelor and close companion, Barry Ussher, to Tyrell’s estate; ostensibly he has come to discuss Tyrell’s land reclamation project and to offer financial advice (18). On the surface this visit remains entirely comprehensible, but the bulk of the act is a prolonged discourse by the players on the subject of Tyrell’s estranged marriage and nostalgia for days as a bachelor. This extensive digression, as it were, achieves a stereotypical gender reversal where Ussher and Tyrell’s younger brother, Miles, gossip about the personal affairs of another man in contradistinction to the male world of politics, sport, and other subjects associated with public life:

USS. ...[Grace] would probably have made an excellent wife for almost any other man; but for your brother--well, it might have been better if he had never thought of marriage at all.

MIL. What? Surely he might have found some one to suit him. Why should you say such a thing?

USS. [with a frightened look] Why?

MIL. Yes, Ussher. But what is the matter with you?

USS. [quickly recovering himself] Oh, nothing, Miles, nothing. I merely meant to say that it would be very difficult for anyone to suit Tyrell. He is a person so much of himself, you know.

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38 According to Katie Trumpener in *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (1997), experiments in irrigation, bog reclamation, and cultivation techniques utilizing tenant labour were believed the best route to economic progress that would alleviate agrarian discontent and produce peaceful relations between classes. “Bog drainage synecdochically represents the project of Enlightenment land reform: the creation of arable, profitable soil out of its former uselessness, by bringing it into the light of day, out of primeval ooze that now covers it,” writes Trumpener (42). Landlords attempted to secure their hold on the land by transforming the surface of Ireland into their own image; however, for nationalists, the bog was significant as a material and discursive site (43, 46). On account of the outlines of the past embedded within the landscape that denoted historical memory—the scars of conflict and the remains of Gaelic civilization—nationalists wished the topography to remain unmolested; subsequently, agrarian resistance to reclamation schemes was common (52-3).
MIL. Ah, it is certainly a great misfortune he ever met Grace. And their estrangement is so extraordinary, for he once used to be so fond of her.

USS. Yes, they generally begin that way. I remember just before he became engaged he told me that he thought till then he should never marry, but that at last he had found real happiness. They all say that, you know. (18-9)

This odd exchange between Miles and Ussher produces various questions: Why is it that Ussher believes Tyrell should never marry anyone? Why does Miles consistently express surprise to Ussher’s statements? Are Miles’s questions most likely shared by the audience, and are they a case of clarifying an appropriate answer from Ussher that would bar any suggestion of sexual ambiguity; or, does the Socratic nature of the dialogue between the men open up the possibility for speculation about the state of Tyrell’s mind?

What is the purpose or importance of Ussher’s frightened reaction in the context of the scene and of the play which appears out of character for a man initially presented as a man of means, intellect, and action? What is not being said by way of the stage directions? What is the source of Ussher’s marked cynicism of marriage? Does an open secret operate within the play?

The scene proceeds with the revelation that ten years prior to the opening of Act One, Ussher attempted to convince his friend not to marry, suspecting that Tyrell’s feelings were not genuine nor lasting. Ussher defends his interference by claiming, “Tyrell and I have been intimate so long...I understood him better than anyone. The sudden overturning of all his ideas at the time seemed to me strange and unnatural. He was like one bewitched. A man’s whole nature somehow does not change in a moment”
(19). Ussher sets himself up as the informed insider who is privy to the innermost workings of his friend’s heart; for example, in Act III Ussher tells Tyrell that he knows the “pain of loss” (57) but also seems to express a certain amount of jealousy in criticizing Grace’s influence:

Oh, he always did so fascinate and interest me. What poetry he put into those days of my youth—the days that are dead. [pause] Then to see him suddenly changed, grown even prosy under the power of her influence—it made it impossible for me to consider this attachment of his genuine or likely to endure. (19)

Ussher proceeds to characterize Tyrell, synonymous with the heather field, as possessing a disposition “too eerie, too ethereal, too untamable for good, steady, domestic cultivation...whose latent, untamable nature was not to be subdued” (20); furthermore, the “first sign of revolt against suppression” (20) involves Tyrell’s reclamation scheme. Ussher’s diction echoes the Freudian lexicon that was emerging in the 1890s, for, in effect, Ussher theorizes sublimation, in this case—the massive undertaking of land reclamation that dominates Tyrell’s waking life.

Afterward, Tyrell and Miles discuss Ussher’s advice against marriage, the incompatibility of the couple, and Grace’s efforts to fashion Tyrell into a typical member of his social class. Tyrell’s musings veer philosophically to the subject of idealism so central to Martyn’s own intellectual and artistic interests:

TYR. Ah, Miles, I have simply found [Grace] to be absolutely different from what I had imagined her. I was very young then, very inexperienced. I longed for sympathy, and thought it was easy to find. I idealised women
in those days. I believed that they were idealists. Ah, that was my fatal error.

MIL. But surely you don’t mean to deny that some are?

TYR. I don’t believe any are, really. They may be on an average more fanciful than man, but your true idealist can only be a man. Alas! Had I known that then, my fate would have been different. I thought others were easy to find, in whom I could confide as in Ussher.

MIL. Do you consider him an idealist?

TYR. I should think so indeed—a true idealist—only he is in a way so drilled and careful, that he will never let himself go. But he is such a friend, and understands everything! Isolation only began with my marriage, which led me out into a lonely world. Oh, it was a great misfortune. And I have no one to blame but myself.

MIL. And yet--and yet were you really so much to blame? She was so beautiful.

TYR. Ah, you have said it. There you have found the cause of all my trouble. But Ussher would never have wavered.

MIL. Oh, he is a hardened philosopher whom no beauty could soften.

TYR. That is because, unlike most people, he can see the truly beautiful, and so is heedless of shams. (24-5)

Overtly gendered as masculine, Tyrell’s idealism, nonetheless, simultaneously disavows the flesh and blood of this philosophy. Tyrell briefly associates ideal beauty with Grace’s allure but almost straightaway overturns such attraction as a sham. Ussher, who Tyrell
declares can perceive the “truly beautiful”, resists such feminine distractions. The
language of classical Greek idealism provides a vehicle for the codes of hieratic
homoeroticism, emblematizing Tyrell’s inner struggles.

In the erotic love triangles that frequently occur in Martyn’s plays, women such as
Grace Tyrell, Rachel Font, and Millicent Fell are cast as interlopers in the homosocial
relationships between Irishmen. In *The Heather Field*, Grace’s entrance shatters the all-

male world and the “great peace” of her husband’s mind (28) indicated not only by the
shifts in conversation but also by the tenor of language; Grace’s appearance precipitates a
dramatic change from poetic sentimentality, evidenced by Tyrell’s plea to Miles, “You
will not leave me if—if ever I should stand helpless and alone” (26), to the pragmatic
world of Grace and her demand for domestic order. Tyrell repeatedly interpellates Miles
into the subject position of the conventional lover/spouse rather than Grace. Moore
writes that “the play resolves itself into a duel between husband and wife, and one of its
merits is that although all right and good sense are on the wife’s side, the sympathy is
always with Tyrell” (“Introduction”, xxv), in part, due to Martyn’s uneven treatment of
his male heroes and female antagonists.

In Act Two, Ussher and Tyrell’s homosocial bond comes under scrutiny by Lady
Shrule and Grace. Lady Shrule, (think: shrew/cruel), expresses contempt for both men:
“To tell you the truth [Tyrell] always seemed to me odd and ridiculous; for he never
cared for society, never went to races, dances, or tennis parties, you know, like other
people” (34). Lady Shrule wonders why the couple ever married, and how they reached
their current predicament:

LADY S. How came he to change? Some other woman, I suppose--
GRACE. No-no, there is no one else. I am sure of that. I have watched him closely now for some years.

LADY S. Nonsense, dear—just as if you could watch him. I tell you it is impossible that a man can exist without loving some woman.

GRACE. Yes—I know we women all think so. But this is quite a case in itself. He is such a queer creature. You cannot imagine how strange his ideas are. [With a certain relief and confidence] Oh, no, there is no one else; and it is very wicked of you, Lillian, to suggest such a thing. (34-5)

The dialogue again veers to the subject of Tyrell’s intimate life when Lady Shrule naturally assumes there must be another woman somewhere, thereby eliminating the possibility of both celibate bachelorhood and homosexuality. Grace remains confident, however, that adultery is not the problem with her husband, whom she labels a queer creature, for “what he loved was something mysterious—beyond me” (36). When the subject of the heather field arises, Grace, with “violent emotion,” distinguishes it as “abominable work” (36), and Lady Shrule labels the entire Tyrell family as a “queer lot” (36). Grace accuses Tyrell earlier of being a victim, in his “imaginary sufferings and aspirations,” asking “What on earth have you to suffer?” (32). Martyn’s choice of adjectives “abominable” and “queer” with their homosexual colouring, even at the turn of the century, provides a linguistic marker as a clue to the marriage’s breakdown. Grace expresses her distaste for Ussher by referring to him as part of Tyrell’s “mutual admiration society” (36), while Lady Shrule disparages Ussher’s “sad, lonely way of living” (36). Grace, aware of her competition with Ussher, states, “I avoid [Ussher] as much as possible; for he was always my enemy, and does his best to destroy whatever
influence I might have with my husband” (36). Martyn “omits too much of common life,” criticizes Una Ellis-Fermor, “the things he omit[s] [lie] at the root of common experience; the relations of everyday men to each other and everything into which women entered intimately” (120). Although Ellis-Fermor’s astute observations register the disordered social and marital relations in the play, she fails to perceive the implications of the omissions she exposes to scrutiny.

In the final act, Ussher and Tyrell discuss their feelings of sadness and loneliness, their desire for escape, and the pain of their mutually understood idealism. The knowledge of ideal beauty haunts the men due to the tremendous challenge in accessing and connecting with this phantom, this “lost paradise” (26), which appears only to be experienced temporarily from a distance:

TYR. Well then, have you ever seen on earth something beautiful beyond earth--that great beauty which appears in diverse ways? And then you have known what it is to go back to the world again?

USS. [sadly] I know, I know--the pain of loss--

TYR. Is it not misery? But you have seen great beauty, have you not? Oh, that immortal beauty--so far away--always so far away.

USS. Yes--yes, our ideal beauty that for ever haunts and eludes us through life. [with a movement of resignation] But let us not speak of it any more.

TYR. Why, Ussher?

USS. Because, as you say, it makes one so miserable in the world, and it is such a hopeless phantom after all.
USS.  *[cautiously]* Hush, Tyrell, I do not know.

TYR.  *[laughing bitterly]* There--just like you, Ussher, careful never to let yourself go.  (57)

This philosophical rambling central to the play's themes and significance resembles a worldview shared by people living in the closet: self-denial, dissembling, and chronic fear, generated by the radical division between individuals' inner cognizance of themselves and the social conventions of the outside world. Martyn's dialogue attests to both the joy and the despair of desire forbidden open acknowledgment.

Later in the scene, Grace poignantly disparages the very notion of "ideas" which have destroyed her marriage and refers to the heather field again as "abominable," condemning the very object that Tyrell "holds nearest to his heart" (63). With the reappearance of the heather, the family faces economic ruin since Tyrell's creditors are foreclosing on his vast debts, and he retreats into the refuge of apparent *madness*, believing he is living in the past, a time before his marriage to "Miss Desmond" (64). Tyrell intends not repeat the same mistake twice: "I will not ask her to be my wife....I do not care for her any more. I know now I never cared for her" (64). In the play's *deus ex machina* resolution, spurred on by Grace's accusation of ruining her family through foiling her scheme to have Tyrell committed to an insane asylum, Ussher promises her, in making amends, "you shall never, *never* bid farewell to your home" (58). Ussher sacrifices his own economic security by assuming the entirety of his beloved bankrupt friend's debt out of guilt for being a source of discord in Tyrell's and Grace's marriage (65).

In *The Heather Field*, Tyrell's unequivocal masculine idealism underpins the
play's two major topoi: aesthetics and land reclamation. Irish Revivalists and nationalists traditionally imagine the symbolic sacralized land of Ireland as a feminine body. In romantic and revolutionary Irish nationalism, there is an attempt to reclaim the material body of that land and, metaphorically, of the woman whether through the use of the gun or the pen. Seamus Deane explains that land is more than just a civic and economic unit of territory, for it also comprises the soil—a metaphysical cultural and communal reality \((\text{Strange 70})\). “The romantic-nationalist conception of the soil, its identity with the nation, its ownership by the people, its priority over all the administrative and commercial systems that transform it into land,” writes Deane, “is the more powerful because it is formulated as a reality that is beyond the embrace of any concept” \((\text{Strange 77})\).

Tyrell's failure to suitably possess or to reclaim the heath, metonymically, is a failure to reclaim a masculine body. The heather field, with its young grass of “matchless Irish green” \((27)\), functions as a type of unconscious repository of all that is most ideal, poetic, and beautiful; the land enchants Tyrell, offering him freedom and individual singularity, yet it threatens his mental health. Tyrell's “infatuation” \((44)\) with the mountain propels his desire to achieve his ultimate goal of “buying up and reclaiming or reafforesting every inch of waste land in Ireland” \((44)\), and thereby, sacrifice the well-being of his family. The many forms of development associated with modernization and economic independence, nevertheless, smack of colonization creating an ideological quandary for nationalists \((\text{Levitas 47})\). \textit{The Heather Field} remains uneasily poised between, on the one hand, the Romantic stereotype of the wild and unspoiled countryside which inspires nationalist dreams of ending British rule and, on the other hand, the
constructive unionist agenda which holds that fulfilling the need for modern industrialization and land reform will preserve the Union and secure the position of the Ascendancy in a volatile socio-political situation.

The heath serves as a displacement of Tyrell’s sublimated desires; he admits to hearing voices out in the heather field, which he claims, “keep telling me I am not what I am....They often call me back to my real life...the life before I wandered into this dream” (46). These voices of Tyrell’s unconscious mind, which return with a vengeance along with the heather when madness erupts, signify his own disavowals. Ussher had cautioned earlier that “if heather lands are brought into cultivation for domestic use, they must be watched...else their old wild nature may avenge itself” (20). This warning of nature’s vengeance upon Tyrell’s blueprint for uprooting the land represents a central irony at the heart of the play.

The text signals the return of these repressed desires through the omnipresent symbol of the budding heather field as a masculine body-as-homeland in need of reclamation. Martyn strives to generate sympathy for his landlord’s ambitious plan despite violent resistance by Tyrell’s own evicted tenants. Tyrell’s reclamation of the field through the destruction of the native heather exposes the imaginary fantasy of both romantic nationalism’s and, ironically, the Ascendancy’s assertion of its own origin or rootedness in, or justifiable claim to, the land. Ussher’s and Tyrell’s idealization of the male body traverses these other fantasized archetypes operating in the text, culminating in the sacrificial punishment of Tyrell’s madness instigated by his attraction to the beauty of the land and his obsession with reclaiming it. Martyn’s fascination with this ruinous, inviolable realm of beauty signifies his importation of a strain of Romanticism situated
within nationalism's *homoeros*.

A cursory glance at some of Martyn's other stage productions serves as additional confirmation of hieratic homoeroticism within his seemingly schizophrenic nationalist plays. *Maeve*, performed at the Gaiety Theatre in 1900 and paired with Moore's *Bending of the Bough*, is a symbolist piece about an Irish princess who is engaged to a wealthy Englishman, Hugh Fitz Walter. Maeve prefers to die by mystically uniting with the Celtic fairy world revealed to her in a dream vision by the legendary Queen Maeve; "I am haunted by a boyish face close hooded with short gold hair—and every movement of his slender faultless body goes straight to my heart," exclaims Maeve (Martyn, *Maeve* 291). This male apparition of the "Celtic dream-land of ideal beauty" is no Cathleen ni Houlihan in Martyn's imagination, for the gender of this symbolic Ireland remains male. According to the Queen, the Celtic prince will grant Maeve the rather prosaic gift of "rest" (*Maeve* 294), yet he notably never appears on-stage and technically is not a character in the play. Martyn deconstructs the ostensible heterosexual circuit of desire and substitutes a choir of page boys to serenade the audience. Reiterating the physical description of the prince, Martyn encodes the heroine in nearly identical terms as "a girl of about three and twenty with a fair complexion, gold hair, and a certain boyish beauty" (*Maeve* 271).

Maeve's mystical vision permits her to abandon her unwanted suitor--a symbolic rebuff of 'heterosexual' English desires in Ireland--and to remain in a perpetual state of virginity sequestered within an ideal realm frequently expressed by the players as one of immortal cold beauty—or, more bluntly, of death (*Maeve* 294). Maeve, one part aesthete one part nationalist, is in love with Greek sculpture, patriotic poetry, and visions of the
heroic Celtic world (Maeve 291; Nolan, Jerry 94). Martyn fashions a protagonist engaged in a celibate masculine romance where not only is she masculinized but the symbolic ideal of Ireland is as well, reflecting the playwright’s own obsessions.

In An Enchanted Sea, performed at the Antient Concert Rooms on 18-19 April 1904, the fatal and romantic (in both common senses of the term) fascination between Lord Mask--Irish peer, Oxford graduate, and bachelor—and, fifteen-year-old heir, Guy Font, tragically leads to their drowning. The critic for All-Ireland Review enjoyed the performance yet remarks: “The play does not read very well, I think; but the illusion of the stage seemed to swallow up anything that seemed strained and unnatural in a close perusal” (qtd. in Hogan 120; emphasis mine). An anonymous review appearing in the Pall Mall Gazette thought An Enchanted Sea was “a weird and gruesomely effective blending of fairies and Fenians’ which, although ‘too queer to be a tragedy’, contained a striking and memorable heroine” (Yeats, Collected 129 n.2). A review of the published edition of the play in London’s Catholic newspaper, Weekly Register, claims the work demonstrates a “morbid and misty spiritualism, with a possible residuum of a kind of knowledge expressly and repeatedly condemned by the Church. The chief work of the Irish Literary Theatre....is, in its essence, pagan” (Yeats, Collected 148 n.2). This comment may refer to the drama’s supernatural elements as well as to other ‘knowledge’ which is condemned.

The play’s villainess, Rachel Font, insistently tries to manipulate Lord Mask into marrying her daughter Agnes, for Font believes Mask needs a wife to stabilize his life. Uninterested in marriage and, instead, preferring the company of Rachel’s nephew Guy Font, Mask counters “[mockingly]. ‘Yes, I know the country people think nothing of a
man unless he gets a great fortune with his wife”” (Martyn, *Sea* 136). When Mask and Guy rendezvous at their favourite spot by the sea, the two barely conceal their mutual excitement at being together:

GUY. Oh! Mask--so soon back--it wasn’t worth your while to go home last night.

MASK. I suppose it wasn’t. But do you want me never to be at home.

GUY. I am sure all of us would like you to stay here.

MASK. [after a short pause, during which he looks with amazement at Guy]. How wonderful you are! The memories of yesterday are still haunting me. (*Sea* 155)

MASK. I always felt you had a strange power. You are bringing us round to your ways.

GUY. Not you, Mask--

MASK. Why do you say that? Am I not ready to do everything for you?

GUY. Yes--

MASK. Have I not tried to make your life happier here?

GUY. [*earnestly*. Yes--indeed you have, Mask.

MASK. Well why should I do so unless I was brought round to your ways?

GUY. In order to bring me round to your ways.

MASK. What are my ways, Guy? (*Sea* 156)

The answer to that last question never materializes in this tedious, melodramatic
dialogue. Both the electricity of the language between the men and their confessions of
secret unhappiness cement the bonds between the performers on stage. Do Mask’s ways
simply function as a metaphor for Celtic spiritual vision, or does the men’s flirtation with
each other signify sexual undercurrents?

When the topic of discussion turns predictably to visions of beauty, Mask
exclaims, “By your life of vision--it has awakened for me the genius of the Antique!”
(157), represented by “youth and form--pale marble form...like the boys in the court of
Manannan” (Sea 157). Martyn again makes worshipful reference to the stereotyped
masculine version of perfection denoted by the Greek marble kouroi, which
inspirationally promises to regenerate Ireland’s own Gaelic genius. Mask states, “I have
dreamed it all in solitary days at Eton and Oxford; and now your genius has made me see
in Ireland my dream of old Greece. How wonderful you are! You do not know how
wonderful you are!” (Sea 158). Martyn further accentuates the young men’s
commitment to cultural nationalism as Font is already bilingual, and Mask is proudly
learning the Irish language despite Rachel’s snobbish disapproval (Sea 138-9).

Mask asks his friend if he recalls when they first met, writing poetry to each other
upon the sand; “We both found our lesson book in the sea,” remembers Font (Sea 159).
Symbolically analogous to the heather field, the sea is an enchanted yet lethal space—a
realm where the men’s language reiterates a longing for intimate communion. The two
young heroes remain inseparable throughout the action of the play until Font’s
Machiavellian aunt drowns her nephew. Agnes asks Mask if he is afraid of the dead, but
he replies, “Not when we love them—...he is still with me” (Sea 194). Mask remains
inconsolable over the loss of Font—“the genius of my life is dead....He stood between me
and the shadows" (Sea 195); consequently, responding to Font’s siren call beyond the grave, Lord Mask, fighting the waves vis-à-vis Cuchulain as imagined in Yeats’s On Baile’s Strand (1903), walks into the sea near where his young companion was murdered (Sea 205). When Thomas MacDonagh proposed to Martyn a revival of An Enchanted Sea, “Edward would not hear of it and confided to him that George Moore had suggested a disgusting connection between two characters...which made Edward want to burn every copy of the play” (Feeney 159).

Yeats and Lady Gregory rejected Martyn’s play The Tale of the Town, citing its poor quality, but Moore revised Martyn’s original text and presented The Bending of the Bough, premiering during the Irish Literary Theatre’s second season in 1900. Moore’s hybrid accentuates the ambiguity in Martyn’s work and subtly broaches the spectre of homoeros. Moore allocates ten pages in Act Three to a discussion of Irish nationalist Ralf Kirwan, a man of ideas fascinated by the “mysterious sub-conscious life” (Moore, Bough 75), and his almost Mephistophelean influence upon fresh-faced, Oxford-educated alderman Jasper Dean. The play pivots on Dean’s angst-ridden choice between a life with his English fiancée Millicent Fell, which will precipitate the ending of his political aspirations, or a life under his political mentor, Kirwan. Millicent gives her betrothed an ultimatum stating, “you must choose between me and Kirwan. I will share you no more with him than with another woman. It would be worse, for he absorbs the best part of you” (Bough 84). With the rejection of his original play and Moore’s reworking of it, a disappointed Martyn left the Irish Literary Theatre to take up other pursuits. Gender and sexual dissonance, however, continued to be imprinted upon Martyn’s later writing for the theatre, much of it unpublished; for example, Romulus and Remus (1907), presented
at the Irish Theatre, satirizes Moore and Yeats as novice hairdressers, Romulus Malone and Remus Delaney respectively, and his final play *Regina Eyre* (1919), also performed at the Irish Theatre, is a gender-reversed Irish version of *Hamlet* (Feeney, “Martyn” 210).

The interaction between Martyn’s biography, representations, and dramatic invention oscillates as Patricia McFate argues:

> In Carden Tyrell and Barry Ussher we find partial portraits of George Moore and Edward Martyn....The characters are never simple imitations, of course, but rather combinations and permutations. Jasper Dean combines qualities of Yeats and Moore; Ralf Kirwan recalls both AE and Martyn. Aspects of Martyn are found in both Carden Tyrell and Barry Ussher. The companionship of Carden and Miles Tyrell is a fusion of Moore’s past relationships with his brother and his cousin. (57, 61)

If one hypothesizes Martyn was not himself queer, then it must be said that particular facets of his plays seem very *queer* indeed.

Following a secession of some of the best talent from the Abbey Theatre in 1906, Martyn served as president of the new Theatre of Ireland Company, working alongside the likes of Patrick Pearse, Tom Kettle, and Pádraic Colum. The venture eventually failed six years later on account of a lack of leadership and successful productions. Tenaciously, Martyn, in his “Plea for the Revival of the Irish Literary Theatre” published in the *Irish Review* April 1914, called for a theatrical organization that would serve an intellectual elite, who preferred a theatre of ideas, for “[t]he peasant’s primitive mind is too crude for any sort of interesting complexity” (qtd. in Levitas 215). Joined by Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett, Martyn founded the small experimental Irish
Theatre in 1914, which offered not only Martyn’s own compositions, but also plays in both “national” languages and selections of modern European masterpieces by Chekhov and Strindberg (Feeney, “Martyn” 206-7; Nolan, Jerry 98, 100). However, MacDonagh and Plunkett, both deeply committed to violent struggle, were members of the Irish Volunteers who used their theatre in Hardwicke Street for military training and strategy meetings (Nolan, Jerry 101). Fascinatingly, in 1916, rehearsals for *The Heather Field* were taking place for a performance scheduled after Easter. Following the Rising and execution of the theatre’s principal players, Martyn soldiered on alone, pleading ignorance of his colleagues’ plans, or simply, one suspects, of turning a blind eye. Publicly, Martyn remained committed to Sinn Féin’s original policy of cultural independence through peaceful means. *The Heather Field* returned to the stage November 1916 playing to small crowds; the Irish Theatre finally folded in 1920 (Nolan, Jerry 101).

Wayne Hall remarks that Martyn succeeded in “establishing a correspondence between his own life style and that of his major literary characters” (112), and Ellis-Fermor states that “Edward Martyn is a hard man to understand....[I]t is easy to draw a series of portraits, but hard, to the verge of impossibility, to see the man” (117). Part of the reason for this ambiguity lies with Yeats’s marginalization of Martyn in his dismissal of the man’s contribution to the development of not only Irish theatre but to cultural nationalism. For many years in Ireland, Martyn was the sole voice pushing for modern, cosmopolitan drama informed by an interaction with Europe (Nolan, Jerry 90, 105).

In spite of Martyn’s awkward treatment of traditional Celtic themes, his melodramatic, wooden dialogue; shoddy, static characterization; and his attempts at
introducing a drama of ideas into the numerous theatre projects that he was involved with in his lifetime, Martyn inscribes homosocial and homoerotic desires consistently across his texts. Romantic longing is displaced into philosophical discussions of beauty personified by male figures, and thereby, functioning as an open secret. Martyn’s explicit connection between beauty and male youth and its metaphorical association with Ireland via the enchanting fields or waves of the sea as enunciated by Tyrell, Mask, and Maeve highlights the demands for Irish redemption in the form of masculine love. The sacrificial end game for all of Martyn’s sensitive souls involves death through murder, suicide, or madness, all entangled with homoeros in nationalist identification; ends that for decades, as Nicholas de Jongh states, were common in homosexual representations (3). The sexualized or, for that matter, desexualized construction of Martyn in the commentary of Irish Revivalists and other critics subsequently opens a critical horizon in Martyn’s writing, disclosing a pattern of hieratic homoeroticism with its concomitant contradictions.

As Gwynn attests, Martyn achieved singularity in many of his country’s most significant cultural movements over the course of his life. Martyn’s plays remain significant to the history of the Irish dramatic movement, foremost because his work, perhaps unintentionally, ruptures nationalist myths of Irish identity on several levels. At this juncture, homoeros in Irish writing suffers from a strain of misrecognition, for Martyn’s disembodied, ‘non-representation’ of homoeros haunts the playhouse through its homosocially-coloured ellipsis, connotations, and ambiguities. Perchance one cannot help but hear the sounds of Wilde’s and Joyce’s sympathetic laughter at the quirky ironies of such a singular and contradictory Irish bachelor as Edward Martyn being
responsible for one of modern Irish culture's originating moments.
III

James Joyce’s *Quare* Compatriots in Bloom

This spirit of quarrelsome comradeship which he had observed lately in his rival had not seduced Stephen from his habits of quiet obedience. He mistrusted the turbulence and doubted the sincerity of such comradeship which seemed to him a sorry anticipation of manhood. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father’s fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school. And it was the din of all these hollowsounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades.

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"--Casement, says the citizen. He’s an Irishman.


May the fireplug of filiality reinsure your bunghole!


Few critics have engaged with *homoeros* and its entanglement with romantic Irish nationalism as they are conjoined in Joyce’s fiction. Since the publication of a special edition of the *James Joyce Quarterly* in early 1994 and Joseph Valente’s pioneering collection *Quare Joyce* (1998), the examination of same-sex desire from a range of queer perspectives has made an influential impact on Joyce studies in recent years, registering in the research of Valente, Joseph Allan Boone, Colleen Lamos, Vicki Mahaffey, Gregory Castle, Garry Leonard, David Weir, and Jennifer Levine amongst others. Before the advent of these academic compilations, hundreds of queer references, gestures, jokes,
allusions, puns, not to mention the multiple instances of “gender trouble” within Joyce’s fictional prose were either completely ignored, strategically dismissed, or deemed worthy of only superficial comment.

Joyce confronts his audience with the dilemma of construing queer signs in tandem with overarching heterosexual significations; here then lies the heart of the debate regarding the nature of sexuality in Joyce’s writing:

Joyce reveals homosexuality, in its dominant construction, to be interior to the law proscribing it, and thus reveals the heterosexual norm, understood as a univocal proposition, to be impossible to fulfil and thus perverse on its face. This move, in turn, goes a long way toward dismantling the foundation of sexual science in his time and our own, the notion of sexual identity, and clearly anticipates the counterdiscourse of queer theory. (Valente, “Joyce and sexuality” 224)

Joyce’s ambiguities and ambivalences force his queer textual elements to behave like rumours. Joyce unlocks a Pandora’s Box of sexual suspicion cast upon his fictional dramatis personae from Dubliners through to Finnegans Wake. It is not surprising that Ezra Pound famously assailed Joyce over the Wake when he pleaded, “have we had enough of the pseuderasts and the Bloomsbuggers? Enough, enough, we have had quite enough” (255). The tenacious power of rumour, a prevalent thematic in Finnegans Wake, almost always lingers and persists as witnessed when someone is publicly accused of sexual “impropriety”.

Critics face a Sisyphean task, if their agenda is to simply and unequivocally re-masculinize or re-heterosexualize many of the Dubliners in Joyce’s writings. Stuck with
the textual slipperiness and aporia of indeterminate sexual identities, it is also incumbent upon commentators to situate and to detail Joyce’s sex/gender transgressions within an Irish context and, moreover, I argue, against a background of an always already homoerotically-coloured Irish cultural nationalism. As a set of discourses, Irish nationalism’s vision of the world is indebted to a homosociality with its attending investment in the male body as the normative ideal Irish subject and its analogous anxiety over femininity and cosmopolitan discourses of sexuality that contradict respectable familial and, mainly, Catholic proscriptions of identity and desire. Reliance upon such sexual dynamics in the configuration and management of national identity is unmistakably convergent with contemporary understandings of “queerness”.

I make a case for a queer reading that focuses upon Joyce’s exposure of the interweaving of nationalisms’ repressed constitutive homoeroticism through its ideology, affective appeal, and its interpellation of an ideal/abject masculinity. A reliance upon normative gendered ideals, which themselves are constituted through a matrix of gender differences, generates an alienated nationalist subjectivity, prone to betrayal. Joyce hedges his bets to a degree by relying upon homophobic stereotypes and his own authorial self-policing indicated by his ambivalent treatment of fictional and historical figures such as Bloom, Stephen, Mulligan, Tusker Boyle, Cranly, HCE, Shem, and even Wilde.

I examine two of Joyce’s strategies of representation drawn primarily from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. Joyce acknowledges the queer elements of Irish nationalism through, first, the recurring influence of the feminization of Ireland upon depictions of gender inversion and performativity. Second, notwithstanding
Joyce’s "scrupulous meanness" (qtd. in McCarthy 2), he—often hilariously—portrays the homosocial relationships between Dublin’s men and their enmeshment within nationalist discourses. At moments of gender crisis and homosexual panic, when Irishmen’s bonds and interpersonal energies traverse the erotic realm, most of Joyce’s texts demand a sacrificial victim—even if only a comic one. Joyce restages nationalisms’ responses to this challenge emanating from the ‘queerness’ of Ireland’s cultural imaginary.

**Gender Inversion and Performativity in Joyce**

The widespread incidences of gender inversion in Joyce’s representation of Dubliners work to draw attention to the homoeros of Irish nationalism through the cultural effeminization of Ireland. Ideological stereotypes of normative Irish masculinity and its attending anxiety over effeminization repeatedly materialize in Joyce’s texts. Joseph Valente theorizes that the paradoxical cultural double-bind Irishmen find themselves in is the interpellative effect of colonial discourses:

On the one side, the British élite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for failing to meet the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being insufficiently courageous, powerful, and unyielding in their resistance to colonial rule; on the other side, the British élite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for exceeding the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, for being excessively violent, aggressive and refractory in their resistance to colonial rule. (“Double-bind” 106)

The Irish male subject was divided through identifications with and interpellations by
regulatory power in the discourses of abject femininity and so too with nationalisms’ virile masculinity. Masculine and feminine identifications, themselves, are constructed through sexual difference within Ireland’s own hetero-patriarchal cultural framework. Homosocial along with hetero- and homosexual desires emanate in a range of infidelities to family, nation, or gender that shape each relationship. Joyce’s texts betray an anxiety about the fact that men, in seeking to resemble and to affiliate with other men, also harbour a hidden desire for them. As Enda Duffy acknowledges in the Irish homosociality of the brothel scene in “Circe”, none of “the male characters is eager for sex: indeed, any heterosexual sex here would interfere with the wholly male camaraderie in which the realist trajectory is interested” (149). Irish historical and fictional betrayals are, in some measure, a result of the tensions internal to competitive homosocial relations and to murderous rivalries between men, commonly triangulated through women or a feminized Ireland.

Joyce understood the contradictory position of an Irish male identity beset upon by English stereotypes and fissured internally by self-betraying nationalist tendencies. In his critical writings, Joyce remarks that Ireland “has never been a faithful subject of England. Neither, on the other hand, has she been faithful to herself” (“The Home Rule Comet” 212); likewise, “in Ireland, just at the right moment, an informer always appears” (“Fenianism” 190). As Wilde’s and Parnell’s tragic circumstances surface throughout Joyce’s œuvre, his sense of Irish political betrayal frequently appears as a textual form of sexual or gender infidelity to hetero-masculine norms. An intimate relationship between betrayer and the betrayed exists within nationalist thematics.

The power of nationalist gendered narratives and representations to conceal their
own repressed elements, their mechanisms of constitution and quotidian operations, may be read as forms of performativity or theatrical performance as theorized by Judith Butler. Indeed, all identity is performative insofar as it depends upon a history of discursive constructions that shape the identifiable characteristics of any given and socially recognizable distinctiveness—an insight that allows one to que(e)ry the performances of the signifiers “Irishman” and “Irishwoman”. The homosocial economy is theatrical in character, and therefore, revelations of the scriptedness of gender such as those found in Joyce’s texts threaten the functioning of homosocial societies because of their requirement that the sexes be kept strictly separate, scrupulously distinct, and thereby dependent upon each other for definition. Analogously, romantic and revolutionary nationalisms also can be described as performative, for instance, when “a demographic group defines itself as a nation, not by the criteria on which that national self-definition is based, but by its willingness to perform that self-definition” (Leerssen 15; emphasis Leerssen’s).

Joyce’s rebellious cross-gendered representations which satirize nationalisms’ sanctimonious posturing support Butler’s ideas of denaturalized and constructed gender performances. The discursive impact of the feminization of Irishmen, where signs of effeminacy or androgyny are read as impugned signs of homosexuality, registers in four of Joyce’s own comic gender parodies as seen in the tale of the Irish bull, Malachi “Buck” Mulligan’s campy masculinity, Stephen Dedalus’s pose as an androgynous artist, and finally, Leopold Bloom’s gender-inverted desires and behaviour.

First, Joyce’s sardonic handling of Irish cows allegorizes gender transgression and highlights its correlation with *homoeros*. Since ancient times, cows have been symbols of
fertility linked to Celtic animal husbandry and cattle-based economies as evidenced in Ireland’s national epic the *Tain* where the narrative revolves around a cattle raid. In the maternity ward in Holles St., Dr. Dixon, Vincent (Lynch), and others discuss the Roman Catholic Church’s political involvement in Irish affairs in a parable about an Irish “bull”. The scene is set by English Pope Adrian IV’s papal *Laudabiliter* of 1155, granting Henry II the lordship of Ireland officially for the purposes of stamping out irreligion and corruption and “to extirpate certain vices which had taken root” within the decentralized Celtic church (Gifford and Seidman 424). Leaving aside the sexual connotation of “certain vices”, the Pope gives the English King an emerald ring as a sign of his newly acquired sovereignty over his western neighbour. In Joyce’s retelling of England’s earliest intervention in Irish affairs, the ‘bull’—now literally castrated—is sent to Ireland and then, once there, develops into an effeminized, dandyish creature languorously enjoying his privileges and power through allegiance to Rome and a betrayal of the people in his new homeland:

> What for that, says Mr Dixon, but before he came over farmer Nicholas that was a eunuch had him properly gelded by a college of doctors who were no better off than himself....Another then put in his word: And they dressed him, says he, in a point shift and petticoat with a tippet and girdle and ruffles on his wrists and clipped his forelock and rubbed him all over with spermacetic oil and built stables for him at every turn of the road with a gold manger in each full of the best hay in the market so that he could doss and dung to his heart’s content. (Joyce, *Ulysses* 14.589-91, 599-
This bull—in drag as it were and with an “emerald ring in his nose” (U 14.583-4)—becomes, perversely enough, a pied-piper of Irishwomen, who channel all their loyalties and affections, not to mention their sublimated sexual energies, to the cross-dressing animal, confessing their innermost secrets in order to “get a lick on the nape from his long holy tongue” rather than “lie with the finest strapping young ravisher in the four fields of all Ireland” (U 14.597-9). This leaves betrayed and, now, neutered Irish males to sexually fend for themselves metaphorically. The men in the hospital continue their ribald version of Irish history as, centuries later, lord Harry (now transformed into Henry VIII) imitates this transvestism when he “got into an old smock and skirt that had belonged to his grandmother” (U 14.632-3). In this wonderful burlesque, the drunken banter of the men lampoons the Roman papacy, the English monarchy, sycophancy, and the former/current pitiful state of Irish “manly” identity. The gender parody of the “Irish bull” serves as a potent formulation of the slippery contradictions and ambiguities framing an Irish masculinity in Ulysses.

Second, in regards to Buck Mulligan’s masculinity, we find the “Robin Williams of Ulysses” as Garry Leonard has dubbed Stephen’s fair-weather friend and roommate in his analysis of Mulligan’s unusual gender affectations (“Corpuscles” 13). Joyce presents us with an animated man who dares to copy in style and performance the disgraced persona of Oscar Wilde, but, at the same time, suggests that Mulligan perceives himself and is perceived by some others as a “gentleman’s gentleman” (U 14.495). In “Hades” however, Simon Dedalus, worried about his son, snarls that “Mulligan is a contaminated

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39 Hereafter citations from Joyce’s Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake will be indicated by the abbreviations, D, P, U, FW respectively.
bloody doubledyed ruffian by all accounts. His name stinks all over Dublin” (U 6.63-65). Mulligan, imprinted with Wilde’s Hellenism, nonetheless homophobically polices the boundary between “nature” and “perversion” within the disavowed homosocial triangulation of desire operating amongst himself, Stephen, and Haines. Wilde appears in the men’s conversation when Mulligan compares Stephen to him: “If Wilde were only alive to see you!” (U 1.143-4), intimating that Stephen belongs to the, now unfashionable, decadence movement in art (Dettmar 149). David Weir claims that sexual desire is the source of tension between Malachi and Stephen; Stephen mentally conflates his current situation of Mulligan’s having invited Haines to stay at the Martello Tower with Shakespeare’s adulterous marital difficulties, thinking, “Bring a stranger within thy tower it will go hard but thou wilt have the secondbest bed” (U 14.365-6; Weir 222). “Yes, my love?” (U 1.48) is Mulligan’s response to Stephen’s question regarding the duration of Haines’s stay with them.

Through Mulligan’s witticisms, songs, gestures, sartorial exuberance, and explicit awareness of homoeros within his own immediate environment, he offers a portrait of an ostensibly heterosexual dandy and perhaps, on the surface at least, a “new womanly man” (U 15.1798-9). The medical student’s flamboyance of personality extends to his clothes and self-conscious masquerade: “God, we’ll simply have to dress the character. I want

40 It is long established that Joyce partially based the character of Buck Mulligan on his erstwhile friend, Oliver St. John Gogarty. For details of the tense and deteriorating friendship between Gogarty and Joyce see Richard Ellmann’s biography James Joyce (1983), 171-6. As Garry Leonard mentions, it is fascinating to notice that Joyce wrote a short lyric about the homosocial triangulation and jealousy that occurred when Nora Barnacle entered his life (“Corpuscles” 15-6). Song XVII in Joyce’s Chamber Music (1907) reads: “Because your voice was at my side / I gave him pain, / Because within my hand I held / Your hand again. // There is no word nor any sign / Can make amend— / He is a stranger to me now / Who was my friend” (Chamber 21). As for Haines, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford characterizes the interloping Englishman as functioning structurally as the “treacherous ‘native informer’” from Irish melodrama, besides operating in the role of rival, “stranger in the house,” and of “Usurper” (along with Buck) in this male homosocial triad (Others 44).
puce gloves and green boots. Contradiction. Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. Mercurial Malachi” (U 1.515-8). Famously, Susan Sontag remarks that camp, as a form of “Being-as-Playing-a-Role,” is a “solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation, sponsors playfulness” (280, 290). Camp is a type of aestheticism that deals “not in terms of Beauty, but in terms of degree of artifice, of stylization” (277), and homosexuals constitute both camp’s vanguard as well as its core audience (290). Mulligan sharpens his campy wit when he prays to “Blessed Margaret Mary Anycock!” (U 9.646), remarks about Dedalus that “[h]e kills his mother but he can’t wear grey trousers” (U 1.122), and even couches his insult to Stephen in affected language: “O, it’s only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead” (U 1.198-9; emphasis Joyce’s). Additionally, Mulligan has dreamt up “The ballad of the joking Jesus” (U 1.608), which begins “I’m the queerest young fellow that ever you heard” (U 1.584), not to mention his daft play spontaneously written in the National Library entitled “Everyman His Own Wife or A Honeymoon in the Hand” (U 9.1171-3). Mulligan’s tendency to reverse assertions of the serious with the playful and vice versa remains the “essence of camp” (Leonard, “Corpuscles” 11).

Mulligan’s policing of his and Stephen’s personal boundaries is a measure of his psychological disavowal in contrast to Stephen’s degree of sexual awareness and understanding. Mulligan trains his campy homophobic shtick at Leopold Bloom, goading Stephen, “He knows you. He knows your old fellow. O, I fear me, he is Greeker than the Greeks” (U 9.614-5), and, again, when Bloom departs the Library after searching for his Keyes’s ad, “He looked upon you to lust after you. I fear thee, ancient mariner. O, Kinch, thou art in peril. Get thee a breechpad” (U 9.1210-1). Mulligan’s gender
performativity crosses boundaries of sexual identity where his “new” variety of Irishman bears more than enough of a resemblance to both Wilde and a class of stereotype as to be considered quare. Garry Leonard writes:

Or, in Joycean terms, is Stephen’s evident uneasiness around Cranly and Mulligan nothing but evidence of “latent” homosexuality, or can it be looked at from the more nuanced perspective of him constantly shoring up the fantasy of his subjectivity by trying to hide what he knows from Cranly and Mulligan, even as he tries to know what they hide?

Discovering another man’s secret(s), while keeping one’s own hidden, is a way of shoring up one’s perceived interiority as a “masculine” subject by coolly decoding everything one’s “friend” says with reference to the secret one has taken from him unawares. (“Nothing” 79)

With Mulligan, Joyce makes available to other men different kinds of ‘queer’ deportment without essentializing them and in accordance with Joyce’s own slippery taxonomic categories (Leonard, “Corpuscles” 10). In any case, Mulligan’s behaviour towards the young artist is marked by ambivalence, leaving Stephen feeling betrayed by a “Usurper” (U 1.744).

Third, in contrast to Mulligan’s theatric frivolity, Joyce’s representation of a melancholic Stephen Dedalus situates the young artist in the position of a feminized man within a masculinist culture early on in the novel fragment Stephen Hero, for the text describes Stephen as possessing “a small feminine mouth” (23) and, in A Portrait, Ellen mischievously mistakes him for a girl named Josephine much to her mirth and his disquiet (68). More damning, from a familial and masculinist nationalist standpoint,
Stephen’s father, Simon Dedalus, and his homosocial cronies in Cork mock Stephen’s perceived lack of sexual interest in women: “He’s not that way built, said Mr Dedalus. Leave him alone. He’s a levelheaded thinking boy who doesn’t bother his head about that kind of nonsense. Then he’s not his father’s son, said the little old man” (P 94). In Stephen’s first sexual experience with a prostitute, he behaves in a scripted ‘womanly’ manner: “He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly, slowly….He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind” and, in fact, “all but burst into hysterical weeping” (P 101). In Ulysses, another prostitute, Zoe, notices Stephen’s “[w]oman’s hand” (15.3678), and furthermore, Dedalus was “delighted when Esther Osvalt’s shoe” fit him in Paris (3.449).

In her study James Joyce and Nationalism (1995), Emer Nolan notes Dedalus’s failure to assume his patriarchal position of male authority. Nolan writes that “[t]he Irish preoccupation with “manliness,” in this sense, bespeaks its actual absence; and instead of inheriting patriarchal privilege, the boy is implored to re-establish it. Nevertheless, in so far as these appeals coincide with those of nationalism, they are firmly linked with the paternal line” (174). Joyce codes Stephen as feminine with its concomitant overtones of a culturally intelligible homosexuality, situating the young man in a disempowered position within the nationalist spectrum of “manhood”. However, as always with Joyce, he presents the very critique of this “manhood” as worthy of mockery and derision in the face of typecasts of the Irish.

Stephen witnesses the masquerade or performative nature of gender in those around him. During a school play at Belvedere, the “pinkdressed figure, wearing a curly golden wig and oldfashioned sunbonnet, with black penciled eyebrows and cheeks
delicately rouged and powdered” (P 74) turns out to be Little Bertie Tallon, causing
Stephen to uncomfortably walk out of the chapel. At University College, Dublin,
Stephen and Cranly keep an eye on Lynch’s bawdy performance as his “body shook all
over and, to ease his mirth, he rubbed both hands delightedly, over his groins” (P 201),
caus[ing Stephen to state that “Lynch puts out his chest...as a criticism of life,” and Lynch
to counter, “Who has anything to say about my girth?” (P 201), before vigorously
wrestling with Cranly. Stephen is aware of his own sexual ambivalence as he later recalls
Davin’s near seduction by a nationalist Cathleen ni Houlihan paragon from the west of
Ireland, but Dedalus is conscious of this nationalist trope’s sacrificial trap, thinking, “But
him no woman’s eyes had wooed” (P 238).

Joyce’s much touted definition of the modernist artist likened to God, “invisible,
refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (P 215) resonates with the
minor character, Tusker Boyle, one of the boys involved in the “smuggling” scandal, who
“some fellows called...Lady Boyle because he was always at his nails, paring them” (P
42). Tim Dean observes that

[s]ince paring his nails earns this boy a mockingly grand female title, and
moreover, Stephen intuits this femininity as somehow responsible for, or
at least connected to, the sin of smuggling, then the image of the
impersonal artist “pairing his fingernails” takes on the tint of
homosexuality as surely as the green rose—on which Stephen mediates in
the novel’s opening pages—conjures Oscar Wilde’s green carnation....
(248-9)

As a child Stephen speculates, “But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps
somewhere in the world you could” (P 12), and this motif resurfaces as “wilde erthe blothoms” in *Finnegans Wake* (69.3).

The charge of gender dissonance significantly extends to Stephen’s endorsement of the androgynous artist: “in the economy of heaven, foretold by Hamlet, there are no more marriages, glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself” (*Ulysses* 9.1051-2). However, Valente is critical of the value of Joyce’s androgyny as some panacea to gendered hierarchies, for he states that in *Ulysses* “man attains to the status of the whole, a manifold organism able to comprehend and mediate gender division; while woman is defined strictly in relation to ‘glorified man’ and reduced to a role, ‘wife,’ in his ontological economy” (*Justice* 214-5). Valente is wise to remind readers of Joyce’s policing of his own subversive political and textual manoeuvres, where the author hedges his bets by establishing a doubtful tone towards *homoeros* in the text just as he invokes it in multiple configurations.

Androgyny, effeminacy, and masturbation were widely associated with male homosexuality by the emerging discourse of psychology in Joyce’s time. David Weir further connects the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual man to one of artistic sensibility, citing Edward Carpenter’s *The Intermediate Sex* (1896) that celebrates the inherent superiority of an “intermediate sex” and an androgynous sexuality as well as Havelock Ellis’s commentary on the prevalence of homosexuality in Renaissance artists. From a nineteenth-century perspective, homosexual men were “partly female and almost completely artistic” (Weir, “Womb” 213). Stephen’s aesthetic theories in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* may be read as a sublimation of (homo)sexuality as the artist appropriates “female” identifications and reproductive capacities in order to produce poetry. This
form of patriarchal parturition makes it possible for the male artist “to conceive, gestate, and reproduce himself in the form(s) of imaginative drama” (Weir 207). Other critics note the link between androgyny/homosexuality and artistic vocation: Richard Brown likens sexual ‘anomaly’ in Joyce to “an aspect of human creativity and imagination” (85) and James F. Carens observes “the association of fin de siècle aestheticism with homosexuality” (348). More remarkably, Kevin Dettmar argues that given Stephen’s identification with poetic precursors, Shelley and Bryon in particular, “the act of announcing one’s calling as a poet amounts to both a vocational and a (homo)erotic declaration. For to be a poet, at least in the literary milieu in which Stephen so assiduously places himself, is to affiliate oneself with a community notoriously identified with male-male love and desire” (134).

Stephen’s quest to escape Ireland to become an artist and forge unhindered “the uncreated conscience of his race” (P 253), offers Ireland what, up until now, it has not had by Joyce’s understanding—an Irish artist capable of representing his fellow countrymen and women accurately and without recourse to a feminizing discourse nor a conventional English lens. “The mirror held up to Culture was going to reflect a reality no-one had presented before,” contends Seamus Deane, “Dublin would find it an unwelcome sight, but Dublin and Ireland would be liberated by it” (“Joyce the Irishman” 37). Ironically, for all of Stephen’s rejection of nationalist sentiment and posturing as well as Joyce’s own parodic satire on nationalism’s limited imaginings, both the author and his young fictive alter-ego are engaged, for better or for worse, in creating Irish texts that transcend nationalism’s parameters, yet simultaneously, ratify nationalism’s “basic impulse” of political freedom (Deane, “Joyce the Irishman” 39).
The resemblances between Joyce and his coeval Irish Revivalists, which he often underemphasized, that play such a paramount role in all their writings include the treatment of Ireland as a literary subject, comic heroic individualism, and a highly stylized textuality (Deane, *Revivals* 103). In “Aeolus”, Stephen struggles with being at the service of nationalism’s siren call as Professor MacHugh recounts John F. Taylor’s speech regarding the Gaelic language revival: “Noble words coming. Look out. Could you try your hand at it yourself?” (*U* 7.836-7). The aesthetic model\(^4\) derived from Stephen’s androgynous ideal, hypothetically, will assist him in grappling with a reconstructed or more nuanced Irish nationalism on his own terms, which, lands him in the same representational predicament that Joyce faces. In order for an alienated Stephen to succeed in his calling, he must come to recognize that he cannot simply avoid the nets of faith, language, nationality (*P* 203), and, I would add, gender and sexuality, that are already constitutive of his personal identity. In exile at home, the Pale is internalized, and Stephen remains trapped by the discourses of semicolonial\(^2\) Dublin. Stephen’s

\(^4\) For further discussion on the intersection of sexuality and Stephen’s theories of aesthetics, symbolized by the androgynous artist, see David Weir’s *James Joyce and the Art of Mediation* (1996), 115-20.

\(^2\) In the essay collection *Semicolonial Joyce* (2000), editors Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes choose the term “semicolonial” to indicate the ambivalent attitude to questions of imperialism and nationalism found in Joyce’s texts, neither a simple anticolonialism, nor a sanction of colonial methods under which Ireland often suffered. “Semicolonial” acknowledges the difficulty in applying most postcolonial theoretical frameworks to Ireland in a straightforward fashion since historical factors other than colonization have shaped the island (3-4):

While Ireland under British rule was underdeveloped and deindustrialized compared to England, twentieth-century Ireland has far more in common with Europe than Africa or Asia in terms of economic performance and living standards. And in social, cultural, and religious terms Ireland is clearly of the West rather than opposed to it...On the other hand, Protestant Ireland, helped build and maintain the British imperial system, and Catholic Ireland enthusiastically pursued the civilizing and christianizing missions that were an important part of empire. (8)

Moreover, “semicolonial” recognizes the vociferous cultural debate in Ireland and abroad about the country’s historical and (in the case of Northern Ireland) current status fought amongst prominent literary and cultural critics such as Luke Gibbons, David Lloyd, Gerry Smyth, and, to a degree, Seamus Deane, who are influenced by various strands of postcolonial theory, and esteemed revisionist-leaning historians
idealistic facade as a Teiresias-like artist inevitably carries within it a strand of homoerôs that likely will affect any future representation of Ireland’s embryonic “national conscience”.

Fourth, Joyce’s crowning achievement in gender parody is his androgynous representation of Leopold Bloom, which relies upon stereotypical feminine identifications, behaviours, and desires. Bloom is, indeed, a burlesque model of an androgyne, not only possessed of feminine intuition, interpersonal sensitivity, nurturing kindness, love of family, pacifism, and hospitality (Black 71), but also associated with a constellation of queer significations involving Bloom’s interest in anuses, sodomy, and a secret fondness for transvestism. With the Blooms, Richard Brown reminds us that Joyce “chose to depict a married couple whose sexual life sits uneasily with narrow definitions of sexual normality, and highlighted those definitions so that their narrowness might be made plain” (78). For decades, Bloom’s femininity and “perversions” posed a problem for critics who wanted to celebrate the man’s modern day quiet heroism and affirm the morality of the text (Brown, Richard 3). Recently, Wolfgang Streit in Joyce/Foucault: Sexual Confessions (2004), rather startlingly, given the focus of his research, posits that “[t]ogether with Bloom’s attempt to become Stephen’s symbolic father, the affirmation of his manhood by Molly and Gerty’s view of Bloom as a ‘manly man’ who could be ‘her dreamhusband’ (U 13.210, 430-1) ultimately take precedence over any questioning of his gender” (119). Thus, Streit straightens out the profusion of androgynous traits in Joyce’s
construction of Bloom.

In “Ithaca”, Bloom, akin to Stephen, is described as having a “firm full masculine feminine passive active hand” (U 17.289-90), his birth certificate reads “Leopold Paula Bloom” (U 17.1855), and as a young man, Bloom played the role of a “female impersonator in the High School play Vice Versa” (U 15.3010-11). In “Circe,” Dr. Dixon judges Bloom’s self-abnegation and masochistic relationship to normative Irish masculinity as the reason “[h]e wears a hairshirt of pure Irish manufacture” (U 15.1805-6). Dixon carries on by announcing that Bloom is pregnant and about to give birth to a baby (U 15 1810), whereby the ad canvasser bears a set of handsome, all-male octuplets (U 15.1821-2, 1823), reinforcing the patriarchal fantasy of the transmittal of power and status from fathers to sons and circumventing women completely. Molly admits that Bloom’s femininity was a major reason for her own attraction; “yes that’s why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is” (U 18.1578-9).

*Ulysses* offers ample evidence of Bloom witnessing the masquerade or performativity of masculinity and femininity in those around him and being conscious and complicit in his own eager and, paradoxically, empowering role as cuckolded victim. In the brothel, Bello accuses the reluctant hero of urinating like a woman: “when you took your seat with womanish care, lifting your billowy flounces, on the smoothworn throne” (U 15.3015-7); Bloom retorts, “Science. To compare the various joys we each enjoy. (earnestly) And really it’s better the position...because often I used to wet....” (U 15.3019-20). By sitting for micturition, Bloom’s body “begins to emulate hers, as if through this gesture he could turn gender upside down” (Soros 17) and elide the performative difference between the two positions: squatting or standing (Soros 17).
“Lotus Eaters”, Bloom thinks to himself: “Leah tonight. Mrs Bandmann Palmer. Like to see her again in that. Hamlet she played last night. Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide” (U 5.194-7). Gender’s ambiguous ontological status is typified by the transvested actor in Joyce’s sly joke that Shakespeare’s tragic Dane was a woman and mockingly tenders an unorthodox justification for Ophelia’s madness when confronted with her romantic love for another woman.

In “Cyclops”, the nameless narrator and the patrons of Barney Kiernan’s steel their judgement against Bloom’s femininity when the citizen mocks the Breens and implies a parallel with the Blooms: “Pity about her, says the citizen. Or any other woman marries a half and half...A fellow that’s neither fish nor flesh” (U 12.1052-3, 1055-6). The anonymous barfly later adds that Bloom is “[o]ne of the mixed middlings” (U 12.1658-59). The German mischling, derived from turn-of-the-century racialist discourse, denotes the offspring of different races—the hybrid—but connotes a degraded mixture signifying impurity (Reizbaum 91-2). Inevitably, this reading of Bloom’s androgyny is linked historically and culturally to nineteenth-century etiologies of homosexuality. Bloom violates the homosociality of Irish nationalisms through his thoughtfulness and reflection when debating Ireland’s state with the citizen and his droll preference for lawn-bowling in lieu of the violence of hurling (U 12.889-90).

Nevertheless, by contrast, the hypermasculine posture adopted by the Irish citizen here

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43 Cheryl Herr notes that “within such arenas as the music hall and the pantomime, sexual impersonation was not only tolerated, it was enjoyed; what is more, it was expected” (137) as she chronicles the frequent drag performances of Joyce’s day from performers such as Harry Randall, Dan Leno, George Robey, and Wilkie Bard. As a boy, Joyce, assumed the role of Widow Twankay in a class play in 1891 at Clongowes Woods College and was photographed in the part dressed in drag (Bradley 55-6).
exposes his histrionic masculinity, "the kind of self-advertising performance associated in
the late Victorian imaginary with feminine heteronomy, woman's inherent being-for-others" (Valente, "Double-bind" 117; emphasis Valente's).

The nameless narrator discloses that the nationalist citizen is a hypocrite as the Molly Maguires are searching for him for "grabbing the holding of an evicted tenant" (U 12.1314-6). Molly Maguires comprised secret societies of activist vigilantes who clashed with landlords over rent, evictions, and land reform. They primarily operated in rural parts of Ireland at night, disguising themselves by cross-dressing as women, replete with bonnets, gowns, and petticoats; some Whiteboy organizations referred to themselves as the Lady Clare boys, Terry Alt's Mother, Lady Rock, in addition to the Molly Maguires. Luke Gibbons cites evidence that this transgressive costume drama had been noted in connection to uprisings within other rural societies, but Ireland experienced the most extensive disturbances of this kind (Transformations 141; Gifford and Seidman 356).

Perhaps coincidently, the nom de guerre of these Irish transvestite terrorists matches the English term "molly," signifying a male homosexual since the eighteenth-century. The English mollies are credited with establishing the first queer social institution--the molly house, part tavern and part bathhouse--for an emerging homosexual subculture in urban Britain (Stewart 169-70). In Joyce's passage here, the ironic spectacle of the intolerant citizen, who is apoplectic with nationalist rhetoric yet culpable for betraying his own people for economic gain, is hunted by transvestite compatriots who, themselves, are identified by their trademark label that commonly refers to English homosexuals. The queerly named Molly Maguires may be deciphered as the

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44 Joyce's own great-grandfather, also named James Joyce, was condemned to death for his involvement with the Whiteboys, but the sentence was not carried out (Ellmann, Joyce 12).
personification of Irish nationalisms' repressed homoerotic investment exhibited publicly, and stereotypically, on the surface of their garments. And, of course, Bloom is married to a Molly—Marion Tweedy. “The instability of these images, and the absence of an unmediated concept of nationalism,” states Luke Gibbons, “proved an embarrassment to later cultural nationalists intent on establishing the kind of ‘self-present’ identity required for state-formation” (Transformations 142).

The world of the heteronormative becomes unglued as desire and gender explodes socially constructed boundaries in Bella Cohen’s brothel in “Circe”, an episode which includes instances of sadomasochism, incest, bestiality, transsexualism, and fisting. Bloom performs his role in these scripted sexual scenarios but not without the attending psychological mechanisms of guilt and shame also on theatrical display. Coded as lesbian, Jewish, and as a transsexual dominatrix, Bella Cohen engages with Bloom in a scene of interrogation and confession, attempting to extract the “truth” of Bloom’s sins, desires, and fantasies. He/She attacks Bloom as impotent and not capable of doing a “man’s job”: “(he bares his arm and plunges it elbowdeep in Bloom’s vulva) There’s fine depth for you! What, boys? That give you a hardon? (he shoves his arm in a bidder’s face) Here wet the deck and wipe it round!” (U 15.3088-91). Fearing that by the homosocial standards of male camaraderie he is not adequate as a man, Bloom punishes himself by imagining that he has been transformed into a submissive woman (Boone 155). Within the sadomasochistic scenario, the submissive ‘bottom’ is always associated with femaleness and the “no-longer-repressed female-identified self”, no matter the actor’s gender (Froula 186).

Living out one of his gender dissonant fantasies, Bloom remembers that he
secretly bought some women’s black undergarments from Mrs. Miriam Dandrade in “Lestrygonians” (U 8.349-51), imagining he wants “to be a bull for her” (U 8.356)—an Irish bull, indeed. Molly acknowledges and tolerates her husband’s fetish, “he’s mad on the subject of drawers” (U 18.289). Bello, however, charges Bloom with an unauthorized performance of gender: “[You] showed off coquettishly in your domino at the mirror behind closedrawn blinds your unskirted thighs and hegoats’s udders in various poses of surrender, eh?...You were a nicelooking Miriam when you clipped off your backgate hairs and lay swooning in the thing across the bed as Mrs Dandrade about to be violated” by over a dozen men (U 15.2990-2; 2999-3001). Bloom, in his typical manner, rationalizes his behavior and blames others, this time an old school chum: “It was Gerald converted me to be a true corsetlover when I was female impersonator in the High School play Vice Versa. It was dear Gerald. He got that kink, fascinated by sister’s stays. Now dearest Gerald uses pinky greasepaint and gilds his eyelids. Cult of the beautiful” (U 15.3009-13). Bloom codes Gerald as homosexual, a “painted” boy of the aesthetic movement, and strengthens his “guilt” by association.

Joseph Alan Boone draws out the implications of Bloom’s performative fantasy of transvestism/transsexuality in this passage and Joyce’s own anxious authorial self-surveillance and control:

Mrs. Danderade is at once a “cover” for Bloom’s taboo desires and the vehicle of the cross-dressing masquerade...in which he is privately engaging. Moreover, as one of the most overtly homosexual of “Circe’s” fantasies—a man imagining himself anally penetrated by men—it's climatic position in the chase sequence effects an unsettling displacement
not only of the text’s heterosexual climax in “Penelope” (husband and wife in bed), but also of the heterosexually charged masculine bravado characterizing the textual erotics of the passage itself. (161; emphasis Boone’s)

So too Cheryl Herr underscores the consequential weight of gender performativity that she ascribes as a source of nationalism’s misogynist homophobia; “[s]ignificantly, the presentation of Bloom’s excuse encapsulates a culture’s fear that from playing a role to being that role is one very easy step” (153). Joyce’s satirical cross-gendered representations emphasize the denaturalized gender performances that are indebted to the discourse of feminization. Irish nationalism’s overinvestment in normative gender identities flags the homoerotic associations within the Irish cultural imaginary of the time.

Another essential component in Bloom’s “gender trouble” entails a juncture of racial identity and femininity as Irish compatriots attack Bloom because of his Jewish heritage. Regularly in *Ulysses*, the guardians of Irish patriotism and historical grievance explicitly censure women or Jewish people for the country’s troubles: from Mr. Deasy in “Nestor” who, although committing historical inaccuracies, singles out “faithless” wives such as Eve, Helen of Troy, Dermot MacMurrough’s bride (Devorgilla), and Kitty O’Shea (*U* 2.390-4), to the citizen who also attacks the “adulteress and her paramour” for having “brought the Saxon robbers here” (*U* 12.157-8). Martin Cunningham refers to Bloom as a perverted jew...from a place in Hungary” (*U* 12.1635), and the anti-Semitic nameless narrator absurdly reflects on Garryowen’s immediate distaste for Bloom: “I’m told those jewies does have a queer odour coming off them for dogs” (*U* 12.452-3). Marilyn Reizbaum glosses the narrator’s ludicrous comment as one which taps into a
stereotype of Jewish odour—the “foetor judaicus”—originating from a myth that Jewish men menstruate (79). In this way, the narrator is not only attempting to displace the Irish as bearers of feminine cultural traits and emotions accentuated in Ireland’s ‘culture of defeat’ and submission chronicled throughout “Cyclops”, but also trying to deny Bloom his “hybrid” status as an Irish Jew, instead substituting a feminized, neutered, akin to queer, “Jewish negation of Irishness” (Valente, “Double-bind” 111). Bloom’s state of affairs starkly differs from that of Councillor Joseph Nannetti, the Irish-Italian manager of Freeman’s Journal and National Press, who is also a “hybrid” but one with a respectable position in Dublin society as beheld in “Aeolus” (U 7.87-100).

In Joyce and the Jews: Culture and Texts (1989), Ira Nadel places internalized anti-Semitism and the pressures of assimilation in context within Joyce’s world; “[n]ever truly accepted by European society, the Jew remained marginal, representing liberalism, materialism and modernism….This led to ambivalent Jewish attitudes and the weakening identity of Joyce’s Jewish friends which the character of Leopold Bloom reflects” (32-3). Bloom breaks with his religious and cultural roots in a range of ways including his three baptisms into Christian denominations (U 17.540-6), his taste for pork kidneys and disregard for Moses Dlugacz, the Jewish Hungarian butcher, in “Calypso” (U 4.46; 186-90), as well as his hailing from a family that changed their surname from “Virag” to “Bloom” (U 16.365-6; 17.1869-73).

In creating Bloom, Joyce taps into racial and sexual stereotypes found inscribed in Austrian-born and Jewish convert, Otto Weininger’s anti-Semitic and anti-feminist tract Sex and Character (1903), where he promulgates his notions of the Platonic “Jew”—vaguely described as a state of mind or being and/or a psychological constitution
The spirit of modernity is Jewish, wherever one looks at it....Our age is not only the most Jewish, but also the most effeminate of all ages” (Weininger 299; emphasis Weininger’s). By the time Joyce began to write Ulysses in 1914 however, Weininger’s theories of androgynous degeneracy were viewed as “inspired quackery” (Byrnes 305). This linkage of femininity and Jewishness was a common late Victorian assumption, for instance, in Matthew Arnold’s implicit feminine associations with Hebraism in his discussion of Hellenism and Hebraism’s impact upon Western culture (Anarchy 129-44). Jewish femininity was contrasted with a muscular Christianity that was part and parcel of nationalist European rhetoric and ideology alive in Ireland. Richard Ellmann acknowledges that Joyce was largely in agreement with Weininger’s theories that perceived Woman as a form of negation and male Jews as womanly men (Joyce 463-4).

According to Robert Byrnes, the representation of Bloom’s indeterminate gender and sexual identity is on account that “Joyce wanted a comic counter-myth to that of the Odyssey....[For] without Weininger and Krafft-Ebing there would be no Bloom, no Untermensch, no comic characterology at all” (312). Certainly Bloom’s masochism, cross-dressing, bisexual desires, fetishism, masturbation, and coprophilia frequently elicit hilarity; however, Daniel Boyarin’s work on the intersections of queer and Jewish subjectivity have recovered another alternative cultural tradition within Ashkenazaic Judaism that speaks to Bloom’s complex identifications and desires. Boyarin’s project is to “reclaim the nineteenth-century notion of the feminized Jewish male, to argue for his reality as one Jewish ideal going back to the Babylonian Talmud....[and] also to find a model for a gentle, nurturing masculinity in the traditional Jewish ideal” (xiv). Boyarin
mentions that “Joyce offers an alternative reading of the male masochist as a man well suited to act heterosexually, marry, beget and raise children” (119; emphasis mine), which expands the definitional parameters of a hegemonic masculinity. This alternative Jewish model, with its healthy emphasis on nurturing, was known as “Edel-kayt (literally, ‘nobility,’ but in Yiddish ‘gentleness and delicacy’!); its ideal subject was the Yeshiva-Bokhur (the man devoting his life to the study of the Torah) and his secularized younger brother, the Mentsh” (Boyarin 23). It is reasonable to suggest that Joyce was aware of this more positive perspective of ethnologically constructed femininity when fashioning Bloom, and conceivably, Stephen. Bloom’s endearing charm and popularity amongst Joyceans and readers also suggests that his “perversions” and “inversions” only add to readers’ delight in what makes the man of 7 Eccles St. most appealingly human.

Arguably, with Joyce having marked the three principal male figures in Ulysses--Mulligan, Stephen, and Bloom--with multiple signs of “queerness”, the representation of Irish identity becomes more tricky than ever since, as Marjorie Howes affirms, “[i]n a common nationalist trope, the story of the individual becomes, at the same time, the story of the nation” (265). Irish nationalisms seek to suppress and to camouflage their own homosocial/erotic desires and their ideological dependency on a strict ontological gender separation. Joyce exposes nationalisms’ own imaginary constructions of gendered Irish identity and contests these figures at every turn with comedy, wit, and a mass of homoerotic associations and coded gender inversions. Joyce’s satire on nationalisms as a strategy of compensatory masculinity (in some respects, one already gelded like the Irish bull of “Oxen and the Sun”) makes evident that nationalisms re-enact and reinscribe the discourses of gender from which they are trying to escape.
Homosocial Sacrifice in Joyce

Joyce accentuates romantic and revolutionary nationalisms’ regulation of *homoeros* within Dublin’s homosocial environment during moments of crisis, where homosexual panic ensues with its requisite scapegoating rituals. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains, homosexual panic is part of a strategy of control potentially over all male bonds where “no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual” (*Men* 89). By the first decade of the twentieth century, homophobia had caused a schism in male homosociality to harden as men’s defensive paranoia of their own “homosexuality” could insidiously be used to manage their conduct. This schism in men’s bonds was grounded not only upon a minimal difference of identity, but also upon men’s refusal to acknowledge the incoherent contradictions at the heart of sexual definitions. The consequence of this rupture has been men’s vulnerability to homophobia’s virtually endless powers of blackmail and manipulation (Sedgwick, *Men* 89, 201; *Closet* 204).

For some of Joyce’s male figures, homosexual panic is due to a threat of the dissolution of a nationalist Irish identity, a falling away from the presumptive dream of sovereignty troped as male and assumed as heterosexual. Joyce’s representation of homosexually panic-prone nationalist communities is interwoven with masculinist nationalisms’ history of violent sacrifice and martyrdom as evident in: first, the (homo)sexually coded secrecy that rouses Bloom’s paranoia regarding the “true” identities of the sailor D. B. Murphy and the alleged nationalist assassin Skin-the-Goat Fitzharris in “Eumaeus”; second, the barely suppressed homoerotic undercurrents present in the sexualized violence implicated in the executions and sentimental commemorations of Joe Brady, the figure of the “croppy boy”, and Robert Emmet; third, the clash of identities between Bloom and the citizen in “Cyclops” along with the beating Stephen receives at the hands of British soldiers, Privates Carr and Compton, in Nighttown.
Homosocial Dublin

_Eumaeus_

In “Eumaeus”, Stephen and Bloom retire to the cabman’s shelter “hardly a stonethrow away near Butt45 bridge” (U 16.9), close to the docks in the seedier eastern section of Dublin, where they encounter returning sailor D. B. Murphy, a man rumoured to be Invincible murderer Skin-the-Goat Fitzharris, and many curious onlookers. In this episode, Joyce presents what Colleen Lamos identifies as “epistemological dilemmas” since the text abounds in queer significations that are neither definite nor disavowed (157; 136); what's more, Valente asserts that “Joyce does not speak the name of homosexuality so much as he names the absence of such speech” (“Thrill” 47). By trying to piece together information and to decipher ambiguous clues, Bloom spends most of his time focusing on Murphy, “Sherlockholmesing him up ever since he clapped eyes on him” (U 16.831) in an attempt to deduce his “true” identity and, in the process, precipitating an atmosphere of disquiet, marked by homophobic suspicion and fear concerning the seaman’s sexual habits (Lamos 160). Accordingly, Joyce proffers numerous dubious designations for Murphy as his identity slides around: “doughty narrator” (U 16.570), “redoubtable specimen” (U 16.983), “imperious navigator” (U 16.1011), “rough diamond” (U 16.1012), “friend Sinbad” (U 16.858), “our mutual friend”46 (U 16.821), Skibbereen father” (U 16.666), “globetrotter” (U 16.575), “old tarpaulin” (U 16.1021),

45 The bridge is named after Isaac Butt, the former leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party prior to Parnell’s rise. Butt was known for his moderate approach to convincing the English of the merits of limited Irish Home Rule (Travers 34-40). A butt is, of course, an abbreviation of buttocks and an object of ridicule.

46 An allusion to Charles Dickens’s 1864 novel of the same name, where homosocial rivalry, erotic triangles, and homophobic blackmail are apparent in the relations amongst Bradley Headstone, Lizzie Hexam, Eugene Wrayburn, and Rogue Riderhood. For further discussion, see chapter nine in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s _Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire_ (1985), 161-79.

potential intimate contacts, sympathetic connections, or for simple voyeuristic, vicarious, and fantasized pleasures.

Joyce scripts these meaningful silences and weighty moments as if they were instances of philandering (in the original sense of the Greek *philandros*—fond of men), leaving readers unable to distinguish flirtation from nationalist paranoia. *Seeing* becomes a central metaphor in “Eumaeus” both for closely taking stock of other men and for serving an economy of surveillance inside a community with secrets, such as the Phoenix Park murders, to hide. The text plays with the binary of *seeing/not seeing* to underpin the epistemologies of the potentially closeted figures both of the sexually suspect and of the more hardcore patriot variety. As Colleen Lamos observes, “both sexual perversion and political subversion function as ‘open secrets’, officially nonexistent and known only to those who have been initiated into their obscure mysteries” (158).

Joyce triangulates the main male characters as they skeptically probe and evade each other for clues about who they “truly” are in this erotically-curious environment:

...Mr Bloom determining to have a good square look at him later on so as not to appear to. For which reason he encouraged Stephen to proceed with his eyes while he did the honours by surreptitiously pushing the cup of what was temporarily supposed to be called coffee gradually near him.

--Sounds are impostures, Stephen said after a pause of some little time, like names. Cicero, Podmore. Nelson, Mr Goodbody. Jesus, Mr Doyle. Shakespeares were as common as Murphies. What’s in a name?

--Yes, to be sure, Mr Bloom unaffectedly concurred. Of course. Our name was changed too, he added pushing the socalled roll across.
The redbearded sailor who had his weather eye on the newcomers boarded Stephen, whom he had singled out for attention in particular, squarely by asking:

--And what might your name be?

Just in the nick of time Mr Bloom touched his companion’s boot but Stephen, apparently disregarding the warm pressure from an unexpected quarter, answered:

--Dedalus.

The sailor stared at him heavily from a pair of drowsy baggy eyes rather bunged up from excessive use of boose, preferably good old Hollands and water.

--You know Simon Dedalus? he asked at length.

--I’ve heard of him, Stephen said.

Mr Bloom was all at sea for a moment, seeing the others evidently eavesdropping too.

--He’s Irish, the seaman bold affirmed, staring still in much the same way and nodding. All Irish.

--All too Irish, Stephen rejoined.  

This dance of questions and responses as Murphy attempts to access personal information spawns Bloom’s characteristic unease. Murphy, I argue, is subtly cruising the shelter through his conversation, tall tales, his immediate interest in the youthful Stephen, his circulation of his “seamen’s discharge” (U 16.603), and his bodily display, which all are strategies of hooking up with some kindred spirit. Joyce’s parataxis of chit-chat about the
fictiveness of identity paired with the arbitrary nature of language beside a patriarchal
image of Irishness in a discursively homosocial framework signifies Joyce’s familiarity
with and exposure of nationalisms’ repressed constitutive homoeros.

Since the surname Murphy is the most common family name in Ireland, it is the
text’s clever insinuation that the queerly-inflected portrait of Murphy is some form of
dysfunctional, national stereotype. Murphy has had a “[w]ife waiting for him for seven
years” (U 16.419-421), but, since he returned that morning when Stephen witnesses the
arrival of the threemaster in Dublin Bay (U 3.504), Murphy is in no rush to reunite with
her, instead preferring the company of the men in the shelter. Murphy’s prodigious
ability to spin yarns draws the attention of all those gathered but increases Bloom’s
uneasiness about the veracity of his tales: “And when all was said and done the lies a
fellow told about himself couldn’t probably hold a proverbial candle to the wholesale
whoppers other fellows coined about him” (U 16.845-7).

The tension between Murphy, Bloom, and Stephen continues with the unveiling
of the seaman’s tattoos: “Seeing they were all looking at his chest he accommodatingly
dragged his shirt more open so that on top of the timehonoured symbol of the mariner’s
hope and rest they had a full view of the figure 16 and a young man’s sideface looking
frowningly rather” (U 16.671-4). Bloom reacts uncomfortably to this bodily exhibition,

47 As a sailor, Murphy is naturally associated with the Odyssean mythic structure of Ulysses but in a
deflated and degraded fashion. Throughout Europe, sailors long had the notorious reputation from the
eighteenth-century onwards for belonging to a subculture of “easy prostitution” commonly found in port
cities. Working-class men earned supplementary money in this manner by being hired by middle- and
upper-class men yet without facing stigma from their fellow shipmates (Weeks 203-8). Additionally, in
Trevor Fisher’s Scandal: The Sexual Politics of Late Victorian Britain (1995), Fisher reads The Sins of the
Cities of the Plain: or the Recollections of a Mary Ann (1881)—the autobiography of Irish prostitute Jack
Saul—as evidence for the existence of a “substantial subculture of homosexual brothels in London where
gentleman could sleep with lower-class boys, often soldiers, and for high prices” (142). Finally, it is salient
to mention that not only is Murphy a red head (U 16.367) but so is the citizen (U 12.153). Bello reveals
that Boylan’s anal hairs are red (U 15.3141-2), and even Garryowen is an Irish red setter wolfdog (U
12.715). Joyce codes Bloom’s adversaries with having red hair, while interweaving motifs of homoeros in
and round these comically diabolical figures.
evidenced in his fractured thoughts: “That worthy, however, was busily engaged in collecting round the. Someway in his. Squeezing or” (U 16.681-2). Murphy is not forthcoming with an explanation about the origin of his tattoo, as if he were playing to a select audience that would recognize the flirtatious sign and the seductiveness of the gesture barring explanation. Colleen Lamos comments that “Murphy’s self-exposure reiterates the exposure of the chests of Indian women and of Molly, with the crucial difference that the breast he bares for their viewing pleasure is a hairy, masculine one. He does so to oblige the members of his audience, who….are so transfixed that they stare at Murphy’s chest while he scratches lice” (161-2).

Joyce ups the ante, moreover, with a passing sex trade worker who saunters into the shelter looking for business. Bloom witnesses her “viewing with evident amusement the group of gazers round skipper Murphy’s nautical chest and [then] there was no more of her” (U 16.725-6). Bloom pays particular attention to Murphy’s trip outside the shelter and subsequent urination (U 16.922-40), foreshadowing Bloom’s and Stephen’s own shared homosocial experience of making water in “Ithaca”, where Bloom reflects on the size, dysfunctions, and diseases befalling the penis in tandem with Stephen’s speculation about whether Christ’s foreskin should be judged divine and venerated as other saints’ relics in accord with Catholic tradition (U 17.1186-1209). As usual Ulysses evades any pronouncement concerning Murphy’s sexual orientation by having Bloom notice the sailor’s apparent heterosexual interest in momentarily trailing the prostitute (U 16.929-31) which, paradoxically, does nothing to dispel the canvasser’s homosexual panic.

Murphy insists that the young man on his chest was a Greek, not an Italian, named
Antonio (U 16.678-9); furthermore, according to Don Gifford’s and Robert J. Seidman’s gloss, the number 16 is associated with homosexuality in European slang and numerology (544), and “Eumaeus” is, of course, the sixteenth episode of Ulysses. Additionally, tantalizing, perhaps, is the sexual pun, “A Greek he was” (U 16.699), drawing out homoerotic parallels to Shakespeare’s Antonio in The Merchant of Venice. Joyce’s representation of Murphy’s secrecy surrounding his life and tattoo substantiates sexual identity’s volatility within a nationalist setting and the trepidation caused due to queerness being perceived as a mode of betrayal of a man’s homeland, which takes the form of homosexual panic, in this case, Bloom’s.

Stephen’s and Bloom’s affiliation remains marked by this psychic panic. “Yes, Stephen said uncertainly because he thought he felt a strange kind of flesh of a different man approach him, sinewless and wobbly and all that” (U 16.1723-4). This observation of Stephen’s, focusing on the physical state of Bloom’s body, is somewhat reminiscent of Wilde’s flippant remark on the stand that he did not kiss Walter Grainger because he was “extremely ugly” (Ellmann, Wilde 424). This slippage here similarly registers in Stephen’s ambivalence but does not stop him from accompanying Bloom, who is anxious to detach Dedalus from Bloom’s hitherto rivals Murphy and Mulligan. Bloom frets over how to ask Stephen home: “what mostly worried him was he didn’t know how to lead up to it or word it exactly, supposing he did entertain the proposal, as it would afford him great personal pleasure if he would allow him to help put coin in his way or some wardrobe, if found suitable”48 (U 16.1616-9). While explaining how the Aztecs sat

48 Joyce’s manipulation of the consubstantiality theme effects a reciprocal blending of the two men’s natures and blurring of identity, “Stoom” and “Blephen” (U 17.549, 551). This irony carries over to Bloom’s circulation of Molly’s photograph and reiterates Stephen’s perverse comment on Beau Mount and Lecher: “Greater love than this, he said, no man hath that a man lay down his wife for his friend. Go thou
bowlegged, Bloom takes the liberty of clarifying his point for Stephen: “because the
muscles, here, you see, he proceeded, indicating on his companion the brief outline of the
sinews...behind the right knee” (U 16. 853-5). Bloom’s gesture of touching Stephen’s
toe maybe read as a “pass” which inadvertently betrays his attraction to Stephen, if only
unconsciously.

To avoid further entanglement with Murphy, Stephen and Bloom must make their
escape from the secret-laden community of the shelter —“[s]eeing that the ruse worked
and the coast was clear they left....arm in arm” (U 16.1703, 1735). Outside the shelter,
the car driver “never said a word, good, bad or indifferent,” writes Joyce, “but merely
watched the two figures...both black, one full, one lean, walk towards the railway bridge,
to be married by Father Maher” (U 16.1885-8; emphasis Joyce’s). Gifford and Seidman
comment that the italicized words cited here, suggesting same-sex marriage, are a slightly
modified version of the song “The Low-Backed Car”, popularized by Samuel Lover and
John McCormack, which includes the line, “To the blooming girl, I sing” (338). The
feminizing pun on Bloom’s surname nestled within the ballad sends up the canvasser’s
ambiguous gender as this male “couple” makes their way back to Eccles St., while
Stephen serenades the older man, oblivious as to how they might appear to others through
Joyce’s satirical lens.

Homosexual panic and paranoia also extend to the alleged nationalist killer, Skin-
the-Goat Fitzharris. Bloom believes that the mysterious proprietor of the shelter is James Fitzharris, one of the Irish National Invincibles, a Fenian splinter group which assisted in the 1882 stabbing assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the new chief secretary of Ireland, and Thomas Henry Burke, an undersecretary in Dublin Castle, who was responsible for introducing hated coercion policies. In *Ulysses*, Fitzharris is rumoured to have driven the getaway car—"a fact seemingly known to everyone in Dublin except the authorities" (Bowen 534). However, historically, Fitzharris was responsible for driving a decoy car and worked as a night watchman like Gumley (Gifford and Seidman 94, 141).

One surmises that the cabmen’s shelter is home to more extreme republican denizens, in contrast with the mixed crowd of separatist and unionist Protestant and Anglo-Irish elements that frequent Barney Kiernan’s pub. As Susan de Sola Rodstein contends: "Crofter or Crofton the Orangeman, Cunningham the Castle employee, Bloom the rumored Sinn Féiner—drinking and interacting at Kiernan’s and outside of it, is an index of the relative political fluidity of 1904" (175). The cabmen’s shelter remains a nationalist site where the scapegoating dynamics of homosociality in its regulation of *homoeros* in moments of crisis operates not just with Murphy but with Fitzharris to a lesser extent. Most likely an advocate of physical force nationalism, Fitzharris participates in inspecting the tattoo of Antonio on Murphy’s manly chest: "the curious effect excited the unreserved admiration of everybody including Skin-the-Goat, who this

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49 For further discussion of the uncertainty of Skin-the-Goat’s identity in *Ulysses*, see James Fairhall’s *James Joyce and the Question of History* (1993), 21-3.

50 Initially, Gumley, the sentry, is asleep in "the arms of Morpheus" (U 16.947-8), but later the night watchman is described as "to all intents and purposes wrapped in the arms of Murphy, as the adage has it, dreaming of fresh fields and pastures new" (U 16.1728-9), reinscribing the homoerotic link to the sailor with concomitant valences of security and death.
time stretched over” (U 16.687-9).

When Murphy makes the statement that the Irish Catholic peasant is the “backbone of our empire” (U 16.1021-22), an argument erupts between him and Fitzharris with Bloom and Stephen on the sidelines. During this exchange, Bloom has quietly been thinking to himself that “the amours of whores and chummies, to put it in common parlance, reminded him Irish soldiers had as often fought for England as against her, more so, in fact” (U 16.1040-2), which deconstructs Fitzharris’s nationalism and underscores the fact that men often are motivated to take up arms, not because of a racial sense of a nation or community, but at times because of the unconscious homosocial bonds amongst comrades. *Contra* to the nationalists’ position, Bloom’s own socialist idea of patriotism as a guaranteed income of £300 to everyone in order to solve the “money question” does not escape its own homosocial valences: “That’s the vital issue at stake and it’s feasible and would be provocative of friendlier intercourse between man and man. At least that’s my idea for what it’s worth. I call that patriotism” (U 16.1135-8). Joyce’s wit never fails as Bloom remains blithely unaware of his words in a chapter awash with repressed desires, angst, and homosocial rivalries, all contained within a romantic and revolutionary nationalist backdrop.

Skin-the-Goat reiterates the citizen’s nationalist rhetoric frequently point for point and prophesizes:

> Brummagen England was toppling already and her downfall would be Ireland, her Achilles heel, which he explained to them about the vulnerable point of Achilles, the Greek hero, a point his auditors at once seized as he completely gripped their attention by showing the tendon
referred to on his boot. His advice to every Irishman was: stay in the land of your birth and work for Ireland and live for Ireland. Ireland, Parnell said, could not spare a single one of her sons.  

(U 16.1002-9)

The cliché, underneath Fitzharris’s rhetoric, that “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity” (Fry 201) carries with it allusions to Achilles—a masculine figure already bearing the mark of homoerōs in his love for Patroclus (Levine 109). Ulysses makes reference three more times to the warrior: first, when Bloom recounts to Stephen his rebuff of the citizen’s anti-Semitism, “[t]he most vulnerable point too of tender Achilles. Your god was a jew” (U 16.1640-1); second, in response to Stephen’s query about the placement of chairs during closing procedures in eateries (U 16.1716); third, earlier in the National Library, when Stephen reflects in his discussion over Anne Hathway’s presumed infidelity: “possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known: what name Achilles bore when he lived among women” (U 9.349-51). Gifford and Seidman remark that in order to prevent the warrior from going to battle, his mother, Thetis, disguises him as a girl and sends him to live with the daughters of the king of Scyros. In one tradition, Odysseus exposes the disguise with a ruse, and Achilles joins the Greeks in their expedition against Troy (127). Joyce’s paratactic strategy of juxtaposing Achilles, romantic and insurgent nationalisms, and notions of anatomical vulnerability implies that nationalisms’ ideological investments in the idealized male body, sentimentality, aggression, and homosocial bonding all function as nationalisms’ own versions of an Achilles heel.
Cyclops

If “Eumaeus” illustrates a microscopic view of the personal internalized dynamics of homosocial bonding and homosexual panic shaping Irish subjects and their actions in the shelter’s patriotic environment, then “Cyclops” offers a wider perspective of *homoeros’s* partial constitution of Irish cultural nationalism. Male homosociality is clearly marked by phallogocentrism, which, in this instance, is not just a catch-all theoretical metaphor for patriarchal assumptions inherent in language but the literal use of sexually-charged discourse that is frequently uttered by the men. Setting the tone in Barney Kiernan’s pub, colloquial references to penises, terminology concerning sexual prowess and arousal pepper the men’s conversations and thoughts threaded throughout discussions of politics, hangings, lynchings, floggings, sport, and legal cases. For example, as a general timbre of the talk in the tavern, Joe Hynes asks the anonymous narrator if Moses Herzog is “[c]ircumcised?” (*U* 12.19) as a way of fixing his presumed Jewish identity; Terry, the bartender, borrows pornography from the undertaker, Corny Kelleher, to learn “[s]ecrets for enlarging your private parts” (*U* 12.1169); after Lenehan’s disappointment over losing money on the Ascot Gold Cup horserace, Hynes encourages him by saying, “keep your pecker up” (*U* 12.1233); and the perpetrators responsible for brutally lynching an African-American man in Georgia are labeled “Deadwood Dicks” (*U* 12.1325). The masculinist ideological and psychic investment in the male body surfaces in these men’s repeated obsession with the idealized and linguistic phallus, literal and otherwise.

At the heart of this all-male milieu rests the citizen, Joyce’s representation of Michael Cusack,⁵¹ the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association. From the anonymous

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⁵¹ Michael Cusack was born in 1847 in County Clare and taught at Blackrock College and, one time, at Clongowes Wood College, becoming an Irish civil servant before the 1884 founding of the G.A.A.
narrator’s vantage point, the barflies show signs of a mixture of awe and contempt for the parasitical (as it applies to drink) citizen, who sits in his “gloryhole”...working for the cause” (U 12.122-3). Joyce portrays the citizen as a hypermasculine superman out of Irish saga: “The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freelyfreckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero” (U 12.151-5). Despite the mocking intent of such a caricature, Joyce’s attention to the citizen’s manly anatomy produces a sense of homoeros in this portrait. Instructively, Joyce’s early description of the citizen from Stephen Hero further enmeshes the citizen with the homoerotic, accentuating the man’s size and his coterie of young male acolytes: “When the company was going home he was usually to be seen surrounded by a circle of young men who looked very meagre about his bulk. He had the voice of an ox and he could be heard at a

(A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in his study Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory, and History (2000) examines Joyce’s ambiguous play of language and taboo sexuality in the early training ground of Irish homosociality—Clongowes Wood College. Here Stephen struggles to understand from the other fellows the meaning of the word “smuggling” (P 42). Attridge posits that “one can imagine...the half-overheard conversations among the older boys that would have granted Stephen that partial degree of sexual knowledge whose lack of specific content can invest certain words with all the more erotic power” (61). In “Cyclops”, Joyce may be capitalizing upon the sexual valences of language and, at times, homosexual codes, with the aim of derision and critique of patriarchal nationalism and its manifestations.
great distance, criticizing, denouncing, and scoffing” (61). Male hero worship is often characterized by homosocial, if not homoerotic, desire, depending upon circumstances.

One of these young men happens to be Davin, the patriotic and virginal student of *A Portrait*, whom Stephen shares an initial intimate friendship but from whom he then later distances himself because of Davin’s delight in rude bodily skill—for Davin had sat at the feet of Michael Cusack, the Gael—repelling swiftly and suddenly by a grossness of intelligence or by a bluntness of feeling or by a dull stare of terror in the eyes, the terror of soul of a starving Irish village in which the curfew was still a nightly fear.

Side by side with his memory of the deeds of prowess of his uncle Mat Davin, the athlete, the young peasant worshipped the sorrowful legend of Ireland. (*P* 180-1)

For it is in this world of athleticism that the symbolic significance of Irish sport to nationalist identity is crystallized in the image of the male Irish athlete as a contemporary warrior in a world of intense bonding, highlighting romantic nationalism’s rhetorical investment in physical and moral vigour in regenerating the (male) body of the Irish nation; “There’s the man, says Joe, that made the Gaelic sports revival....The man that got away James Stephens. The champion of all Ireland at putting the sixteen pound shot” (*U* 12.880-2). The citizen betrays the shifting grounds of his own gendered hetero-masculinity and attending homophobia. Nonetheless, the citizen’s masculinist demeanor

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53 James Stephens (1824-1901) was the one-time head of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.). Betrayed by a Dublin informer, Stephens was arrested and jailed in 1866. A daring rescue by a group of Fenians shortly ensued, and Stephens was smuggled out of Ireland, ending up in America in 1867 (Gifford and Seidman 56).
risks being perceived, at least by others, not only as a ‘fake’ expression of manhood, but
also, and at the same time, as an ‘authentic’ expression of womanhood” (Leonard,
“Corpuscles” 7). Nonetheless, the citizen quickly steers the conversation from sports to
politics and the generations of Irish martyrs:

--The memory of the dead, says the citizen taking up his pintglass and
glaring at Bloom.

--Ay, ay, says Joe.

--You don’t grasp my point, says Bloom. What I mean is....

--Sinn Fein! says the citizen. Sinn fein amhain! The friends we love are by
our side and the foes we hate before us. (U 12.519-24)

Although relying on binary logic to structure his position, the citizen reveals his intense
emotional investment in the love of his comrades and his equally intense loathing of
outsiders. The citizen’s discourse uses the accepted or authorized language of affect in
making his distinctions between friend and foe.

Susan de Sola Rodstein remarks that in “singling out Cusack’s GAA, Joyce hit
upon the ‘center of gravity of Irish nationalism’ between 1884-1924,” as the organization
took onboard and disseminated not only athletic agendas but Celtic revivalism, a
celebration of peasant virtues, muscular Christianity, cults of masculinity, physical force
radicalism, and extreme Anglophobia (180). The Nameless One states that Joe Hynes
mentions the revival of ancient Gaelic sport and sports’ centrality to the success of
classical European civilizations, “the best traditions of manly strength and prowess
handed down to us from ancient ages” (U 12.910-2). Similarly, while in Bedford row,
Stephen gazes at a forty-year-old advertisement promoting the boxing match between
Heenan and Sayers: "The heavyweights in tight loincloths proposed gently each to the other his bulbous fists. And they are throbbing: heroes' hearts" (U 10.833-5). Joyce chips away at this problematic patriotism through demonstrating this athletic prowess to be implicated in a maze of dogmatic infidelity to nationalist and gendered ideals (Valente, “Double-bind” 114). As conceived by figures like Cusack/citizen, Irish sport was utilized as an ideological tool to discipline and shape the attitudes not only of the participants, but of spectators as well. "Like public executions," writes Rodstein, "sport was a rival mass entertainment of extraordinary impact," especially given the huge crowds that attended Gaelic football matches in Croke Park (180).

The G.A.A. employed sentimental discourses to advocate the value of sport to the Irish by partially relying upon public spectacle, yet underneath this nationalist rhetoric lay the violent tendencies produced, in part, by the incoherent paradigms of acceptable identity circulating within the cultural imaginary. "An advertisement gushes about 'a race that is fated not to die, diffusing the tenderness of an evening Angelus bell and the loneliness of a golden sunset fading behind the eternal hills,'"54 records Rodstein in her examination of G.A.A. propaganda (181). In spite of this idyllic image, the G.A.A. archives disclose a more disreputable version of power struggles and infighting. In “Cyclops”, Joyce imitates these contrasting sides of the athletic movement which reflect the “two complimentary [sic] sides of nationalist discourse, as a continuous accommodation of violence to sentiment” (Rodstein 181). Rodstein’s linking of sentimentality to violence as it manifests itself in Joyce approximates Sedgwick’s analysis of the role that homosexuality plays in the shifting understandings of the

sentimental:
something new: a change of gears, occupying the period from the 1880s through the First World War, by which the exemplary instance of the sentimental ceases to be a woman per se, but instead becomes the body of a man, who...physically dramatizes, embodies for an audience that both desires and cathartically identifies with him, a struggle of masculine identity with emotions or physical stigmata stereotyped as feminine....This male body is not itself named as the place or topos of sentimentality, the way the home, the female body, and female reproductive labor had been in the mid-nineteenth century. Rather, the relations of figuration and perception that circulate around it, including antisentimentality, might instead be said to enact sentimentality as a trope. (Closet 146; emphasis Sedgwick’s)

This late nineteenth-century gender shift marks a transition from suffering female domesticity to a horizon of masculine “heroic self-pity” and “agonistic male self-constitution” and materializes in Ulysses’ treatment of nationalism (Sedgwick, Closet 147, 148). Grounded upon the historical models of Parnell and Wilde, Joyce’s overemphasis on Irish male treachery reveals Dublin to itself through the sacrificial energies extant in Joyce’s account of sentimental patriotic ballads and the spectacle of Irish executions.

Numerous instances of the display of male sentimentality and homoeroticized violence in “Cyclops” make public the element of self-betrayal involved in unstable nationalist identifications. This is particularly evident in the hanging of Irish rebels and
the men's shocked hypocrisy towards the British navy's disciplinary practices:

--But what about the fighting navy, says Ned, that keeps our foes at bay?
--I'll tell you what about it, says the citizen. Hell upon earth it is. Read the revelations that's going on in the papers about the flogging on the training ships at Portsmouth. A fellow writes that calls himself *Disgusted One*.

So he starts telling us about corporal punishment and about the crew of tars and officers and rearadmirals drawn up in cocked hats and the parson with his protestant bible to witness punishment and a young lad brought out, howling for his ma, and they tie him down on the buttend of a gun.

--A rump and dozen, says the citizen, was what that old ruffian Sir John Beresford called it but the modern God's Englishman calls it caning on the breech.

And says John Wyse:

--'Tis a custom more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

Then he was telling us the master at arms comes along with a long cane and he draws out and he flogs the bloody backside off of the poor lad till he yells meila murder.

--That's your glorious British navy, says the citizen, that bosses the earth.

(*U 12.1328-46*)

This account of public sodomitical rape veiled behind protocol and tradition, where the cane serves as a substitution for the phallus and whipping for penetration, acts as the *mise*
en scène of homosocial bonding, functioning as an exercise in esprit de corps, or, conversely, as the site of infidelity by and to authority figures, and thereby, cementing the connections of spectators to each other through flogging’s usefulness as entertainment and as a form of negative pedagogy—an example and warning to all. The humiliating and homophobic picture of flogging addresses the impact of sexualized power upon relations between men; moreover, these relations are commonly found in exclusive male institutions such as the British military or the Catholic clergy, exemplified by the sadistic, sexually repressed Father Dolan and his delight in whacking schoolboys with pandybats in A Portrait. As Athy cheekily rhymes: “It can’t be helped; It must be done. So down with your breeches. And out with your bum” (P 44). Bloom, of course, resists the citizen’s easy characterization of this naval punishment as an inherent English practice and custom, echoing the moderation of John Wyse, “But...isn’t discipline the same everywhere. I mean wouldn’t it be the same here if you put force against force?” (U 12.1360-1). Defending himself by projection, the citizen prefers to castigate the British for their ‘perversions’, wishing to create political and cognitive distance between the young lad’s buttocks and his view of Irish manhood, but Bloom senses that the Irish nationalists are up to the same tricks.

The barely hidden homoerotic undercurrents circulating in the sexualized violence of the executions and sentimental memorials to Joe Brady, the figure of the “croppy boy” and Joyce’s sensational journalistic parody of Robert Emmet’s death foreground a homosexually panic-prone Irish revolutionary nationalism interwoven with a zeal for sacrificial martyrdom in scenes of subaltern virility, yet these spectacles undermine “the union effected by sentimental patriots of hero-worship and eroticism—that is,
‘heroticism’” (Fairhall 25). First, Alf Bergen and Joe Hynes reminisce about the hanging of Invincible assassin Joe Brady, triggering a discussion about penile erections:

—There’s one thing it hasn’t a deterrent effect on, says Alf.

--What’s that? says Joe.

—The poor bugger’s tool that’s being hanged, says Alf.

--That so? says Joe.

--God’s truth, says Alf. I heard that from the head warder that was in Kilmainham when they hanged Joe Brady, the invincible. He told me when they cut him down after the drop it was standing up in their faces like a poker.

--Ruling passion strong in death, says Joe, as someone said. (U 12.455-62)

Joyce comically melds together primitive physiological reflexes and nationalist passions, whereby “the eroticization of political violence suffered, at the hands of a mightier foe... literalizes the notion of ‘having a hard on’ for defeat and death” (Valente, “Double-bind” 115). Ultimately, the text posits that these Irish martyrs are not virile at all, but instead are both paternally and politically sterile as these victims engage in their final dances of death, not unlike Frank McGuinness’s Ulster soldiers in Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme.

Secondly, this tint of sentimentality and Irish chauvinism registers in one of romantic nationalism’s standard songs of solidarity, the traditional melancholic ballad “The Croppy Boy” written by William B. McBurney (a.k.a. Caroll Malone) in 1902

Joe Brady was a member of the Invincible Society, a Fenian splinter group. Brady was hanged on 14 May 1883 in Dublin’s Kilmainham Gaol for his involvement in the 1882 Phoenix Park assassinations (Gifford and Seidman 94, 141).
(Gifford and Seidman 293) and commemorating the treachery suffered by a young rebel during the rebellion of 1798. The ballad is featured most prominently in “Sirens” when Ben Dollard,56 egged on by Simon Dedalus and Father Cowley, passionately performs a rendition. The song’s seductive sway interpellates listeners to partake of its sentimental stance, venerating the “croppy boy” as a martyr. Dollard’s performance, in part, increases Bloom’s feelings of alienation and confirms his status as outsider and cuckold.

Afterward in “Circe”, the “croppy boy” makes an appearance on stage in a reenactment of Joe Brady’s hanging by the English Demon Barber, Rumbold: “(the rope noose around his neck, Gripes in his issuing bowels with both hands) I bear no hate to a living thing. But I love my country beyond my king” (U 15.4531-5). As he grotesquely struggles for breath, Emmet’s last anguished words are “[h]orhot ho pray hor hother’s hest” (U 15.4547), just as Stephen has failed to do. Paralleling Alf Bergen’s and Joe Hynes’s anecdote about Joe Brady earlier in the pub, the “croppy boy” dies, and the stage directions state: “A violent erection of the hanged sends gouts of sperm spouting through his deathclothes on to the cobblestones. Mrs Bellingham, Mrs Yelverton Barry and the Honourable Mrs Mervyn Talboys rush forward with their handkerchiefs to sop it up (U 15.4548-52). This histrionic moment combines the thematics of romantic nationalism and violence, death and sexuality, sentimentality and heroism, with the campy air of Joyce’s text almost eliciting visions of Veronica, accompanied by her handkerchief, swooning at the Cross.

56 Bloom recalls Dollard’s physical endowment: “Ben Dollard’s famous....Trousers tight as a drum on him. Musical porkers. Molly did laugh when he went out....With all his belongings on show” (U 11.554, 555, 556, 557), and Joyce exploits the double entendres more so with the macho jibing, “Sure, you’d burst the tympanum of her ear, man, Mr Dedalus said through smoke aroma, with an organ like yours....Not to mention another membrane, Father Cowley added” (U 11.536-37; 540).
So too in other Joycean passages, a comparable spectacle of the tortured routine of masculine self-pity and pathos reigns. The Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait* ends with Mr Casey, sobbing, “Poor Parnell!...My dead king!” while Mr Dedalus’s “eyes were full of tears” (P 39). The trauma and humiliation in failing to attain Home Rule for Ireland and the sight of male tears serves as an index of the homosocial bond and psychic investment in the male hero’s body. Parnell, as betrayed hero/leader/brother/lover, surfaces again in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”, when Joe Hynes, in the role of patriot bard, recites his lugubrious elegy, “The Death of Parnell” (D 133). In Hynes’s poem, the Uncrowned King is betrayed with a kiss to fawning priests, functioning as a scapegoat of sexual hypocrisy and prudery and paralleling Judas Iscariot’s unfaithfulness to his lord—in the eyes of some, the oldest case of homoerotic bonding and betrayal in one tradition of Western culture.

“Cyclops” contains Joyce’s longest comic interpolation—the excursive parody of the hanging of Robert Emmet⁵⁷(U 12.525-678). While the citizen and Bloom debate the value of dying for one’s country as it pertains to the United Irishmen’s rebellion of 1798, over 500,000 people gather to watch Emmet’s hanging in Joyce’s version of the Irish martyr’s execution (U 12.533-4). Joyce presents the feminized image of English executioner Rumbold in “faultless morning dress and wearing his favourite flower, the

⁵⁷ Robert Emmet (1778-1803) endeavoured to secure Napoleon’s help for an insurrection in Ireland. Emmet attempted to seize Dublin Castle in July 1803 without assistance, only spawning a riot when his allies failed to appear. After a month in hiding, Emmet was captured. Legend has it that he returned to say goodbye to his fiancée Sara Curran. Emmet was hanged and beheaded in a botched public execution, its farcical nature fed into the potent myth of Irish victimhood, and his tragic failure became incorporated as part of Emmet’s credentials as an Irish nationalist (Gifford and Seidman 124). Emmet’s youth and sincerity, his eloquent speech from the dock, paired with the hopelessness of the 1803 action burned into the romanticized memory of nationalist mythology (McCartney 24 ). In his peroration, Emmet appealed to young men to listen to Ireland’s cry for freedom and to justify his own sacrifice: “When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then and not until then, let my epitaph be written” (Hachey et al 60).
Gladiolus Cruentus" (U 12.592-3), a flower with phallic sword-like leaves and spotted with blood (Gifford and Seidman 335-6). Sentimentality pervades the digression as “[b]ig strong men, officers of the peace and genial giants of the royal Irish constabulary, were making frank use of their handkerchiefs” (U 12.655-7). The image of the sacrificial victim is reinforced by Rumbold’s meddling in Emmet’s intestines and the collection of his blood as prescribed in Old Testament rites (U 12.620-30). Emmet’s fiancée, whom the victim calls Sheila (another allegorical name for Ireland) (Gifford and Seidman 336) is offered a hand in marriage by “a handsome Oxford graduate” (U 12.658-9); she gladly accepts, generating more tears. This shifting of Sheila’s affections from condemned Irish rebel to establishment English figure epitomizes men’s traffic in women.

This sentimental spectacle affects the crowd, including the stern provostmarshal Tomlinson, the presiding official at the hanging: “Blimey it makes me kind of bleeding cry,” blubbers Tomlinson, “straight, it does when I sees her cause I think of my old mashtub what's waiting for me down Limehouse way” (U 676-8). Valente claims that Emmet is not any nationalist but the most self-sacrificing of personalities: “Emmet personified the ethical jouissance of exceeding the instinct of self-preservation in the name of group imperatives. He incarnated, if you will, the ‘feminine’ side of the hypermasculine ethos” (Valente, Justice 186). Rodstein concurs that “[t]he well-known quasi-sexual terms” 58 Pearse, for example, used to describe the ‘terrible contortions’ of

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58 Patrick Pearse addressed an audience in New York on 2 March 1914, where he commemorated and described Emmet’s death: “Up to the last moment Emmet seems to have expected him. He was saying ‘Not yet’ when the hangman kicked aside the plank and his body was launched into the air. They say it swung for half-an-hour, with terrible contortions, before he died. When he was dead the comely head was severed from the body. A friend of mine knew an old woman who told him how the blood flowed down upon the pavement, and how she sickened with horror as she saw the dogs of the street lap up that noble blood” (Pearse, Political Writings 70-1). A week later, Pearse psychologizes about Emmet, and perhaps projects some of his own demons, to another New York audience: “For Emmet, finely gifted though he was, was just a young man with the same limitations, the same self-questionings, the same falterings, the
Emmet’s death throes (a standard feature of descriptions of his execution) is an index for the sort of sexual and religious sublimations that gave these figures their power” (159). The public nature of these events both historical and fictional bear witness to the sexualized violence of hanging, functioning as a type of erotic scene commandeered by sacral nationalism for ideological reinscriptions of Irish victimhood.

Homosocial Scapegoats

At the climax of “Cyclops” Bloom serves as the scapegoat for the citizen’s nationalist wrath, anti-Semitism, and homophobia as their personal and political identities collide: “Do you call that a man?” asks the citizen, “It’d be an act of God to take a hold of a fellow the like of that and throw him in the bloody sea. Justifiable homicide, so it would” (U 12.1654, 1660-2). As the citizen’s vitriol targets Bloom, the canvasser is driven out of the pub with death threats trailing in his wake. In the vein of mock Irish epic, the citizen makes use of his athletic talents to hurl Garryowen’s dog dish at Bloom and consequently sets off an earthquake (U 12.1843-ff). Because Bloom’s virtues of restraint and moderation are associated with femininity, he is not seen as personifying proper nationalist manhood. Accordingly, the citizen binds the other barflies to him through attacking Bloom as a way of shoring up their collective identities by highlighting their differences from the Dublin flâneur (Valente, “Double-bind” 121). Repressed desires and fears are projected onto Bloom as a convenient target of the abject Other in an effort to

same kindly human emotions surging up sometimes in such strength as almost to drown a heroic purpose, as many a young man we have known” (Pearse, Political Writings 82).

59 Aware of the danger just underneath the surface of male bonding, Molly Bloom reflects on pub culture that “they call that friendship killing then burying one another and they all with their wives and families at home...they’re a nice lot all of them well they’re not going to get my husband again into their clutches if I can help it...”(U 18.1270-2; 1275-6).
constitute the self and to demarcate prescribed borders. When the masculinist forces become conscious of their own precarious homosocially-structured relations, homophobia punishes the source of that revelation, reminding the hard men of Ireland of the weakness inherent within agonistic male constitution and exposing the nationalist imaginary to itself.

In “Circe”, Bloom, yet again, is earmarked for the role of scapegoat when he tries to explain to the Watch: “I am a man misunderstood. I am being made a scapegoat of. I am a respectable married man, without a stain on my character. I live in Eccles street. My wife, I am the daughter of a most distinguished commander...” (U 15.775-8). This last slip of tongue feminizes Bloom, mixing his identity with Molly’s, which is significant vis-à-vis his homo-social/erotic affiliation with Boylan. “Because the norm of proper manliness evolved under the aegis of imperialism,” comments Valente, “the claims of subdominant groups to such manliness could only be sustained relative to one another through an internecine struggle of mutual abjection” (“Double-bind” 112). Joyce’s identification of Bloom with Jesus—perhaps the ultimate Jewish scapegoat—makes obvious that Bloom suffers for the sins of Irish culture and, in part, the citizen’s homosexual panic.

Stephen Dedalus, the other sacrificial scapegoat, experiences homosexual panic most powerfully in his relationship with his university friend Cranly from A Portrait, before the young artist’s departure to Europe. In their final meeting, Stephen suffers apprehension over Cranly’s words: “And not to have any one person...who would be more than a friend, more even than the noblest and truest friend a man ever had. His words seemed to have struck some deep chord in his own nature. Had he spoken of
himself, of himself as he was or wished to be?” (P 247). According to Valente in his seminal article, “Thrilled by His Touch: The Aestheticizing of Homosexual Panic in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”, Dedalus’s question effectively typifies panic as a fixation with the boundary separating homosexuality from heterosexuality—a margin that “defines Stephen as its captive” (67). Valente also claims that Cranly plays a critical role in inspiring Stephen’s exile, for the artist “can only re-construct the aesthetic mission as a safely heterosexual adventure by making its completion somehow contingent upon separating himself” from his friend (66-7).

Elsewhere, at the swimming hole in Ulysses’ opening chapter, tension surfaces between the melancholic artist and Mulligan as Stephen observes, “Dressing, undressing. Buck Mulligan erect, with joined hands before him” (U 1.725-6). Later in “Proteus”, Stephen reflects on his changing and invidious relationship with Mulligan and its parallelism with Cranly: “Staunch friend, a brother soul: Wilde’s love that dare not speak its name. His arm: Cranly’s arm. He now will leave me. And the blame? As I am. As I am. All or not at all” (U 3.450-2). Remembering Cranly grasping his arm as a sign of attachment, Stephen is “thrilled by his touch” (P 247) in an oft-recurring motif of homoeros in Joyce’s texts (Weir 222). Joyce’s famous distrust of male friendship as a model of betrayal bar none paired with Cranly’s link to Wilde foregrounds Stephen’s

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60 Joseph A. Kestner writes of Joyce incorporating another emblem of nineteenth and early twentieth-century homosexuality, Greek ephebia, which was a common homoerotic motif in the visual arts of that time. In “Telemachus”, Joyce “privileges the young male body in specifically ephebic contexts: the ritual nudity; the exercising in the nude; the sequestration of the young male; the comradeship; the liminal landscape (the shore/coast); the absence of females; and the idea of ritual bathing associated with initiation” (Kestner 237). Jaime O’Neill greatly exploits this theme in At Swim, Two Boys.

61 Hans Walter Gabler inserted this line, “His arm: Cranly’s arm,” into his corrected text of Ulysses. The debate over the import of this line and the efficacy of its inclusion confirms the homophobia which has hindered critical commentary of the text and, conceivably, Joyce’s own construction of it (Lamos 250).
ambivalence towards his friend, who acts as the exemplar for other male betrayers (Lamos 148).

Another university associate, the nationalist Davin, means to seduce Dedalus into learning Gaelic, but Stephen rebuffs any notion of becoming one with the group: “No honourable and sincere man, said Stephen, has given up to you his life and his youth and his affection 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” (P 203). Stephen conceives this political failure as an almost romantic betrayal in an Irish masculine romance. Furthermore, following the climatic events in the brothel, Stephen attempts to resist the siren calls of colonial entrapments and the demands of his conscience in his guilty “refusal to be sacrificed for his country like the croppy boy” (Bowen 530), when Stephen cries out, “No! No! No! Break my spirit, all of you, if you can! I’ll bring you all to heel!”..... “Nothung!” (U 15.4236-37, 4242).

Stephen is confronted by two British soldiers, Private Carr and Private Compton, ostensibly over some indecorous form of “advance” towards Cissy Caffrey. Ironically, Private Carr asks Cissy, “Was he insulting you while me and him was having a piss?” (U 15.4393-4). Not surprisingly, Joyce marks these two military grunts with the homosocial brush, echoing the urination scenes of Murphy, and of Bloom with Stephen. Thus, it is not unexpected that the soldiers use the homophobic epithet “bugger”62 six times, mainly directed at Dedalus (U 15.4493, 4495, 4629, 4770, 4794, 4797). Partially an index of their class dialect, the British soldiers’ choice of imprecation in a text afloat with queer or

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62 Buggery is a corruption of bougrerie, a reference to eleventh-century Bulgarian heresies, subsequently applied to the Albigensians of Languedoc, who were suspected of homosexuality among other transgressions (Levine 114; Mahaffy 226).
sexually ambiguous signifiers is not a coincidence as Stephen is identified as both feminine and, of course, Irish—an easy target in any case for intoxicated soldiers out on the town. But when Stephen drunkenly mentions he “must kill the priest and the king” (15.4437), drawing upon William Blake’s metaphor (Gifford and Seidman 521), Private Carr explodes, “(tugging at his belt) I’ll wring the neck of any fucker says a word against my fucking king” (U 15.4597-8). Unfastening his belt to strangle or beat Stephen, Carr, inadvertently, projects a sexualized image of undressing amid the irony of his crude diction. Stephen responds to Carr’s threat, “Nothing. He wants my money and my life, though want must be his master, for some brutish empire of his” (U 15.4568-70). The comic phantasmagoria of the episode proceeds apace as “(Major Tweedy and the Citizen exhibit to each other medals, decorations, trophies of war, wounds. Both salute with fierce hostility)” (U 15.4622-4), and Old Gummy Granny gives Stephen a dagger, urging him to kill Carr, and thereby, receive his heavenly reward for striking a blow for Irish freedom and entering the romantic nationalist pantheon which Stephen has spent most of his life trying to evade (U 15.4736-9). Private Carr, losing patience with Stephen’s temerity, punches him, knocking Stephen to the ground (U 15.4746-50).

Amidst this sacrificial battle between Dedalus and these two agents of the British military, Joyce inserts a mock apocalyptic set piece that weaves together the celebration of a Black Mass, Christ’s crucifixion, and a seemingly prescient vision of the Easter Rising: “Dublin’s Burning! Dublin’s Burning! On fire, on fire...Heavy Gatling guns boom” (U 15.460-2). “It rains dragon’s teeth. Armed heroes spring up from furrows”

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63 Gifford and Seidman gloss dragon’s teeth by making an allusion to the Greek myth of Cadmus and the founding of Thebes. After Cadmus kills a dragon, Athena instructs the hero to bury them in the ground, whereby armed men emerge from the ground and slaughter each other. Irish statesmen Walter Hussey Brugh said in a speech in Grattan’s Irish parliament in 1779: “Talk not to me of peace. Ireland is not at
Joyce’s unorthodox and comic connotations here colour the framework of the fight between Stephen and Carr. If the Easter rebellion is the moment of truth for romantic Irish nationalists in the twentieth century, then Joyce’s sardonic deflation of the event and of the narrative climax of *Ulysses* serves as a partial measure of Joyce’s critical assessment of nationalisms. Students of history will note the extensive catalogue of Irish leaders and their internecine conflict between those advocating parliamentary solutions to the Irish question and the physical force revolutionaries: “Wolfe Tone against Henry Grattan, Smith O’Brien against Daniel O’Connell, Michael Davitt against Isaac Butt, Justin M’Carthy against Parnell, Arthur Griffith against John Redmond…” (U 15.4682-5). Emphasizing the rivalries between the various nationalist movements, Joyce transforms them into personalized contests, imagined as a medieval brotherhood of Masonic knights jousting.

Immediately following these duels is the spectacle of a Black Mass, prefiguring Armageddon and the Last Judgment, while a pregnant Mrs Mina Purefoy, “goddess of unreason,” lies, naked, fettered, a chalice resting on her swollen belly” (U 15.4692-3) upon the altar of St. Barbara—the patron saint of soldiers and artillery men (Gifford and Seidman 525, 527). Purefoy serves as the sacrifice celebrated by a cross-dressed Father Malachi O’Flynn who sports “a lace petticoat and reversed chasuble” (U 15.4693-4), and holding an umbrella for the priest is the Reverend Mr Hugh C Haines Love in parodic ecumenical spirit. The sacrifice of mothers and newborns is a convention of the Black peace. It is smothered war. England has sown her laws as dragon’s teeth, and they have sprung up as armed men” (Gifford and Seidman 526).

64 The goddess of unreason is an inversion of the figure of the Goddess of Reason established in 1793 during the French Revolution to replace God (Gifford and Seidman 527).
Mass as well as inversions of the traditional ceremony complete with backwards motifs. However, this is filtered through Stephen’s imaginative projection, whereby the figure of O’Flynn becomes a composite of Malachi “Buck” Mulligan and Father O’Flynn of the epic catalogue of saints in “Cyclops” who brings up the rear of the procession with his attendants Malachi and Patrick (U 12.726-8).

Additionally, the discourses of secrecy, sin, and rumour in Dubliners’ “The Sisters”, disturbingly suggestive of pedophilia, surround the friendship between a Father Flynn and the young narrator. Most troubling, the stage directions read Haines “(raises high behind the celebrant’s petticoat, revealing his grey bare hairy buttocks between which a carrot is stuck) (U 15.4705-6). Joyce’s deployment of a carrot as an erstwhile dildo is comically homophobic for the purposes of humiliating Mulligan, Haines, and perhaps O’Flynn. The mock transubstantiation of the bloody host with O’Flynn’s intonation, “Corpus meum” (U 15.4703), in this perverse offering of the Eucharist entangles associations of cannibalism, (homo)sexuality, and the profane. Since the altar has risen from the centre of the earth, betrayal and usurpation tie these figures and actions together: the nethermost pit of hell is reserved for those, like Satan and Judas, who betrayed their masters and benefactors (Gifford and Seidman 527). The unholy service degenerates into sectarian songs of Orange and Green factions and the forthcoming violence that Stephen faces in the primary narrative. Undertaker Corny Kelleher sums up the events of “Circe” well when he winks to Bloom and says, “Boys will be boys” (U 15.4832).

Joyce skewers the romantic and revolutionary nationalist imaginary through the homophobic mocking of O’Flynn and Haines at one level, while he casts light on the
male nationalist pantheon and its homosocial rival energies. Stephen is to be sacrificed at the hands of the masculine Carr and Compton and their homosexual panic and abjection of the Irish Other, manifested as a violent betrayal repeatedly witnessed throughout the Irish historical record. This picture of Easter 1916 is coded as *queer* in some respects and positioned in the text in the climatic clash between Ireland and England. It might be a convention to have Purefoy on the sacrificial altar symbolically in "Circe's" psychic theatre, but it is Stephen who suffers Carr's blow as the final demarcation of Dedalus's status as outcast. As already mentioned, Stephen, Bloom, Mulligan, Haines, and O’Flynn are tinted with a *queerness*, from these characters’ private thoughts, speeches, manners, behaviour, and clothing, to the ways other Dubliners perceive them. Even Privates Carr and Compton, as representatives of the British military, with their repeated recourse to "bugger" and their fondness for violence, engage in a classic case of homosocial rivalry with Stephen, where the soldiers are compelled to defend, ironically, Cissy Caffrey's honour, and, more significantly, the honour of King Edward VII. This overreaction brings to light the sexually-marked political issues of identity between Dedalus and the soldiers and, thereby, exploits Cissy as a convenient excuse for fighting as a means of demarcating their differences from one another.

Although Joyce participates and extends the early twentieth-century explosion of discourse about (homo)sexuality through a blurring of desire, sexual identity, and signification, I contend that *homoeros* remains ultimately contained and circumscribed by the paternal normative influence of received stereotypes derived from nineteenth-century sexological and psychoanalytic discourses. On the other hand, Joyce places the issue of *homoeros* on the map in Irish and modernist writing, and, most significantly, highlights
the “perversive” nature of sexual “normality” exhibited by most of his important creations. Joyce’s texts seduce readers with veiled yet, paradoxically, transparent homoeroticism, generating enormous discomfort or pleasure depending upon the audience. As Tim Dean observes,

Joyce’s invention of a homosexual code could be indeed understood as enhancing his literary prowess; yet, on the other hand, this invention also potentially impugns his prowess by casting over it the shadow of too much familiarity with homosexual semiotics. Rejecting both of these arguments, I would argue instead that it is more accurate to interpret his introduction of homosexual code as a sign of Joyce’s familiarity with a set of mainstream cultural conceptions of homosexuality, including the idea that its association with concealment means that homosexuality is most effectively, albeit paradoxically, denoted by means of connotation. (249) Joyce’s parataxis of homoerotic codes resonate, colouring his polyvalent correspondences that establish links and analogies between disparate references where the text refuses to elucidate the precise meaning of these provocative signs.

Politically, Joyce’s ambivalent relationship with the strands of Irish nationalism and his own deconstruction of the representation of nationalist exclusions exemplified by the Jewish Bloom and the artist Dedalus is, I argue, a parallel and analogous move to the exposure of the sexual “enemy within” everyone and the “pervasive” desires that saturate Dublin. It is both fitting and ironic that Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Ulysses and A Portrait, themselves, are now quintessentially symbolic of, or metonymic for, Irish culture and literature in spite of the ambivalences and contradictions engendered by
Joyce's trenchant criticism leveled at Irish society. Given Joyce's complex delineation of sexual identity, his texts, as Irish literary and cultural icons, compellingly explore the intersection of the construction of these axes of identity.

Unlike Edward Martyn, who strains to maintain the intimate bonds between his male protagonists corralled within respectable heterosexual limits yet finds that he becomes more entangled in homoeros as his plays progress, Joyce takes on the relentless questioning of received ideas and the destabilization of identity in A Portrait, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake and is not afraid to challenge his audience's discomfort and the ideological strictures of his own culture. Hurtling light years forward from Martyn's personal asceticism, slavish devotion to Catholic dogma, and conflicted hieratic homoeroticism, Joyce's writing, in lieu of silence, tenders Dublin's quintessential gossip, chatter, and innuendo. Where sexual desire is displaced and censored in Martyn's thought, Joyce allows wayward desires to speak repeatedly for brief moments by means of a saturation of homoerotic references, gestures, jokes, and a multitude of instances of gender "trouble." Joyce critiques the normative in identity by opening up his central figures to queer readings through illuminating their private psychic interiority yet, by the same token, representing exposed desires (and fear of these desires) that potentially pose a threat from inside the individual and within Irish culture. In the next chapter, the figure of the Irish bachelor, so common in Irish writing, takes on a queer spin in plays by Brian Friel and Thomas Kilroy. Seeing decisively functions in The Gentle Island and The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche, not only as a form of surveillance, but also as the foundation for assembling clues about Irish masculinity. These plays explore more explicitly the epistemological privilege of unknowing as it relates to contemporary
understandings of the closet.
Queering the Cracked Lookingglass of a Servant:

Brian Friel and Thomas Kilroy

When you call me a repressed gay to my face
--To my face, I am happy to say--
I smile, gratified that you have got it half right.
But of course you have got it also half wrong.
Repressed? No, not repressed,
Embracing men on the side of the street
Full of praise, awe, admiration of them.
I am a free man at home in my own country,
An image of the gay metaphor of God.


SHANE: Be Jaysus, Shane boy, you’re a quare comedian. You should be on the stage. Like me. Look at the act I have—the simple, upright, hardworking island peasant holding on manfully to the real values in life, sustained by a thousand-year-old culture, preserving for my people a really worthwhile inheritance.


KELLY: ..Anyway they can be seen a mile off. Sure you’d know one before he’d open his mouth.
SEAMUS: Is that right? I wouldn’t have known your man to be one, now.


Dramatists Brian Friel and Thomas Kilroy scrutinize the open secret structure of the closet in the plays *The Gentle Island* (1971) and *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* (1968). Challenging Irish cultural constructions of sexual identity, in particular that pertaining to the Irish bachelor, both playwrights expose the contradictions within romantic cultural nationalism’s *homoeros*. Friel and Kilroy organize *The Gentle Island* and *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* around a series of secrets integral to the performative operations of the closet in which homosocial desire melds with
homophobia. Counter to the “tacit assumption that to be Irish is to be white, heterosexual and Roman Catholic” (Norris 770), both Kilroy and Friel dramatize the bewildering spectrum of male relationships where the act of seeing/not seeing becomes metonymic for not only a type of Foucauldian surveillance but also for the “privilege of unknowing”. Rural and urban communities in Ireland are in crisis in Friel’s and Kilroy’s productions as traditional social structures and authority break down, triggering the violent, and in Kilroy’s case, “comic” scapegoating of homosexual outsiders. Melancholic homosociality’s sacrificial interpellation of the homosexual emerges as a return of the repressed couched in a Christic configuration, whereby a “redeemed” homosexuality remains contained within patriarchal norms. In the dramas under discussion, the audience witnesses the consequences of romantic cultural nationalism’s determining influence in Irish life and the concomitant tensions between this rendering of the nation and an implied other version of community marked by urban modernity.

Friel and Kilroy critique the nostalgic romantic illusions propagated by nationalist rhetoric and symbolism which saturate the Irish cultural imaginary. The Edenic west of Ireland serves as an ideological repository of ancestral Irishness connected to culture, language, faith, and geographical space. Friel’s early plays from the 1960s nostalgically engage the terrain of the Irish pastoral embodied in the traditional way of life characteristic of remote locales in the northwest of Ireland. “The west became the place of Irish authenticity,” clarifies Seamus Deane, “the place that was not yet subject to the effects of administrative, governmental rules and laws, and which therefore preserved among its population the national character in its pristine form” (Strange 52). According to Luke Gibbons, this authenticity frequently materialized as a form of romantic
primitivism that was "extolled at the expense of the city and the past [was] venerated rather than the present" (Transformations 23, 29). Friel insists that Ireland remains a "peasant society" with two prevailing fundamentals—a passionate attachment to the land and a paranoiac individualism (Pine, "Contemporary" 193). Friel includes within his concepts of Irishness such factors as "religion, politics, money, position, marriage, revolts, affairs, love, loyalty, disaffection," which he believes can only be addressed in staging dramas dealing with the family (Pine, "Contemporary" 192). Seamus Deane posits that Friel's dark parable of de Valera's Ireland, The Gentle Island, written and first produced in 1971 at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin, marks a watershed in the author's career, for in this play Friel unremittingly exposes the brutal and often lethal realities underneath constructed illusions that have held a grip on the cultural imagination of Irish society for decades ("Introduction" 12-6).

Based on the close examination of Friel's essays and interviews, Scott Boltwood observes that during Friel's early career the playwright maintained an equivocal relationship to Republican nationalism as he sought principles satisfactory to both communities in Northern Ireland; more recently, however, Friel's statements on nationalism have greatly distanced himself and his work from condoning any insistence upon a united Ireland (307). However, Friel's entire œuvre revises "the master narratives of Irish nationalism that he inherited from his native tradition" (McGrath 282). Friel concurs with David Lloyd's argument that "the principal organizing metaphor of Irish nationalism is that of a proper paternity, of restoring the lineage of the fathers in order to repossess the motherland" (Anomalous 105). Friel's work remains overwhelmingly anxious over the issue of paternity and his generation's failure to
reconcile nationalist homosocial narratives with its own (Boltwood 310).

To contextualize Friel's romantic nationalist setting in *The Gentle Island*, the audience must understand the impact and the character of historical forces upon hundreds of small isolated rural communities like Inishkeen. Rapid depopulation and a demographic gender imbalance, spawned by a much greater rate of emigration by women, thereby, creates a culture where bachelors numerically form the dominant social group in these communities by a large margin. These unmarried men, who wish to maintain ties to their family farms, suffer from documented cases of isolation, loneliness, alcoholism, and psychological breakdown (Brody 93-4). Friel refracts this crisis in traditional social structure and authority by portraying the decay of the Sweeney family. Friel describes the ubiquitous father figure, a decrepit avatar of cultural nationalism, as a "rambling parent"; moreover, this stress on the paternal underscores not only the homosocial nature of the nationalist imaginary but marks the absence of mothers (Boltwood 310). Friel's and Kilroy's focus upon community breakdown, in part, traces its root cause to "the collapse of rural structures of spiritual support," which may strike critics as reactionary but is rather "radical because it is the conservative traditions themselves (of family, church and state) which they find deficient" (Murray, "Contemporary" 5). Conversely, Claire Gleitman argues that Friel's dramas are forms of "vexed nostalgia"; even though Friel debunks old mythologies, he, nonetheless, seems unwilling "to surrender history altogether, to acknowledge that the grand and teleological interpretations of history have failed" (72, 61).

Between 1968-1971 Kilroy and Friel premiered both plays in Ireland amidst major legal and social changes happening in England and America including the
decriminalization of sodomy in England and Wales and several American states in 1967. In 1965, New York ended its ban on theatrical depictions of homosexuality, and, in Britain, three years later, the passing of The Theatres Act of 1968 ceased government censorship. Mainstream theatre venues began to produce plays such as Mart Crowley’s *The Boys in the Band*, Christopher Hampton’s *Total Eclipse*, Noel Coward’s *A Song at Twilight*, controversial works by Edward Albee and John Osborne, not to mention, Joe Orton’s overturning of dominant gay stereotypes in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, *Loot*, and *What the Butler Saw* (de Jongh 86-94). Brendan Behan’s productions of *The Quare Fellow* and *The Hostage* offered inspiration closer to home in dramatizing disenchantment with post-independence Ireland and in his dissenting incorporation of queers and other marginalized figures within Irish theatre.

*The Gentle Island* is generally regarded as Friel’s rejoinder to the eruption of bloodshed in Northern Ireland; accordingly, D. E. S. Maxwell labels the play an “anti-masque of violence and frustration” (“Imagining” 95; Lanters 163). Almost a decade earlier and touching upon the forces at work in *The Gentle Island*, Friel staged *The Enemy Within* (1962), a tale of homicidal impulses circulating within the hermetic homosocial world of St. Columba’s monastery and rival Irish clans. It is curious to note that in spite of Friel’s influence upon contemporary Irish theatre, *The Gentle Island*, has been relatively neglected from the writer’s canon, having only been performed four times—three occasions in Dublin and a 1993 Irish language version in West Belfast. Unlike the rest of Friel’s work since his 1964 breakthrough *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *The Gentle Island* has not been produced in the United States; to what degree the play’s subject matter has contributed to this text’s academic and theatrical invisibility remains
disputable. Typically, Friel composes traditional naturalist plays with detailed arrangements of characters and props situated in specific historical and cultural contexts, and *The Gentle Island* is no exception (Gleitman 63, 68).

In December 1988, Frank McGuinness, in his directorial debut, revived *The Gentle Island* at the Abbey's Peacock stage, which coincidently was the first dramatic performance McGuinness had ever seen as a young undergraduate (Lojek, “Lamentation” 48; *Contexts* 171). In a R.T.E. broadcast in 1988, McGuinness describes this play as prophetic:

> When it was first presented in 1971, I think it was ahead of its time and perhaps deliberately ahead of its time, because then it was a prophetic play, prophetic in that it diagnosed the problems that were going to afflict Ireland over the last twenty years, the hypocrisy of the south, the violence of the north, and he brings the two together on this Gentle Island and exposes them mercilessly. (Qtd. in Lojek, “Lamentation” 56)

Writing for the *Sunday Tribune* on 11 December 1988, McGuinness further explains that “love between men infects the island, a plague to be eradicated. It is, at terrible cost. Recognition dawns that the disease is not alien. It is native to this place and therefore natural. Nature is denied and a love that dares not speak its name develops” (qtd. in Lojek, “Lamentation” 56). Ireland’s romantic ideology repeatedly emphasizes the well-being and the sanctity of the nationalist community at the expense of dissonant sexual and gender identities.

Into Inishkeen’s disintegrating and volatile environment two *other* Irishmen, a gay couple, Peter and Shane, enter on vacation from the relatively cosmopolitan world of
Dublin. The drama's layers of buried secrets compel the audience to piece together the "truth" behind the Sweeneys, their visitors, and the island's brutal history. "The function of the hidden story, when it is uncovered is to transform the stage as public exhibition area into the stage as private and sacral" (Deane *Celtic* 168). Manus, a powerful hypermasculine figure and the undisputed "King of Inishkeen" (Friel, *Gentle* 18), exhibits authoritarian control in his aspirations to shape the lives of the villagers according to romantic pastoral ideals. On stage, Manus is seated with his back to the audience, exemplifying Daniel Corkery's "backward look" indicative of those living in the past. As part of the Irish system of familism, Manus is interested in the management of his family and the transmission of male power, driving his desire for Sarah to conceive and for Joe to marry Anna.

Friel relies upon gender stereotypes to delineate complex human differences, shoring up male homosociality with its intrinsic homophobic unease, by crudely distinguishing Manus's elder son Philly from the other men on the island. In contrast to his father and brother, Joe, who are depicted as having big physiques (11), Philly is "lightly built" and "talks quietly" (19), residing on the margins of this island's homosocial order. Both Manus and Joe joke about whether or not Philly is strong enough to handle the salmon catch alone (20-1). Bosco's remarks further typify the feminization of Philly: "It's a buck like me Sarah should have got. Jaysus, I'd never rise out of the bed except to eat" (12). Bosco strews his speech with references to male virility: "Inishkeen stallions", "buck", and "Donegal bulls" (12, 13); moreover, Joe's description of Bosco and his cohorts' drunken celebration involving wrestling competitions and the

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65 Hereafter, all citations to Friel's *The Gentle Island* will be specified by page number only.
sadistic torture of two cats (22) as a means of cementing masculine bonds suggests the
violent repression of *homoeros* amongst the men on the island.

Sarah’s disclosure of how exactly Manus lost his arm underscores the level of
sacrificial violence present in Ireland’s isolated island communities. Friel nicknames
Rosie Duffy—the missing wife and mother of the story—“Rosie Dubh” (Black Rosie)
(56), aligning her with the woman in James Clarence Mangan’s nineteenth-century
translation of the patriotic standard “Dark Rosaleen”. Mangan’s speaker is on a journey
back to his Rosaleen where he details what he would endure to heal her hurts (273-5),
vaguely paralleling Manus’s own journey back to a pregnant Rosie Duffy to ask her to
marry him years earlier. Nevertheless, like Cathleen ni Houlihan, this dark emblem of
Ireland has been coded as male through Irish nationalisms’ constitutive homosociality,
which greater elucidates Manus’s castration through the loss of his arm, amputated with
fishing knifes by his future wife’s abusive uncles upon landfall (57).

Visiting this romantic dystopia, Peter is blinded by *Bord Fáilte* images of his
nation, for, in his first speech, he utters the verbs “to see” or “to look” five times in eight
lines, relating the imagined physical splendour of the Donegal *Gaeltacht* to the audience
(25); however, unlike Shane, he fails to see the sinister undercurrents afoot on Inishkeen,
which Shane immediately stamps as “scalping island” (26). *Seeing* becomes a crucial
metaphor in *The Gentle Island*, not only for acts of observation, but also for the
Foucauldian constitution of knowledge where “the codified power to punish turns into a
disciplinary power to observe” (*Discipline* 224). Panopticism involves the power of
society’s disciplinary all-seeing eyes, in this case Sarah’s, that sanction ideological codes
of conduct by coercively socializing individuals to conform to acceptable models of
behaviour. The closet remains only a partial refuge within an economy of policing surveillance, for the closet is intrinsically sewn into the knowledge-fabric of society. The binary of seeing/not seeing underpins the epistemologies of the numerous closets that exist on Inishkeen, a microcosm of the Irish family and of the state.

In Shane’s and Peter’s first encounter with Sarah, who like Abraham’s wife is barren, the stage directions state: “They are not aware of her until she speaks” (28).

From the very beginning, Friel places Sarah in the position of the observer or the seer in relation to all the men on the island. She acquires knowledge and attempts to wrest the silence from around the Dubliners’ private lives. Sarah’s almost catechetical interrogation of Shane roughly sketches out the biographical facts about the engineer and furnishes data which Sarah absorbs in order to solve the enigma of the men’s relationship (35-7). Throughout the play, what exactly Sarah knows and how soon she knows it remains uncertain. Sarah confesses that she has been spying on Peter and Shane, monitoring their routines: “when you’re down below at the tent, I do watch you all the time through the French binoculars. (Pause) Peter goes for a walk at ten o’clock every night along the white strand” (38-9). Such surveillance tactics have the effect of conditioning subjects to monitor and to regulate their behaviour. In the poetic ethnography Inishkillane: Change and Decline in the West of Ireland (1973), anthropologist Hugh Brody discusses this surveillance phenomenon in relation to Irish communities similar to Inishkeen:

Awareness of neighbours in all its insightful detail has a partner in gossip...Gossip is directed...against deviation. To this end it watches, anticipates and criticizes. It is the expression of a collective Sherlock
Holmes, as it were, seeking to find in the smallest detail a clue to the identity of transgressors and precise nature or timing of transgressions.

(153)

Although the Dubliners will modify their interactions, signs of their intimate relationship will unavoidably register in Sarah’s mind to one degree or another.

Desiring to know if Shane has any reason to remain in Dublin, Sarah asks one of the questions most dreaded by a man in the closet: “A girl, maybe?” (37). This heterosexist assumption becomes a dangerous tool in Sarah’s hands as she proceeds to make an unequivocal sexual advance, “I want to lie with you, engineer” (39). Naturally, Shane declines, “Sorry. Rotary meeting tonight, luv” (39). Dismayed at being rebuffed, Sarah demands a reason for Shane’s refusal as Peter enters the scene by way of explanation. It is difficult to ascertain exactly to what degree the escalation of the epistemological stakes is conscious on Sarah’s part; however, she has a history of extracting and retaining others’ secrets, and her shadowing of the travellers is deliberate. Insofar as both of Sarah’s questions function as litmus tests for signs of heterosexuality, Shane faces a discursive double bind. Barring the prospect of coming out to Sarah, a closeted Shane encounters two options: either he lies by confirming that there is another woman in his life and, he therefore, must decline Sarah’s offer; or else he admits there is no woman, but then must construct a lie to explain her absence as well as why he must refuse Sarah again. Sarah’s rapid-fire inquiries and keen mind duly note the fact that Peter and Shane are unmarried and that Peter has played a principal role in Shane’s life for years; moreover, the suspiciousness the woman displays in her seemingly innocuous query, “Who cooks your food?” (36), in her reaction to the hint of scandal surrounding
Peter’s unemployment (54-5), and in her sour disposition during the men’s excursion in the boat (52-7), all suggest that Sarah is close to solving the riddle of her guests.

In contrast to Peter’s nostalgia for a romantic version of Ireland demonstrated by claiming to envy Manus’s way of life (54), Shane, in his ever-shifting personas, mocks Manus’s patriarchal hypocrisy, laying bare his so-called values and historical traditions. *The Gentle Island* places these peasant values “glorified by the fathers of the state” under scrutiny and “finds it wanting,” remarks Tony Corbett (53). For the inhabitants of Inishkeen live life akin to scavengers, picking at the corpses of whatever happens to wash up on their shores from the outside world. “We give support to his illusion that the place isn’t a cemetery. But it is. And he knows it,” asserts Shane; “[t]he place and his way of life and everything he believes in and all he touches—dead, finished, spent. And when he finally faces that, he’s liable to become dangerous” (41). Shane intuits the melancholic sacrificial violence just under the radar and undercuts the nationalist idyll as the set itself discloses that the Sweeney estate has become tantamount to a war museum lacking any distinctive culture of place (Lojek, “Lamentation” 51-2).

Inexorably, the personal and sexual tensions mount amongst the characters as Act One draws to a close. During a traditional song-and-dance, Shane’s playful flirtation with Sarah then Philly turns ugly and degenerates into physical violence. Shane prances across the stage beckoning to Joe, then Philly, to dance with him. Joe good-heartedly resists, “You’re doing great yourself” (44), but his elder brother abruptly rejects Shane’s hand, shouting “Go to hell!” (44). Philly trips Shane and proceeds to punch the outsider repeatedly, yelling “Dance, you bastard! Dance! Dance!” (45). In contrast to his

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66 In contrast, Joe Comerford’s film *Reefer and the Model* (1988), which won Best Feature Award at the Celtic Film Festival and the Europa Prize in Barcelona that year, portrays a gay character, Badger, dancing with an Irish soldier in a pub on Inis Mór and kissing him during a céilidh (Pettitt, “Pigs” 260-1).
earlier disapproving attitude towards the revellers at Big Anthony’s (22), Philly seems to be out of character as he taunts: “We were only beginning to warm up there, weren’t we? (To PETER.) You should see us when we get going full steam” (46). Here the implicit homoeroticism paired with veiled threats foreshadows later violence. To Philly, who potentially is closeted, Shane’s sexuality represents not only attraction and imaginable sexual release but also the threat to the maintenance of his heterosexual identity. Shane serves as a ready scapegoat for the male homosocial order where desire and identification encounter each other.

In Act Two, Sarah irrevocably shatters Shane’s glass closet as well as uncovering her husband’s when she returns from the boathouse aghast in the knowledge of secret desire, illicit sexuality, and fervent betrayal:

SARAH: Would you like to have a look at your son? Would you like to see the bull that’s going to sire your grandchildren and bring back life to this graveyard?....No, you don’t want to see, Philly’s the prince. Philly’s the hero. Philly’s the apple of your blind eye. And it’s easier to blame me, isn’t it? I’m the barren one. My womb bears no crop. Like the lower field good seed’s wasted on me. The worst mistake your Philly could have made, wasn’t it, to marry a sterile woman?

MANUS: What are you trying to say?

SARAH: That he’s down there in the boathouse at the far slip, your Philly, my husband. That he’s down there with that Dublin tramp, Shane. That they’re stripped naked. That he’s doing for the tramp what he couldn’t do for me. (61)
Sarah attacks Manus’s illusions concerning Philly and the sexual orientation of their guests. Less vengeful than his sister-in-law, Joe challenges Sarah’s account, arguing she may have been mistaken—“How could you see in the dark?” (63); moreover, Joe is cognizant of the fact that “two’s to blame” (62) in contrast to Manus who later denies Philly’s involvement (74). “What do you think, Manus?” pressures Sarah, “Is there doubt in your mind?” (63). In spite of his denial afterwards, Manus’s simple reply “[i]he gun” (63) indicates that possibly he has suspected Philly’s and the travellers’ sexuality before but has refused to acknowledge even the faintest possibility of such a reality, instead blaming Sarah for her infertility and not his son’s lack of appetite. Framing questions of sex into metaphors of theft, Manus accuses Shane, “You stole my son” (67), puncturing Manus’s illusions about Philly’s normative masculinity. In confronting Shane, Sarah attests to have caught the two men in the act “with [her] own eyes” (67), again relying upon the validity of vision as her basis of knowledge despite the fact that sight remains contingent upon the preconceptions of the observer. Sarah assails Shane’s perception of the truth, “Look at the slippery eyes” (67) she jeers; hence, the very faculty upon which Sarah steadfastly relies to formulate judgements is, in Shane’s case, defective and false.

Some critics such as George O’Brien, Desmond Maxwell, and Ulf Dantanus⁶⁷ question the veracity of Sarah’s allegations because her jealousy provides a plausible motive to lie. Although Sarah conceivably is barren however, Philly is the woman’s only viable ticket off the island and her only rescue from the isolation she suffers, so it is not in Sarah’s best interests to fabricate the homosexual scenario simply out of spiteful jealousy. Sarah impugns her husband and father-in-law for her discontent but “turns her

hatred for them towards Shane, whose transgressions are substituted for the family’s ills” (Lanters 166). Moreover, given the considerable evidence of the woman’s detective work, it is likely that Shane and Philly share a sexual experience. Because the boathouse sex scene takes place off stage, the audience relies upon Sarah’s statements. Friel may be justifiably criticized for sparing his audience the urgent necessity of grappling with homosexuality—not in the veiled abstract but in the life as lived--instead choosing to refract the affair through a character whose observations are suspect because of her tendency to “see things”; however, this playwright characteristically places the audience and some of the drama’s characters in a position of uncertainty, mirroring the operations of power, knowledge, and ignorance in society at large. The audience can choose to disbelieve and reject Sarah’s testimony if they wish to deny Peter’s and Shane’s sexual identity, preferring to consider them a pair of Irish bachelors. The play unfolds as a metaphor for the epistemological privilege of unknowing in a world which pretends “to not know what it knows” (Sedgwick, Tendencies 51) as much as Friel brilliantly exposes this privilege to scrutiny.

The closet rapidly reasserts itself by means of silence and denial in the aftermath of the shooting. Given the illegality of homosexual relations in the Republic in 1971, Shane and Peter lie to both the police and medical authorities about the event which leaves Shane maimed for life (70). The play ends “with a conspiracy of silence” (O’Brien 72) as Manus requests that Sarah not speak of the incident, pretending nothing happened and, thereby, refusing to acknowledge Philly’s complicit involvement. The consequences of coming out or being forced out of the closet can be unpredictable, and, in Shane’s case, tragic. The horrible event provides the impetus for Joe to leave for
Scotland to join Bosco and the boys, not Anna. Manus, heartbroken and delusional, blames his son’s exodus on Shane and Peter and resorts to employing Gothic metaphors of disease:

MANUS: *(Shouts)* It’s them--them queers! I should have killed the two of them when I had them! What we had wasn’t much but what there was was decent and wholesome! And they blighted us! They cankered us! They blackened the bud that was beginning to grow again! My curse on them! My curse of hell on the two of them! *Agus marbh-fhasc ortha*--an early shroud on them! (72)

Sarah’s shooting of Shane and Manus’s irrational reaction reveals how severely the melancholic homosocial order is shaken by same-sex desire and what moral and ethical transgressions become not just permissible but sanctioned by the community to eradicate such deviations from the norm. “Shane becomes Philly’s sacrificial double,” posits José Lanters, “when the shot paralyzes him from the waist down and he is removed from the island, Philly’s impotence and the violent tensions evoked by it are symbolically castout” (169).

Shane and Peter are sacrificial scapegoats for a community which is at a crisis point--its very existence is under threat demographically as well as culturally--as the reality of an increasingly modernized nation with its own set of values and beliefs intrudes upon the islanders’ gentle domain. The archaic authority of sacrifice in Irish peasant society also materializes in some of Friel’s later plays such as *Faith Healer* (1979), *Translations* (1980), and *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) where Dionysian scapegoating remains central to the action. However, in *The Gentle Island*, nationalisms’
sacrificial *homoeros*, underwriting the life of this agrarian community, remains, in the first instance, an internal homosocial phenomenon and one that bears greater currency in a rapidly changing country. F. C. McGrath claims that *The Gentle Island* "demystifies the myth of Gaelic rural innocence as the foundation for family and social values for the Irish nation....[and] portrays peasant life in the West as visceral, vengeful, and without redeeming virtue" (76).

On Inishkeen, ghosts and the spectral homosexual haunt the homosocial order as Joe claims that Shane "looked like a ghost lying on the stretcher" (70) when he was taken to Dublin for medical treatment. The combining of the ghost and the homosexual is an appropriate one, for both exist beyond the daily perceptions of an anxious mainstream—there, but usually not seen. Kieran Flanagan writes that Friel "manages to articulate with great dramatic force the plight of those caught in social conditions not of their own making, but which in the tragedy that unfolds unmakes them" (201). Neither their sexual identity nor society’s wilful ignorance and prejudice, sustained through an equally wilful unknowing, are Shane’s or Peter’s fault, but the collision of the two results in the wounding of the homosexual figure who vanishes from the island as quickly as he appeared.

Even though *The Gentle Island* places homosexual-identified characters on the stage, Peter and Shane lack psychological and cultural depth, but they do mark the beginning of the development of gay self-consciousness in Irish writing, moving away from Behan’s caricatures and Joyce’s exploration of the psychic queer complexity of heterosexually-identified men such as Dedalus, Bloom, and Mulligan. Ostensibly, the gay men serve to elicit a modicum of sympathy and pity for their suffering, but Friel’s
ambivalent attitude towards the couple is demonstrated in the overall maintenance of the violent status quo on the island, a fitting symbol for a melancholic nationalist identity. The playwright generates empathy for the men’s suffering, but “they are not the protagonists; this is not their play” (McGrath 77); therefore, Friel contains the couple’s social and political importance by transforming them into tragic sacrificial victims, which redeems them for their apparent sexual falls from grace.

Translations (1980), Friel’s most celebrated Field Day production, is an update on The Gentle Island, complete with a mute Sarah and a lame Manus, re-examining Friel’s conviction that traditional Ireland is and always has been a brutal place, particularly in regards to the outsider figure, who, in this instance, is Englishman Lieutenant George Yolland. As Yolland arrives in the archetypal Frielian village Baile Beag, Donegal in 1833, the community is on the precipice of catastrophe for the Great Famine is only a decade hence, which will witness the loss of the Gaelic peasantry and the Irish language. Commissioned to perform the Ordnance Survey of Ireland to standardize Irish place-names by translating them into English, Yolland unsuspectingly finds himself part of two homosocial triangles with the O’Donnell brothers—Manus and Owen—and Marie Chatach completing the triad. Owen, assisted by his friend Yolland, serves as translator and native informer. In the stage directions, Friel makes a point of describing Owen as the “younger son, a handsome, attractive young man in his twenties. He is dressed smartly—a city man” (Friel, Translations 400). Yolland works on his mapping exercises with his handsome friend, who remains busy translating between the engineer and the Irish-speaking villagers.

68 Hereafter, all citations to Friel’s Translations will be specified by page number only.
When Yolland meets Marie, who previously has been romantically associated with Owen’s brother Manus, resentment and rivalry escalates; furthermore, Friel complicates this ostensible colonial allegory of stealing the Irish “colleen” from the castrated native Irishman by having Owen forced into the role as linguistic mediator between the couple (Cullingford, *Others* 56). Because the two can barely communicate with one another, their relationship remains unsound as Yolland constantly asks, “Sorry—sorry?...What’s she saying?” (424). Ironically, Marie desires to learn English and leave for America, but Yolland yearns to learn Irish to stay put, further underscoring their incompatibility. Elizabeth Butler Cullingford argues that Yolland’s “most sustained relationship is with...Owen” demonstrated in the men’s lengthier, more substantial scenes together compared to Yolland’s one scene with Marie (“Gender” 169; *Others* 54). The audience witnesses the differential qualities of Yolland’s relations in the scenes of male bonding between the two men as they drink poteen and map the nation, Yolland’s growing love for Ireland, and, even at one point, the merging of their names in a joyful inebriated collapse of identity—“Oland!” (422). Owen and Yolland discuss spending Christmas holidays together on Inis Meadhon as well, echoing Manus’s invitation to Peter on Inishkeen (423).

In any case, Yolland’s true love is Ireland, viewing the country through rose-tinted glasses and believing Baile Beag to be an “Eden” (422). “I think your countryside is—is—is very beautiful. I’ve fallen in love with it already,” admits Yolland (407), who wishes to become fluent in Irish with Owen’s help (412). Owen calls Yolland a “committed Hibernophile” (407) but warns him not to be “such a bloody romantic” (414). The effects of Irish nationalisms’ sacrificial *homoerōs* is not confined to the Irish-born
alone. As with other figures, Yolland has fallen in love with a romantic Ireland which is
gendered as male ultimately, and he will be punished for ostensibly violating
heterosexually-patrolled national borders. “Even if I did speak Irish I’d always be an
outsider here,” suspects Yolland; “I may learn the password but the language of the tribe
will always elude me....The private core will always be...hermetic, won’t it?” (416).
The audience witnesses Yolland’s precarious status of being an outsider when he
disappears and is presumably murdered by the Donnelly twins, not to mention, Manus’s
bubbling resentment towards him, his deep homosocial bonds with Owen, and his rather
perfunctory relationship with Marie. Significantly, the one point of contact in Yolland’s
scene with his love interest revolves around the word “Earth” (428) denoting a handful of
Irish clay, thereby bringing on board the tropes of land, soil, and nationalist identity. As I
have argued, an Irish body-as-homeland has been consistently coded as masculine while
simultaneously deploying as a form of camouflage the trope of Ireland as Woman within
the nationalist cultural imaginary. Yolland is in love with Irish homosociality’s male-
construction of this “earth”, which eventually costs him his life.

If Frielian drama unveils to the audience a vast subterranean economy of
homoeros in the most romantic archetypal of Irish settings, then Thomas Kilroy’s comedy
*The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche*, performed at the Olympia Theatre, Dublin in
1968 and later revived at the Abbey Theatre in the late 1980s, succeeds in deconstructing
the nature of the ubiquitous male institution: the pub crawl. *The Death and Resurrection
of Mr. Roche* remains a landmark in its sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality only
three years after England’s Lord Chamberlain had rejected John Osborne’s *A Patriot for
Me* and twenty-five years before homosexuality’s decriminalization in Ireland (Murray,
Kilroy’s primary theatrical influences are the Abbey’s rural and Ibsenist traditions and that of the more international, experimental, and urban traditions of the Royal Court theatre; with the exception of *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche*, Kilroy eschews conservative realism to underscore his critique of representation and the coherence of national and sexual identities best illustrated in *Double Cross* (1986) and *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde* (1997) (Murray, “World” 68; McMullan 126).

*The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* offers an Irish audience a perspective on what happens when the values of de Valera uneasily co-exist within Dublin’s urban environs as Kilroy remains conscious of the ubiquitous discourses of nationalist identity throughout the culture. In the play, the tension between Irish tradition and cosmopolitan modernity surfaces in the debates between a nostalgic, backward-looking, closeted Irish civil servant, Kelly, and his more progressive, forward-looking associates Myles and Seamus. Kelly emphatically states, “[f]lats isn’t a house!” (Kilroy, *Roche* 10) upon entering his apartment in the first scene, implying that a house or traditional cottage is imbued with a sense of family instead of the compartmental character of metropolitan dwellings. As Kelly recollects, a cottage is “home” and “a natural place to live in” (56), and he admits to his mates that he rather be a “farmer’s labourer....working on the land” (55) than stuck in Birmingham. D. E. S. Maxwell comments that the men’s modern rootlessness is a loss of the sense of possessing the land and of belonging to a particular farm, region, or culture (“Imagining” 98). On the other hand, Myles, branding Kelly’s flat a “tomb” (20), fixates on the present: “It’s now that counts, friend, now and not yesterday” (18); moreover, Seamus asks Kelly questions that Kilroy poses to his

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69 Hereafter all citations to *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* will be specified by page number only.
audience: “Why haven’t you changed? Why haven’t you changed even a little?” (52).

*The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* presents a darkly comic perspective upon the homosocial world of Irish pub culture through Kelly, who by means of a series of revelations comes tentatively to concede his unorthodox sexual identity. Kelly is an unkept, sweaty, slob who wears the same clothes everyday according to Kilroy’s notes to the wardrobe department (7); however, he is the consummate proponent of the codes, behaviours, and expectations of male homosocial bonding. The action begins with Kelly and his “best friend”, Seamus, returning from a night out drinking at Murray’s pub. Nostalgic for their glory days, Kelly complains that it has been two years since they have socialized together, attributing this fact to Seamus’s married state:

KELLY: ....God, them were the days, Seamus, them were the days. Gargle and the bit of auld crack every Saturday night of the week. Things haven’t been the same since....D’you remember them days, at all....?

SEAMUS: I remember those days. A bare two years ago—

KELLY: Don’t go correcting me, y’auld tool of a schoolmaster. (*Pause.*) That was before you went off and got yourself a wife, you auld bugger.

SEAMUS: Before I got myself a wife, that’s right.

KELLY (*Enthusiastically. They are at the door now*): But I said you’d come back to the fold, boy....Give ‘em all a couple of years and it’ll wear off....And two years to the minnit in you walked this ‘effin door....Looking for a jar with the lads....I said it the day you were married, boy. Give him

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70 Recent research published by the United Nation’s World Health Organization states that Ireland has some of the highest rates of drug abuse among Irish students and of alcohol consumption in the European Union. Part of Irish stereotypes accounts for the denial about the extent of the problem, a pattern of binge consumption, and the public’s tolerance of drunkenness (Moane 110, 117-8).
two years and he’ll be back in circulation again. ‘Tis alright for the first stretch. Then it wears off, ha? Sure you shouldn’t be married at all, you poor whore, if you’d taken my advice! Anyway you’ve got out in time, boy, so you have-- (11-2)

Kelly’s homosocial discourse betrays more than a casual interest in Seamus’s marital status. Seamus’s absence from the homosocial economy disturbs a closeted Kelly who has a considerable emotional investment in the camaraderie of men, especially in Seamus’s case. Kelly’s confidence that Seamus would return to the “fold” (11) and be “back in circulation” (11) is underlain by his desire to be involved intimately in Seamus’s affairs so as to alleviate the loneliness he suffers.

Kelly has a habit of being sentimental in Seamus’s presence: “He’s the best pal I ever had——I’m not afraid to broadcast it. I’m not ashamed of my feelings....I don’t have any complexes about myself” (15, 17). This emotional effusion embarrasses the teacher, who, in turn, protests, “Ah Kelly, don’t go all soft on me—” (11). In light of the entire story, the irony of Kelly’s defensive declarations becomes glaringly manifest, for his true feelings are refracted through the closet. Seamus’s two-year absence and his decision to distance himself from his erstwhile companion at the end of Act Two strongly suggest that Kelly’s perception of their intimate friendship is not mutual. Kelly’s relations with all of his companions by the conclusion of the play are exposed as uncertain, yet the social pressures of conformity prompt the indefatigable man to deny his desires, choosing instead to shore up his established identity through affiliation with the identity of the homosocial collective (Roche, “Fall” 162). The Saturday night and Sunday morning male rituals are so ingrained that the man acts as if his long night of soul-searching never
happened.

Sexual relations between these Irish bachelors are, primarily, in language: sexual euphemisms, innuendoes, figures of speech and banter mobilize discourses of misogyny, scatology, and physical familiarity to establish and to maintain masculine bonds. This linguistic performativity provides relief maps of the closet and of the movement towards the scapegoating of homosexual desire and identity embodied by Mr. Roche in the Irish cultural imaginary. Male homosociality is marked by the use of sexually-charged and misogynist language that is frequently uttered by Myles, Doc, and Kelly.\footnote{The misogynist sentiments expressed by Kilroy’s bachelors are unsettling not just because of the prejudicial rhetoric but the mythic stereotype of the homosexual who hates women. Even though Mr. Roche does not resort to sexist language, much of Kelly’s reasoning for not being attracted to women plays into a misogynist discourse: “I can’t abide their skittering and giggling. It gives me a royal pain in the arse to be listening to them” (54). Kelly’s “closetedness” and his association with ostensibly heterosexual companions remain critical factors in the bachelor’s language and his expressed opinions.} Crude terminology concerning sexual prowess, penises, arousal, and women is sprinkled throughout the dialogue: “stillorgan” (10), “virgins” (12), “stretch one of them Holy Marys” (14), “whore” (14, 20, 48, 68), “randy” (14), “do my nut” (17), “have it hard” (17), “get us some fluff” (17), and “a good rattle” (66). This list, far from complete, excludes homophobic jests and adjectives. These sexual euphemisms, figures of speech, and innuendoes suffice as confirmation of the men’s shared sense of heterosexual identity. Physical familiarity and bodily functions also play a role in the bachelors’ bonding; for example, Doc’s declaration that it is time to relieve himself as the audience hears him urinating throughout the next seventy-five lines of the play, though humourously bawdy, subtly draws the audience’s and cast’s attention to the source of all that noise (21). Doc emerges out of the lavatory, in the best locker room fashion, without having buttoned his trousers (24) underlining the unconscious communal nature of this...
behaviour for these men.

Furthermore, Myles’s vaunted womanizing is later exposed as performative bluster for the benefit of the other men. The characters’ dialogue “reveals that talk is a mask which conceals fears, doubts, anxieties, just as much as it maintains the public roles which sustain these friendships....Kilroy’s constant assumption is that the notion of character has disintegrated and with it the reliability of speech as an expression of a stable self” (Sampson 131). If, however, dialogue is a mask and speech is not an indicator of coherent identity, then the epistemological uncertainty involved in ascertaining the ‘truth’ about these men’s sexuality remains extremely problematic, for male homosocial discourse solidifies rigid definitions of masculine heterosexuality through its heightened sexist vocabulary and its abjection of the homosexual and the feminine. The irony engendered by such dissembling manoeuvres is not only what gives Kilroy’s drama its impact, but also, equally significant, offers an example of the “closet in action”.

Kelly’s paranoid concern with his image and reputation highlights the performative aspect of the closet. Kelly’s fastidious and self-conscious presentation of the farcical poem, “The Face on the Bar-room Floor”, where the actor is suddenly alone and pooled in light, foregrounds the ironic performance of identity executed repeatedly, not just by the civil servant, but by the entire cast:

*KELLY strikes an impossible theatrical pose in the centre of the floor but then seems to think better of it....He begins uncertainly but is gradually caught up by his own performance. He accompanies the words with many elaborate gestures. He affects what he considers to be a tough, cowboy accent but loses it from time to time in performance.* (24, 25)
The contradiction between the semiotics of the poem’s closeted performer with his elaborate (read: affected) gestures and his attempted masculine inflections is striking. The wonderful ambiguity in the line, “My friend had stolen my darling and I was left alone” (27), where the two figures of the friend (ostensibly a man) and the darling (ostensibly a woman) blur, suggests a transference of identity. It is quite reasonable to speculate that the couple in Kelly’s recited farce are allegorical representations of Seamus and his wife, for Kelly later recites the refrain “And you shall see the lovely Madelaine upon the bar-room floor” (62) to coincide with Seamus’s withdrawal from their relationship.

Kilroy’s play reiterates liberal sympathy as the appropriate attitude when dealing with “homosexuals.” Hypocritically, Kelly announces where the borders of his tolerance rest: “Bejay, I’m as liberal as the next man but I draw the line at perversions” (33). Myles remains eager to demonstrate how contemporary a Dubliner he is by asking Seamus, “Have you any objections to homos, teacher?”—to which Seamus, replies, “I mind my own business” (28). In a patronizing rhetorical gesture of seeming generosity, Myles informs Mr. Roche of his attitudes: “Look, personally speaking I don’t give a tuppenny curse how people like it. You know. I mean sex. It takes all kinds. ‘Course I’m broad-minded—more broad-minded than the average. Have to be. I mean this is the twentieth century” (34). Myles’s claims to sexual modernity dissipates when he executes a homophobic backslide: “But don’t get me wrong, sweetheart. Don’t be getting wrong ideas. I may be liberal, O.K., but I like mine straight. Real female, not female substitute, if you get me” (35). Homosocial convention compels Myles to reiterate his sexual preference to maintain the illusory solidity of his heterosexual image as if it were in
question. With characteristic sophistication, Mr. Roche, ignoring Myles’s anxiety over being *misunderstood* by the other bachelors on stage, attends to the more pressing matter of Kevin’s health rather than bothering to explain to the playboy that female “substitutes” have no bearing on same-sex attraction. Roche consistently refuses to take the homophobic bait and declines to draw attention to his sexuality since the revellers do it for him. Kilroy, however, utilizes this strategy of playing the sympathy card at the end of the play when Roche pleads: “We all need sympathy now and again. Everybody needs sympathy....There’s little comfort as it is, in this world. We have to take what there is to endure it” (76, 78). Although within liberal circles sympathy towards homosexuals was becoming fashionable in the late 1960s when Kilroy composed the piece, this emphasis on compassion comes across as dated and condescending to contemporary audiences today.

Symptomatic of his internal psychosexual struggle, Kelly exhibits an extreme reaction whenever Mr. Roche is mentioned, unable even to say the word ‘homosexual’ for most of the play and preferring to rely upon a homophobic discourse of perversion: “We don’t want him and the type he goes around with....I have me principles if others haven’t” (13). Kelly’s volatile hostility does not go unnoticed by the others, causing Seamus and Doc to defend Mr. Roche’s generosity and to comment that Roche has visited Kelly’s flat in the past. Kelly, backed into a corner, succinctly explains that that “I’ve had him in the place before, sure I’ve let him in before, but that was until I knew his form--” (13-4). At this point, Myles shifts the topic to women and Kelly’s sexual prowess, suppressing any move to place his friend’s sexuality into question by announcing that as a Bachelor of Lechery, himself, he recognizes Kelly for what he is
When Roche arrives at “Kelly’s Hideaway” (14), the owner initially undergoes homosexual panic: “Get him away, away to hell. Dirty, filthy pervert” (28). As the evening progresses, the drunken group’s homophobic language inevitably metamorphoses into violent horseplay. Mr. Roche, the archetypal scapegoat for the boyos’ melancholic masculinity, is manhandled and shoved inside the lavatory with Kevin (30-1). As a sad reflection upon traditional Irish hospitality, Mr. Roche protests the drunks’ treatment of him and Kelly’s open hostility: “I believed we had an invitation. Quite truthfully, I believed we were invited” (34). Anthony Roche remarks that Kilroy “charts the ironic process by which the outsider who is the butt of the established group’s jibes also serves to expose the shortcomings they are so anxious to conceal” (“Fall” 162).

When Roche, the only character who is sober on stage, intervenes on an ill Kevin’s behalf, Kelly attacks his sexuality and accuses him of scheming to seduce the young man (37). In one of the play’s keynote speeches, Roche goes on the offensive, reversing the discourse that condemns homosexuality as pitiful and barren, and projects this discourse back onto his heterosexual tormenters:

Dignity! Self-respect! Oh, my God! What do you know of the dignity of the human person? Any of you? Or self-respect. What do you know of self-respect?...you are busy reducing yourselves to the animal...dribbling with alcohol....Waste, withering, joylessness....[Drinking] is the way we chain ourselves together, no freedom, no joy. (37, 38)

Roche’s disapproval suggests that intoxication’s inherent barriers limit the intellectual, social, and perhaps, the sexual connections and possibilities among the men. The rabble
reacts by violently thrusting Roche into the provocatively-named “holy-hole”—a gloryhole in Kelly’s basement flat. Upon retrieving Roche, the men shockingly discover that their homophobic horsing around has apparently killed him by accident.

As in Friel’s play, characters ascertain another’s sexuality through observed appearances, failing to recognize the performative nature of the homosocial and the dissembling effects of the closet. Seeing/knowing is also an essential metaphor for the epistemology of the closet in Kilroy’s text. The central scene of revelation between Kelly and Seamus as they await news of the disposal of Mr. Roche’s body illustrates how knowledge and ignorance work in tandem to keep the closet in place through the contradictory incoherence embedded in definitions of sexual identifications:

SEAMUS: Who is he, anyway, this Mr. Roche? (Musing.) He’s a homosexual, isn’t that right? I’d never have known it.

KELLY: You know what he is. He hangs around Murray’s pub.

SEAMUS: He’s the first one I’ve ever spoken to. Strange. (Pause.) I didn’t think Murray’s was that kind of place.

KELLY: Oh, it’s changed entirely since the old days, Seamus. Sure it crawls with them after dark. D’you know they can’t keep ballcocks in the men’s jacks down there?

SEAMUS: They what?

KELLY: What I say. Ballcocks. No sooner have they replaced one than it’s whipped off by one of your queers. They must collect them or something. Like trophies. They carry on in there and afterwards steal the ballcock as a souvenir. S’fact.
Seamus undermines the stereotype that one is able to discern if someone is gay, yet Myles, another ostensibly straight-identified man, echoes the common wisdom—“it takes one to know one”—when he earlier states, “I recognize him for what he is” (14), attributing to Kelly a reputation of heterosexual licentiousness. Nevertheless, Kelly defensively remarks, “Anyway they can be seen a mile off. Sure you’d know one before he’d open his mouth” (60). All three men dwell within the same cultural milieu and similar class environments, yet they do not agree on how to recognize someone’s homosexuality. As the play unfolds, Myles is unequivocally proven to be inaccurate in his perceived knowledge, for either he cannot identify Kelly as a heterosexual, or he lies about identifying him as the Other—unnervingly, both are simultaneous possibilities within an epistemological privilege of unknowing. Outside of the theatre, this confusion reigns, allowing ignorance to impact people’s perceptions of non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals alike.

The scene between Seamus and Kelly reveals the privilege of unknowing which strives to render queer subjectivities invisible. There is a plethora of evidence that Kelly is not heterosexual: Kelly’s confession of his disinterest in women (54-5); his blatant admission that female sex symbol Brigit Bardot offers no stimulation (55); his concern that something might be awry with him (55); his posturing about the intimate friendship he and Seamus share (15); his barely concealed negative attitude towards Seamus’s marriage (12); and his known past association with and angst-ridden response to Mr. Roche (28). Despite these confirmations, Seamus maintains that Roche is the first gay
man he has ever spoken to, which, in light of what he knows about Kelly, is patently false. Kelly himself queries how Seamus could not know about Roche’s identity if the man is a frequent patron of Murray’s—an establishment which “crawls with them after dark” (57). Kelly possesses an intimate insider’s knowledge of the homosexual nightlife at the pub that includes information on furtive sex in the rest rooms. The immediate question that arises is what were all these bachelors doing in Murray’s late Saturday night if, indeed, the pub has a number of gay clientele. Kelly also participates in the circulation of ignorance when he divulges that he knows next to nothing about Mr. Roche—his origins, home, occupation, and family (59-60)—succumbing to the absurd, yet powerful, stereotype of the rootless, shifty homosexual without attachments.

Paranoid that his connections with Roche will be discovered by the police or the press, Kelly masks fears born of the closet, stating, “I don’t want anything to come out” (58). Ironically, Kilroy’s unintended pun on “coming out” is exactly what occurs as the civil servant continues to speak with Seamus, revealing in small increments his intimate involvement with Roche. Stylistically, Kilroy renders their conversation through the use of semantically loaded words, pregnant pauses, and a multitude of dashes in the script, which work in concert to underscore the anxious silences inherent in the situation as both characters avoid articulating what cannot be openly discussed. Naively, Seamus’s claim that “[i]f you tell the truth, nothing can harm you” (58) could not be farther off the mark, for Kelly is quite cognizant of the consequences of disclosing his homosexual activity. Kelly’s need to make a confession however, spurred on by guilt over Roche’s supposed demise or, perhaps, by the pressure of living a lie, forces him to admit to prior sexual activity with Mr. Roche: “God forgive me. I let him handle me—” (60).
Unfortunately, Seamus, who has endeavoured to hold back the floodgates of Kelly's confession, reacts poorly to the news: "I'd prefer if you hadn't said anything at all like that. You've made me live with it as well as yourself. It's not fair, man. It's not fair" (60). Sedgwick writes that one of the dangers in coming out "results partly from the fact that the erotic identity of the person who receives the disclosure is apt also to be implicated in, hence perturbed by it" (Closet 81). Kelly's affections for Seamus carry now, in part, explicit sexual overtones. Seamus's telling reaction of polite clichés and bourgeois commonplaces, "[w]e'll have to have you out to the house sometime too" (61), betrays his desire not to possess the knowledge of Kelly's disclosure and absolves him from the homosocial scene where identification and desire have crossed.

Swiftly exiting, Seamus leaves the front door open, permitting the dawn to come flooding into the hallway. Taking a page out of Synge's playbook of pseudo-resurrections, Kilroy scripts this burst of light as heralding the resurrection of Mr. Roche, a queer Christ-like figure, symbolizing not only the Christian tropes of rebirth, but also, more poignantly, for Kelly, the promise of a release from the dark recesses of the heart (62-3). Jochen Achilles argues that Kilroy's plea for sympathy is buttressed by the "quasi-theological significance of the symbolism of Mr. Roche's radiant redemption from the darkness of death" (21), and Christopher Murray remarks that "Mr. Roche's presence at the end of the play is a 'Real Presence' in the liturgical sense; he is a figure who sanctifies the space around him" ("World" 70). Despite the model of freedom, self-possession, and resistance to the sacrificial homoeros of Irish identity offered by Mr. Roche, Kelly accepts his circumstance of limitation evidenced by his trip to the peaceful "enclosed" (79) St. Mary's Gayfield Church beside the, aptly named, Royal Hospital for
Incurables; however, Kelly seems too obtuse or frightened to learn any lesson following his near brush with the law and scandal. “Despite the intensity of people’s suffering due to public conflicts,” notes Thierry Dubost, “Kilroy’s writing strategy prevents any one-sided vision, which would, for instance, incriminate society alone for the misfortunes of individuals” (14).

Mr. Roche functions as the mature anti-hero, making the boyos appear ridiculously immature and cruel in their potentially lethal homosocial behaviour of alcohol-fuelled rough treatment of him. However salutary Kilroy’s parallelism of Roche with Christ as a figure of redemption appears to be, the representation of Roche’s identity as a gay man is veiled, for he remains a noble enigma who is constructed by the fears of the lads around him. Refined and independent, Roche haunts the others, especially Kelly, yet he is not fully embodied but more of a caricature—a sanitized digestible version of gay Dublin. The sexuality of Friel’s Peter and Shane is recuperated or redeemed as well through the tragic suffering they endure, again sparing the audience from squarely looking at the role homoeros plays in the formation of Irish nationalist identity. So too Éibhear Walshe reminds us that the Abbey’s productions of The Gentle Island and The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche inevitably reinforce the link between homoeros and “death, mutilation and disempowerment” (“Introduction” 13).

Unlike The Gentle Island, where Sarah and Manus can barely speak about ‘what’ they learn and observe, The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche draws the audience into the discussion as well as the orbit of sexual suspicion by this foregrounding of disavowed desire. Kelly’s melancholic insecurity that there is something “wrong” with him contrasts with the fears that Joyce’s Bloom and Stephen acknowledge but keep to
themselves. *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* intervenes in the scripted public performances of Irish cultural identity and challenges religious dogma and conventional bourgeois morality by drawing the parallel between Christ’s resurrection and Roche’s Easter recovery from unconsciousness, conjuring up the familiar nationalist trope of Easter 1916 and, thereby, jointly linking nationalism and (homo)sexuality. Kilroy articulates “the troubling vision of a modern Ireland undergoing ever greater social and ideological stress” (Roche, *Drama* 191) as new subjectivities come to the fore. In *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche*, Kilroy dissects the melancholic homosocial sphere with a razor-sharp scalpel, laying bare an astonishing architecture of desire, grief, repression, anxiety, and prejudice.

Thomas Kilroy’s *Double Cross* (1986) also produced for Field Day is the tale of twinned Irish figures Brendan Bracken—“the flamboyant Celt” (Kilroy, *Double* 37) and William Joyce (a.k.a. Lord Haw Haw). Bracken hailed from a family of Republicans, eventually becoming Winston Churchill’s Minister of Information from 1941-1945. American-born Joyce moved to Ireland at age three, and, during the revolutionary period, he worked as an informer for the British authorities against the Republican movement, later joining the British Union of Fascists led by Sir Oswald Mosley. Joyce relocated to Nazi Germany in 1939 to begin his stint as a war propagandist on German Radio (16-9). Christopher Murray remarks that “[u]nder the guise of a history play enacting the conflict between England and Germany, *Double

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72 Hereafter, all citations to Kilroy’s *Double Cross* will be specified by page number only.

73 Along with Mosley’s group in Britain, Ireland had its own homegrown Army Comrades Association (the Blueshirts) who shared the ultra-nationalist, anti-Communist views held by the Nazis as well as practicing the straight-arm salute, the wearing of uniforms, and organized marches. Hiroko Mikami provocatively asks, “Was there much difference, then, between Joyce’s conduct and Yeats’s interest, for example, in the racial theories of Nazi eugenics?” (“Vision” 105).
Cross is essentially a play about Ireland’s relations with England” (Mirror 217). Kilroy probes the effects of a melancholic masculinity in constituting the personalities of these two Irishmen, the shaping of their fates, and the national destinies of the states they served:

This is the notion that two men who so spectacularly denied and concealed their native origins might dramatize the deformities of nationalism more effectively than two patriots....The reason why they end up on either side in the war has nothing to do with where they were born and raised. It has to do, rather, with the driven nature of each man, in each case a personality driven by the compulsion to eliminate, or, if you will, to betray their ancestors. (Kilroy, “Introduction” 11)

Not only does Kilroy explore themes of the power of language, nationalism, betrayal, internalized hatred, the contrivance of historical truths, but he also takes on the “Wildean notion that one must make of one’s life a work of art” (35) as Joyce and Bracken reinvent their identities by ashamedly rejecting their Irish backgrounds. Kilroy’s penetrating diagnosis of the heart of Bracken’s and Joyce’s mystery leads the playwright to assert that “I came to believe that the centre of it all was, finally, psychosexual” in the battle between “effete sophistication and fascist brutalism” (“Introduction” 14), represented by Bracken and Joyce respectively.

The two men double for each other as mirror images, implying an intimate bond in the stereotyped constructions of the strong, masculine patriot and the weak, effeminate bureaucrat which criss-cross both their identities. Celebrated actor Stephen Rea played both Brendan Bracken and William Joyce in the original Field Day production in 1986;
this theatrical strategy accentuates the men’s “distorted reflections of each other and of
the societies by which they permit themselves to be molded” (Rabey 35; Jones 48). As
the action moves from the first to the second part of the play, the actor disrobes and
switches identities, leaving Bracken behind and transforming into Joyce who warns a
Fascist audience about the perils of “the serpent of history” (57). As Joyce’s lines come
to a close, “the real audience conventionally applauds for the end of Part 1, even though
the speech addressed to them is virulently anti-Semitic” (Murray, Mirror 217). Kilroy
cleverly implicates his theatre-going audience in Joyce’s Nazi rhetoric, for both “men’s
identification with an imperial and exclusive version of the English or Germanic nation,”
writes Anna McMullan, “leads them to abject all those who, like their fellow Irish, are on
the outside of power” (131).

Kilroy represents Bracken as a closeted queer, outed by Popsie, his female lover,
who dresses up like a Boy Scout in a “Baden-Powell outfit” (30) in order to obtain a
sexual response from Bracken. Magnanimously, Popsie spells out Bracken’s private
dilemma: “what is really bothering you is sexual truth—you spend your life constantly
evading, constantly avoiding, constantly inventing....[C]an you not be yourself for once!
You conceal nothing from me, Brendan, nothing, and it doesn’t make the slightest
difference to my feeling for you, whatever you are” (33). Joyce, by contrast,
homophobically attacks Bracken as a “bumbling fruit” (69) and as an effete degenerate
(79), but Joyce also has sexual dilemmas as his wife, Margaret, cuckolds him through her
affair with the younger man Erich (67). In a rage, Joyce lashes out at Margaret: “Was it
sexual? Did I fail you sexually?...A vile bitch in heat allowing that dirty kraut to put his
thing into you....I can smell him off you” (73). Joyce’s attack reveals the volatile
insecurity of his masculine identity and close homosocial tie to Erich whom he “smells” on his wife.

Nationalisms’ melancholic homosociality ensnares other “victims” as illustrated in Double Cross’s closing lines delivered by a journalist following Joyce’s 1946 execution by the British for treason at the age of 39:

What I remember was the group of young fascists, the acolytes, the loyal ones, the young men in the gallery, those pale, blue faces, their dark, shining eyes, that look of inspired poverty, inspired promise. They were weeping. Those lilting Celtic voices in grief at the death of their christus. They put on their old raincoats, like vestments, and talked raucously of patriotism….And before they left in the rain for some secret meeting, some illicit upper-room, the tears poured down those long emaciated, Celtic faces. They wept for Joyce. They wept for England. (90)

This grieving Irish fraternity that supported English and German nationalist ideals with their own requisite sacrificial redemption and sublimated homosexual investments coalesce here in the striking picture of the weeping men in the gallery.

Kilroy acknowledges that his depiction of Bracken and Joyce, not surprisingly, generated hostility, especially in his treatment of their sexuality:

In Ireland I was told by admirers of Lord Haw Haw that the original man would never act in such a fashion towards his wife. In London any depravity on the part of Joyce would have been entirely acceptable. There, however, I was reprimanded for pushing Bracken’s dandyism towards kinky sexuality. But, then, after the event, as it were, I received
correspondence offering me details of Bracken's sexual tastes that were far more lurid than anything in the play. (“Introduction” 15)

Internationally, nationalisms establish a defensive perimeter around their iconic heroes to protect these figures' sexual reputations through the reinforcement of their performative heterosexual identities.

Friel's The Gentle Island and Kilroy's The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche express the bewildering intricacy of male relations where the act of seeing becomes metonymic for epistemologies of knowledge/ignorance. Friel's play is a grim forsaking of archetypal romantic illusions associated with the traditional Irish way of life, whereas Kilroy presents a more expansive, yet blackly comical, perspective on male bonding. The ironic performative masking of identity, transmitted through language, provides relief maps of how the closet functions in both authors' work. In regards to the figure of the homosexual scapegoat, Shane remains a silent victim of homophobic violence, but Mr. Roche triumphs over the small-minded bigotry of his peers and remains almost ethereally beyond reproach. Friel's and Kilroy's texts mark the beginning of the overt public expansion of queer Irish definition on stage as Kelly's journey out of the closet as well as Peter's and Shane's grim holiday resolutely elevate the hitherto taboo subject of homoerros into public space. Both playwrights resort to the manipulation of their audience's emotions, however, in order to generate sympathy as Roche, especially, is reified as the mysterious conscience that haunts his play and, by implication, Irish normative masculinity. The advent of gay characters in Irish theatre contests the definition of who is Irish—a question equally germane to the Troubles of the North. In the next chapter, Frank McGuinness investigates Ulster's internal divisions originating
partially in the province's competing melancholic masculinities of its tribes.
Mourning Sacrificial Wounds in Frank McGuinness

McIlwaine: The whole of Ulster will be lost. We’re not making a sacrifice. Jesus, you’ve seen this war. We are the sacrifice.


Caravaggio: Are all dead men beautiful?


Dido: Some people here fuck with a bullet and the rest fuck with a Bible, but I belong to neither...


Frank McGuinness’s poetic companion pieces *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1986) and *Carthaginians* (1988) theatrically explore the homosocial nature of Ulster Unionism and Irish nationalism through the trope of wounds acquired from contact with Northern Ireland’s historical traumas. *Homoeros* remains a constant thread running through this playwright’s work as Fintan O’Toole observes that McGuinness employs “the condition of homosexuality itself...as a physical metaphor for states of national consciousness” (qtd. in Nally 41). What is uniquely daring about McGuinness is not only the priority accorded to the perspective of gay consciousness which lies at the heart of his plays, but also his exposure of the intertwining of melancholic masculinity with the homosociality of romantic nationalist and Unionist cultures and the resultant psychic and physical wounds. McGuinness’s epigraph by
Czeslaw Milosz from his first version of *Carthaginians* reads, “It is possible that there is no other memory than the memory of wounds,” providing a key to interpreting the network of personal and national traumas with their symptomatic hatred, fear, anger, vulnerability, and violence (McKenna 174). McGuinness stages the theory that war and internecine conflict is, in part, motivated by the sublimation of homosexual investments as evident through his recreation of the Protestant soldiers’ motivations for participation in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and by the painful fallout of Bloody Sunday in 1972 for Derry’s Catholic cemetery dwellers. Both individually and collectively the casts grapple with cultures saturated with homosocial violence; moreover, this aggression remains indicative of a repressed *homoeros* in the social body, a homosexuality internal to the regulation of the homosocial, resulting in neurotic and sacrificial disavowals. This chapter examines melancholic homosociality in relation to its sacrificial interpellation of McGuinness’s male figures as subjects and the men’s growing awareness of and resistance, however futile in some cases, to these psychic and discursive forces.

H homosociality strengthens communal masculine identity through its “aggressive circuit of renunciation” (Butler, *Power* 143) within homophobic cultures. As discussed in previous chapters, one particular manifestation of this repression is an ethos of sacrificial *homoeros* as described by Sedgwick which becomes a productive form of paternal power. Sacrificial drives are aggravated by psychic wounds inflicted on McGuinness’s *dramatis personae* not only by the heteropatriarchal societies in which they inhabit, but also through a haunting by the primary lost homosexual object. The sacrificial interpellation of the *homosexual* or “enemy within” and its haunting of the

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74 See published rehearsal script *Carthaginians* and *Baglady*, Faber and Faber, (1988) 1.
identities of Northern Irishmen is illustrated by both communities’ fight either to guard and to preserve a Protestant Ulster conceived as a Fatherland, or, in the case of Irish nationalists, to redeem Derry’s fallen “Carthaginian” state envisioned as Mother Ireland yet, more accurately, as a Fatherland too.

A handful of critics approach or touch upon the critical magnitude of sacrificial *homoeros* in sustaining Unionist and nationalist cultures. Lionel Pilkington comments that “the audience’s impression is that at the core of unionist mentality lies a deeply felt personal bonding” (*Theatre* 222), while Helen Lojek notes that McGuinness “assesses the impact of the bond of friendship, which sometimes conflicts with and sometimes reinforces cultural bonds” (“Myth” 48). Anne Kelly-O’Reilly remarks of the women sitting in the graveyard in *Carthaginians* that the “dirty jokes they share are often about sex and sexuality—where the wound seems deepest” (95), and Eamonn Jordan, in the only comprehensive study of McGuinness, *The Feast of Famine* (1997), observes the recurring threads of “a destructive masculinity…[and] a celebration of comradeship, community, strength and defiance” (25). Des O’Rawe, however, is closer to the mark in his negative appraisal of *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, sounding an alarm over McGuinness’s subversive theatre: “It is difficult to see how many Unionists,” O’Rawe contends, “might not perceive this play as being anything other than offensive: does *Observe the Sons* imply that Unionism is little more than a political expression of repressed homosexuality, a neurosis?” (158). O’Rawe’s reductive rhetoric attempts to safely contain the implication of *homoeros* having anything to do with Unionist identity, let alone as a constitutive facet of Loyalism always already there.

McGuinness’s dramaturgy draws upon influences from European theatre such as
Ibsen, Chekhov, Brecht, Beckett, Artaud, and Pirandello as well as from contemporary
television, cinema, and popular music, explaining the fact that “McGuinness’s versions of
the past are inflected through the present, not the other way around” (Gleitman 72, 61;
Jones 143-4). Breaking with the tradition of Irish realism prevalent from the founding of
the Abbey Theatre, McGuinness creates multi-layered, non-naturalistic dramas
incorporating the impressionistic, poetic, symbolic, parodic, and hallucinatory, stretching
from savage anarchic carnivals to searing tragedies (Gleitman 61-2; Jordan vi).
McGuinness’s craft embraces an arsenal of metadramatic devices such as game and role
playing, plays-within-plays, recitations, intertextual allusions, songs, dreams, storytelling,
myths, and the re-enactment of historical events, all suitable techniques for
deconstructing political, (homo)sexual, and national issues as evident in Observe the Sons
of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme (Dean, Joan 144). This drama earned
McGuinness his current reputation, along with Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, and Thomas
Kilroy, as one of the most vital voices in Irish theatre today. In 1985 Derry’s Field Day
Theatre Company rejected Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme
without a full explanation. In an interview McGuinness comments that the company
“associates itself very strongly with the colour green”; furthermore, the playwright
tellingly withdrew Carthaginians from production by Field Day, citing the company’s
elision of issues of gender and sexual orientation (Cullingford, Others 111).

Set in World War I and steeped in male homosociality, Observe the Sons of Ulster
Marching Towards the Somme is the tragic story of four pairs of young Northern Irish
Protestant soldiers fighting for the Union. As discussed earlier, Protestant Unionism
retains a set of symbolic homosocial practices, displayed in Loyalist street culture and the
prevalence of Orange and Masonic brotherhoods, which take guidance and inspiration from a nearly deified cult of male leadership. Northern Irish Protestant identity, therefore, is grounded in the embodiment of a stylized masculine ideal. Unionist marches and rallies concede a form of emotional reward to participants and their audience by offering a crucial sense of communal belonging (McKenna 103). The interweaving of violence with homoeros productively constitutes normative masculine identity and the subjectivity of abject others, evident in the sexually-loaded valence of Loyalist slogans of resistance: "Never Surrender!" and "Not an Inch!"

Moreover, war remains an arena where the homosocial manifests itself most intensely, where young men vow to die for one another if necessary. Throughout the drama, a general replacement of service to the oppressive demands of melancholic masculinity by more homosexually-inflected bonds are obvious in McGuinness’s signpost headings for his scenes: "Initiation", "Pairing", and "Bonding" (McGuinness, Observe 102, 138, 171). A melancholic cultural legacy bonds the eight men in a sense of belonging and shared loyalty to their province, yet these personal ties of friendship and love (including romantic love) between Ulstermen is what, ultimately, they come to understand motivates them to give up their lives: a sacrifice instigated by a paternal bloodlust that McGuinness views as a betrayal of youth, beauty, and homeland.

The first word of the play’s title “Observe” is an interpellative command for the audience to witness the sacrifice of dutiful sons upholding the Union with Great Britain by marching towards their inevitable slaughter. The sons are in relation to a powerful, imperial mother country, perhaps, but their ultimate loyalty is to the paternal fiction of

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75 Hereafter citations from McGuinness’s Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme will be indicated by page number only.
Ulster as shown when, before going over the top, Christopher Roulston leads the troops in singing, “Heaven is my Fatherland/Heaven is my home” (194). David Craig avers, “I’m in this for Ulster,” while Kenneth Pyper asserts, “God’s chosen will rise up and fight....The elect shall bond in God’s brotherhood” (135). Challenging received orthodox concepts of what constitutes history, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* takes the form of a sort of extended reverie on and compulsive repetition of a foundational traumatic event resulting in an unresolved relationship to the beloved Fatherland (Lojek, “Myth” 45).

A sculptor and the narrator of *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, Pyper is an ambivalently queer outsider—neither clearly homo- nor heterosexual—amidst the men in the barracks who attempts to challenge the sexual and political allegiances of his fellow soldiers and to reveal the quandary of the province’s crisis of national identity. Pyper’s recollections at the opening and close of the play serve as framing devices that recount the circumstances that brought him and his fellow Ulster volunteers together leading up to the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, when the 36th (Ulster) Division suffered 2700 wounded and 2000 dead in the first two days of fighting as the price paid in blood to maintain the Union (Mikami 21).

In the phantasmagoric opening scene, “Remembrance”, the Elder Pyper is haunted by ghosts: ancestral fathers76 and his fraternal companions from the war. In the first speech of the drama, he reproaches the paternal ghost’s demand for remembrance but capitulates to its will in a tortured play of conscience:

76 Roulston’s story of his troubled youth reinforces the influence of Ulster’s melancholic paternity. Roulston recounts that as a boy he “only wanted to please his fathers, earthly and heavenly. But neither father believed, by word nor passion, in him, the boy. The father’s lack of belief stunted the boy....For the only men he knew were men of firm faith....The boy tried to assert his faith in their world by serving the church of his heavenly father. He failed” (151).
I do not understand your insistence on my remembrance.... I am angry at your demand that I continue to probe. Were you not there in all your dark glory? Have you no conception of the horror? Did it not touch you at all?... A passion for horror disgusts me.... You have no right to excuse that suffering, parading it for the benefit of others. (97)

This scenario has obvious parallels with the incorporation of a lost love object, a homosexual paternal cathexis, as Pyper’s introjection acts as the voice of conscience; however, his act of memory is finally sustained, not by love for the Father, but by Pyper’s affection for his dead companions. Indeed, Pyper reproaches the paternal ghost for its cynical and selfish manipulation of horror and its appropriation of the memory of Pyper’s fallen comrades. According to Eamonn Jordan, “[s]acrifice is fetishised in Northern society, principally because history is digested and congested within the psyches, but still it is constructed in such a way that memory postpones mourning” (35). The belief in a Fatherland and Pyper’s latter conversion to ideological bigotry are effected through the spectacle of the sacrificial offering of the dead men’s bodies and the mourning the paternal ghost seeks to instigate. This voyeuristic enjoyment is coextensive with a melancholic homosocial society which uses the energies of disavowed homosocial bonds to reconsolidate masculine power yet shields itself simultaneously from the homoerotics of fraternity. As Helen Lojek explains, “Pyper goes back to recreate Ulster in the image of his dead companions, believing that... he owes them that because of the bond of shared friendship and shared experience. So, a private debt becomes a public policy” (“Difference” 59).

Pyper tries to resist the Unionist imaginary’s appropriation of death and the
seductive spectacle that demands allegiance as the audience witnesses Pyper’s vacillation between utter loss and the consolatory mythical narrative of the great cause of a Protestant Ulster:

Those willing to talk to you of that day, to remember for your sake, to forgive you, they invent as freely as they wish. I am not one of them. I will not talk, I will not listen to you....Fenians claim a Cuchullian as their ancestor, but he is ours, for they lay down for centuries and wept in their sorrow, but we took up arms and fought against an ocean. An ocean of blood. His blood is our inheritance. Not theirs. Sinn Fein? Ourselves alone. It is we, the Protestant people, who have always stood alone. We have stood alone and triumphed, for we are God’s chosen.

(Silence)

Leave me. Do not possess me. I do not wish to be your chosen. (97, 98)

Pyper’s narrative verifies a cooption by the homosocial, mythical form of Unionist ideology. Unionism’s cultural imaginary resides here to mourn the death of wartime comrades, an operation by which it deploys nostalgia and repressed homosexual desire to interpellate Pyper via a melancholic incorporation. Pyper tells the audience of his desire to commemorate his fallen friends beyond the strictures of the homosocial economy in an attempt at imagining a new dispensation in male relations. A fraternal debt is paid by Pyper invoking a spectacle of his companion’s deaths and the memory of loss as the play unfolds. However, Pyper also tellingly employs the nationalist metaphors of Cuchulain and Sinn Féin in his assertion of an ancient tradition, which not only undermines an exclusive Unionist legacy by not citing the revered personages of Protestant history but
also inscribes an ‘enemy within’ a mythically pure Unionist identity (McKenna 114, 115).

At the end of the opening monologue, Pyper reflects on the melancholic fraternity’s integral, yet vexed, homoerotics by recalling his initial encounter with Craig that the audience is about to witness re-enacted: “Look, David, I’ve cut myself peeling an apple. Kiss it better” (100). Pyper, whom Craig labels “a bit of a mocker” (104) phallically describes the apple’s “flesh” as “beautiful,” “hard,” and “white” (105). This is the first of several references in the play to a primeval fall and a founding sacrificial castration in Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme. Appreciably, this primordial seduction is replayed here between two men. In “Initiation,” Pyper dramatizes his self-inflicted cut since his desire for Craig is the castrating mark of sexuality (137). Pyper’s attention to his delicate hands, fine skin, and Craig’s bandaging of Pyper’s wound with his shirt sleeve work to deny the effects of castration via same-sex male desire, or, at least, offer some form of psychic balm. Pyper’s symbolic cut melds with the iconographic Red Hand of Ulster throughout the play, but the parody of submission to prohibition is unmistakable: the Garden of Eden, temptation, the forbidden fruit of knowledge and the Fall of man.

Pyper flaunts his gender dissonant inversions of masculine/feminine cultural

77 The name Craig calls to mind Sir James Craig, one of Northern Ireland’s founding fathers and the future first prime minister.

78 The Red Hand of Ulster forms the crest emblazoned upon the Ulster flag that continually hangs above the stage. This symbol has its origins in the legendary invasions of Ireland. A pre-Celtic tribal chieftain offered a reward to the first man to touch land with his right hand, so the left-handed son of the chieftain cut off his right hand and threw it onto the shore. So too Anderson and McIhwaine belatedly celebrate the Protestant tribal ritual of the Twelfth of July by marching around Ulster’s holiest field and playing a large lambeg drum (145). McIhwaine poignantly remarks, “To play this brute of a drum your flesh must bleed” (157).
codes by frequently repeating the joke about his “remarkably fine skin” (109). The mock story of his short-lived marriage to a French Catholic woman with three legs, whom Pyper claims to have castrated by sawing it off as part of his Protestant duty (127), and his response to Craig who queries the notion that Pyper had married in the first instance to establish an unsettling queer identity for Pyper. When Craig asks whom Pyper finds beautiful—men or women, Pyper replies, “What’s the difference?” (129). The quick-witted sculptor playfully attributes his general despair to Craig, recruiting him under his own sign of desire: “Did you not join up to die for me?” (106). “This theme of a Christlike homoerotic sacrifice,” observes Margot Gayle Backus, “is repeated throughout the play in way that calls attention not only to the homoerotic underpinnings of Christian agape but also to how this homoerotic agape is deployed in the context of imperial militarism as a way to seduce young men into ‘dying for each other’” (Gothic 161).

In “Initiation” the general arrival of pairs of men carrying with them intense territorial pride seems symptomatic of these loyal sons’ march towards the Somme as Nat McIlwaine exclaims, “We’ll make a fair show of Orangemen” (146). The fact that this sacrifice is voluntary, that these men are not conscripted, makes the effect of their service to the Fatherland more emphatically acts of sublimation shielding unconscious homosexual investments. When John Millen and William Moore enter the barracks, Millen mocks his companion’s virility and success with women: “You never laid a hand on her....You wouldn’t know where to put it if I wasn’t there to tell you” (107); conversely, Moore ridicules Millen’s profession as a baker, “[g]ive him a skirt and he’ll run you up a four-course dinner” (118). This sexualized banter between the two hints at how the energies of homoeros lie just below the surface in these men’s relationships.
In addition, Martin Crawford tells Roulston later in the church on Boa Island, "I'm a soldier that risks his neck for no cause other than the men he's fighting with. I've seen enough to see through empires and kings and countries....I'll support you because if it comes to the crunch I hope you'll support me. That's all I know. That's all I feel. I don't believe in Christ. I believe in myself" (152). Crawford's motivation for fighting in the war and potential self-sacrifice is due to male-male bonds, usually unarticulated, that counter frequently proffered explanations that cite abstract notions such as duty, honour, and tribal ideology. "Pyper the bastard was right. It's all lies. We're going to die. It's all lies. We're going to die for nothing" (167), realizes George Anderson as Unionism's sacrificial designs become plainer.

In the "Pairing" interlude on Boa Island, Pyper's narrative of his life describes how a melancholic homosocial interpellates its sons, pushing them to make the ultimate sacrifice while renouncing all traces of psychic homosexuality. Pyper recounts the redemptive role Craig comes to play in this overdetermined cultural family romance, where his hands are not his own but controlled by his ancestors and how he tried to do something beyond the pale of social responsibility:

...as the eldest son of a respectable family whose greatest boast is that in their house Sir Edward Carson, saviour of their tribe, danced in the finest gathering Armagh had ever seen. I escaped Carson's dance. While you were running with your precious motors to bring in his guns, I escaped Carson's dance, David. I got out to create, not destroy. But the gods wouldn't allow that. I could not create. That's the real horror....for when I saw my hands working they were not mine but the hands of my
ancestors, interfering, and I could not be rid of that interference. I could not create. I could only preserve....I would take up arms at the call of my Protestant fathers. I would kill in their name and I would die in their name. To win their respect would be my sole act of revenge, revenge for the bad joke they had played on me in making me sufficiently different to believe I was unique, when my true uniqueness lay only in how alike them I really was. And then the unseen obstacle in my fate. I met you. (163, 164)

Pyper’s intended “perverse” revenge to kill and die in the name of his Protestant fathers is finally resisted through his desire for Craig. The restrictions around how Pyper can love Ulster are resolved in the love between himself and Craig, evident in their long farewell. Pyper’s uniqueness is not in the direction of a melancholic paternal investment, but in his conscious awareness of the blurring between desire and identification and its volatile relation to an ideal paternity embodied by Sir Edward Carson, who was not only leader of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) opposed to Irish Home Rule, but also Queens Counsel in Wilde’s trials.

Moreover, Craig’s reply to Pyper further elaborates this unpredictable identity poised between desire and identification:

You said you wanted to die. I know what you mean. I didn’t want to die, but I know what you mean. I wanted war. I wanted a fight....I wanted to change what I am. Instead I saved you, because of what I am. I want to live....I can’t talk in your riddles. I used to worry even up till today, when you talked to me like that, in case you were setting me up. I don’t worry
any more. It was yourself you were talking to. But when you talk to me, you see me. Eyes, hands. Not carving. Just seeing. And I didn’t save you that day. I saw you. And from what I saw I knew I’m not like you. I am you. (164)

The dramatic trajectory of “I love my Ulster” (196) to “I am you” is a declaration of love and identification, a performative identity ostensibly freed from deadly self-hatred and Unionist atavism but not Utopian by any means as Craig asks, “What kind of life do you see for us when we’re out of here? It might be many things, but it won’t be together” (192).

The other Ulstermen in the battalion also subscribe to the ethic of laying down a man’s life for his friends, established in Pyper’s and Craig’s address to Ulster’s melancholic father figures; yet, the men confront this ethic’s homoerotic dimensions face-to-face when Anderson and McLlwaine ascribe *something rotten* to Pyper’s personality:

Mcllwaine: He’s some fighter though. Pyper. Who would have thought it?

Anderson: Who indeed?

Mcllwaine: You said he was a milksop.

Anderson: There’s still something rotten there. That time Craig threw himself on him to save him.

Mcllwaine: What about them?

Anderson: The look on their faces. Something rotten. (147)

These signs should be read under the cipher of Pyper’s and Craig’s emerging mutual
homosexual desires. Moore, later recounting this same incident to Millen, describes it as: “Risked his life for Pyper’s. Together for eternity now....I saw it. I saw Craig what he did. He blew his own breath into Pyper’s mouth. It was a kiss” (159).

Sacrificial homosociality solidifies melancholic masculine identity through the aggressive renunciation of not only prohibited homosexual desires but also, correlative, the feminized Other consisting of, in this instance, nationalist Irish Catholics. Moore and Millen identify themselves as Carson’s men, part of the U.V.F., in particular, the North County Derry Battalion, and are “no strangers to guns” (121). In the barracks the two Ulstermen present to their new comrades an account of a Catholic teenager caught for painting the Irish tricolour on the side of an Orange Lodge:

Millen: We tracked down the artist. Sixteen years old. Wanted to die for Ireland.

Moore: The mother a widow woman, decent enough creature for a Papist.

MILLEN: We rounded him out. Her crying not to shoot him, he was only a wain.

Moore: Did better than shoot him.

Pyper: What?

Millen: Battered him down the streets of Coleraine.

Moore: Shaved every hair off his head.

Millen: Cut the backside out of his trousers.

Moore: Painted his arse green, white and gold.

Historians debate whether the U.V.F. afforded any training to members so that the British army could depend on this in wartime, or if the U.V.F. was “targeted for the battle as an act of political murder” (Heininge 32). Although the Union was maintained partially as recompense for Ulster’s sacrifice, suspicions lingered that the British were trying to mollify the ‘problem’ of having to deal with a powerful, illegal Irish militia (Heininge 32).
Millen: That cured him of tricolours. (123)

Violent sectarian hatred intersects here with sexual humiliation and the threat/promise of sodomitical rape. For McGuinness's Ulstermen, the message is identical: literally, "fuck an independent Ireland!" and "fuck you!" It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the dynamics of policing the homosocial order against men who have broken with cultural and sexual taboos square with the repeated punitive dynamics of intra- and intercommunal regulation.

It takes nothing for the soldiers to air their anti-Catholic views and attending renunciation of nationalists as when Anderson, performing the role of an Orange Grand Master, warns: "I do not speak of the Hun, dire enemy though he may be, when I speak of the enemy now. I speak of the Fenian. The Catholic traitor that will corrupt our young, deflower our womenfolk and destroy all that we hold most dear. Our beloved religion" (167). Anderson constructs Irish nationalists as the "enemy within" Ulster, analogous to the Protestant element serving the same purpose, at times, in various nationalist ideologies although not nearly as pronounced. This dire threat to Ulster is transformed, however, by McIlwaine's feminization of the men involved in Dublin's Easter Rising, again conflating the contradictory impulses of Unionist homosociality: "Fenians can't fight. Not unless they're in a post office or a bakery or a woman's clothes shop. Disgrace to their sex, the whole bastarding lot of them," denounces McIlwaine (175).

Another illustration of Unionism's volatile policing of sacrificial homoeros involves Crawford's precarious predicament as a Loyalist, a lover of football and boxing, but secretive about his maternal Catholic heritage. The epistemology of the closet
extends here to another axis of identity—religious background, for McGuinness draws parallels between one’s knowledge of another’s abject sexual identity and one’s knowledge of another’s abject tribal identity. “The enemy becomes less clear, less and less distinctive as the play develops, until the enemy is found within,” comprehends Eamonn Jordan (39). When Anderson and McIlwaine first enter in Scene Two, Anderson’s paranoid intuition immediately senses a Catholic in the barracks when he encounters Crawford. In a scene of parodic homosocial/homoerotic violence, Crawford is thrown onto the bed and attacked for being a “Catholic bastard” (132). Anderson informs the audience that he has trained his buddy to “smell a Catholic within a mile” (132). Crawford naturally denies any affiliation with the Catholic Church; however, he confesses to Roulston later that “my mother’s Fenian. She never converted. I’m sure I was baptized one sometime. No one else knows that” (161). Anderson’s intuition about Crawford’s open secret is correct—he is the Catholic in the closet, a supposed internal threat within the men’s Protestant ranks.

McGuinness foregrounds homosociality’s harnessing of myth and religion as the basis of the Ulstermen’s haunting self-reproach that leads them to willingly march to their deaths and to practice paranoid bigotry against both visible and invisible enemies, epitomized by Crawford. The Elder Pyper tormented by his memories, baldly asks:

Answer me why we did it. Why we let ourselves be led to extermination?

In the end, we were not led, we led ourselves. We claimed we would die for each other in battle. To fulfill that claim we marched into the battle that killed us all. That is not loyalty. That is not love. That is hate. Deepest hate. Hate for one’s self. We wished ourselves to die and in
doing so we let others die to satisfy our blood lust. That lust that we
inherited. The true curse of Adam. (100)

The soldiers hate themselves but hate Catholic nationalists more than they love Ulster.

From patriotic ideologies of whatever stripe to the overdetermined homosocial quality of camaraderie within the military, Pyper exposes the buried architecture of men’s problematical relations with themselves and the tragic waste that World War I represents.

Against this Unionist ideology of suicide, McGuinness presents an alternative to this destructive trajectory of men’s complex identificatory commitments, particularly in Part Three, “Pairing”, where a split stage uses lighting to recreate four separate locales for the pairs of soldiers on leave. Returning home to a world without women—no wives nor girlfriends—these male “couples” learn about the nature of their bonds and the dire tests they face when they return to France (Schneider 95). As the scene draws to a close, the individual vignettes blend together almost as if the Unionist community concurrently speaks through the sons of Ulster:

History folds in upon itself, as its primary constituents fold in upon each other. The simultaneity of Part Three both parallels and confirms such an interrelationship between identity, sacrifice and repetition....The circular format suggests a constant return of the psyche to the past, demonstrates the pattern of endless re-definition of identity, detects the obstacles to closure and the temporary nature of homecomings, and the difficulty of breaking the specific cycle. (Jordan 29)

McGuinness’s intimated solution in contravening the cycle, paradoxically, involves the libidinal nature of the Unionist cultural imaginary’s foundation, which is
given alternative expression in *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* by the recurring motif of a dance of death or *danse macabre*. In the first instance, it is characterized as the imperative to “Dance in the deserted temple of the Lord. Dance unto death before the Lord” (100). This is Pyper’s invitation to the ghosts around him in at the play’s opening. The dance can be seen as McGuinness’s attempt to navigate mourning for and honouring of beloved comrades-in-arms without this activity’s appropriation by the dominant order with its homosocial character and deeply contradictory investments. Whereas the dance unto death as war bolsters a melancholic homosociality, here the dance signifies male-male desire and pleasure outside the circuit of renunciation, averting the death-wish of the former and clearing space for a more generous and humane remembrance of both one’s fallen compatriots and one’s ancestors. For, if not, “we ensure that history itself will continue to be ‘the same’ rather than different,” states Margot Gayle Backus, “as repressed male needs for passionate and tender bonding with other men, regardless of individual sexual orientation, continue to be readily supplied only in the context of athletic, military, national, or corporate collectivities” (*Gothic* 169).

At the end of the Boa Island scene, Craig asks Pyper to dance in an exchange that gestures to a paternal genealogy, submitting it to resignification:

Craig: Dance.

Pyper: The gods are watching.

Craig: The gods.

Pyper: Protestant gods.

Craig: Carson.

Pyper: King.
Craig: Ulster.

Pyper: Ulster.

Craig: Stone.

Pyper: Flesh.

Craig: Carson is asking you to dance in the temple of the Lord.

Pyper: Dance. (165)

Who is dancing? Men. Beloved Ulster becomes male flesh, dancing: a potential grieving and healing of wounds through a return of the repressed homosexual cathexis.

In the very last lines of the play, the Younger Pyper, reaching towards his Elder incarnation, commands “Dance in this deserted temple of the Lord” (197), signifying a marked difference than the moment on Boa Island where Craig declares, “Carson is asking you to dance in the temple of the Lord” (165; Lojek, “Myth” 47). The Godhead figure has left the temple, and some of his sons now begin a psychic process of healing twisted bonds of repressed desire and the remembering of loved ones, corroborated by Pyper’s two incarnations apparently dancing with one another.

Therefore, the audience finds in this drama a profound initiative: an invitation to humane mourning for, and therapeutic recovery of, a beloved anthropomorphized Ulster. This recovery extends to the soldiers’ mock re-enactment of the Battle of Scarva, where they attempt to possess the land, to reclaim it as home in order to rouse themselves before battle (181). Men divide up into the respective forces of King Billy and King James, replacing the mounting of steeds with piggybacking. Anderson exerts much effort to stage manage this trench-side production as the men are told repeatedly to “keep to the result” (182) in Anderson’s sportscasteresque commentary. As it happens, the
representation of history fails when Pyper stumbles throwing King Billy (Crawford) to the ground and giving the Catholic king (Moore) the upper hand, foreshadowing the soldiers’ doom (183).

Craig, moreover, tells the others of his dreams of the Enniskillen River, making the rivers of the province objects of reminiscence. Pyper locates the river Somme as “the source of the strange smell,” and detects that “it smells like home” (187). Pyper’s powerful olfactory sense, integral to memory’s operations, causes him to profess: “We’re not in France. We’re home. We’re on our own territory. We’re fighting for home. This river is ours. This land’s ours. We’ve come home” (188). In their attempts at redeeming their homeland through imaginatively reclaiming the French countryside, the Ulster that the soldiers march for is decidedly masculine. “I love my Ulster” is a refrain of the play, sounding from within the melancholic structure of a gender identity refracted by a homophobic culture and sexual ideology. “I love my Ulster” is derived from a disavowed “I love him,” or, as Pyper says just before the battle—“I love —” (196). This is arguably what animates Craig’s declaration to Pyper that “I am you” (164), collapsing the mark of differential identity so critical to the melancholic operations of Unionism’s imaginary.

With an exchange of Orange sashes before the battle, Pyper’s final prayer for his comrades returns to the homosocial matrix of patriarchal Ulster and the world of war. McGuinness’s anatomy of the cost of patriotic fervour in terms of hate—this ideological hatred’s origins in desire’s prohibitions and a compulsion to repeat a psychosexual trauma ending in death—remains virtually palpable in the ensuing butchery:

Lord, look down on us. Spare us. I love --. Observe the sons of Ulster marching towards the Somme. I love their lives. I love my own life. I love my home. I

As the chant of ‘Ulster’ commences rifles and bayonets are raised. The chant turns into a battle cry, reaching frenzy. (196)

The near compulsive repetition of “Ulster” surely is symbolic of the lost love object beyond recovery. Pyper is the sole survivor of his companions who escapes not only the horrors of the Somme, but also, for a while at least, the restrictive homosocial pressures that drove him there before reverting to the archetypes of his Protestant ancestors.

“Sacrifice is examined within the framework of an uncritical, mythological trust in repetition,” observes Eamonn Jordan, for the “dramatic form of the play functions not only to highlight the ritualism of both tribal identity and sacrifice but it also contributes towards the exhibition of the immense pressures on the soldiers to both venerate and repeat the past” (26). The Elder Pyper’s submission to the paternal strictures of the homosocial fold remains symptomatic of his groping in the dark to make sense of the deaths of his fellow Ulstermen, taking the guise of his rehabilitated faithfulness to the service of the Protestant gods that the Younger Pyper had rejected earlier. The play dramatizes the “difficulty of departing from the pre-established script” (Harris, par. 27) by demonstrating the struggle in avoiding the weight of historico-political forces and the illogical beliefs that sustain them (Harris, par. 46).

Whereas Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme suggests that Pyper’s closeted, yet subversive, queer identity only has limited influence in resisting melancholic sacrifice shaping the province, Dido Martin’s model of a defiant queer singularity in McGuinness’s Carthaginians,80 proposes the prospect of change. Seven

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80 McGuinness’s title, Carthaginians, reinscribes the populace of Derry and those in the cemetery within a reified allegorical subtext, filtering the play through a classical frame of reference. Access to ancient
Northern Irish Catholics gather in Derry’s Creggan graveyard to await the hopeful resurrection of thirteen civil rights demonstrators killed by British soldiers on Bloody Sunday\textsuperscript{81} in early 1972. When Galway’s Druid Theatre Company performed the play in Derry, where everyone knew by heart the names of the victims, the most contentious issue however, was not the representation of Bloody Sunday but Dido’s homosexuality. An anonymous local reviewer, who had predicted there would be a hostile reaction or even riots, joked sardonically, “Dido, was gay, and, as everyone knows, Derry’s population does not include such a thing as a homosexual community” (qtd. in Lojek, \textit{Contexts} 178). In an interview in 1991, McGuinness identifies the historical homosocial forces shaping Irish identity in the North:

> It’s not the influence of Empire, it’s the influence of nationalism—that’s what I really have to confront….Look, a lot of our ills we brought on ourselves….We’ve done nothing to create a pluralist society other than being dragged kicking and screaming into it. And that is not England’s influence; that is Rome’s influence, and that is the Irish influence. (Qtd. in Gleitman 62)

The action of \textit{Carthaginians} takes place within the Gothic setting of a Catholic Carthage is through Virgil’s \textit{The Aeneid}, alluded to in several instances and through the opening music of Purcell’s opera \textit{Dido and Aeneas}. Historically, the Carthage myth of Irish origins was used to counteract the degrading stereotype that the Irish were descended from ‘savage’ Scythians (Cullingford, \textit{Others} 100). McGuinness draws parallels between the imperialism of the Roman Empire and its utter destruction of Carthage in the Punic Wars and both the current religious imperialism of the Catholic Church and domination by England. To be Carthaginian is to refuse both Britain and Rome McGuinness explains, for “Irish Catholics are shaped by the authority of Rome, which can be an exceptionally destructive force. \textit{Carthaginians} looks at the acceptance of that authority in Ireland, at what happens to a people who move the centre of authority away from their own country….When you do that you are handing authority to an empire which will destroy you ultimately” (qtd. in Cullingford, \textit{Others} 120).

\textsuperscript{81}On 27 March 2000, the Saville Tribunal opened a new investigation into the events of Bloody Sunday. The people of Derry for the first time ever in legal history were able to force London to overturn the findings of one of its own official inquiries by repudiating Lord Widgery’s earlier report that covered-up military incompetence and illegalities (Cregan, “Camping” 31; Kinsella, \textit{Butcher’s Dozen}).
cemetery as, reflecting on this choice, McGuinness states, "[i]t is a city with ruins, and the only way you can find out about it is from its ruins and its graveyards" (Penny 12). Cemeteries have served as traditional refuges for marginalized outcasts existing on the fringes of respectable society and as places of dread (O’Dwyer 112). Burial grounds resonate with symbolic political significance where historically the remembrance of dead generations has bordered on obsession; moreover, the killings over the thirty-six odd years of the Troubles have made funerals social commonplaces where both communities parade tribal solidarity. Ritual events commemorating the dead illustrate melancholic nationalisms’ appropriation of death and the seductive spectacle that demands allegiance to sacrificial offerings with each generation.

Comparable to Unionism’s interpellation of its sons, romantic Irish nationalism’s melancholic masculinity similarly wounds its male offspring who, both consciously and unconsciously, struggle to live up to its impossibly hyperbolic dictates. “While Pyper and other rare boyos are interested in recovering a separate and separatist Ulster,” compares Susan Cannon Harris, “the vision that conditions the formation of political identity for the tenants of Derry’s graveyard is that of a united Ireland—one that risks referring back to a precolonial, homogenous, idealized Ireland that Carthaginians argues never existed” (par. 28). Carthaginians’s four male characters Hark, Paul, Seph, and Dido each struggle with romantic and revolutionary nationalisms’ demands to fulfil the narrow ground of masculine Irishness laid out before them. The audience witnesses the consequences of their wounds via the men’s neurotic hostility and disavowing homophobia.

Before Bloody Sunday, Hark, Paul, and Seph had been the “best of pals”
(McGuinness, *Carthaginians* 327) and involved in the civil rights movement, idealistically marching for equality. Bad times befall this gang of friends when Hark is incarcerated, Paul suffers from mental instability, and Seph turns into an informer; these instances of misfortune are partially traceable to survivor guilt compounded by the ungrieved loss of the primary love object. “They are trapped within a pattern of grief, just in the same way that the soldiers in *Observe the Sons of Ulster* are confined within a sacrificial rhythm of history,” remarks Eamonn Jordan (73). Reunited with his pals in the graveyard, Hark is on the run from the I.R.A. because of his refusal to continue to function as their look-out man. Hark, whose birth name is John, is fuelled by rage, bitterly disparaging his society through recourse to anal metaphors: “Let us create a nation fit for assholes to live in….For as assholes are we known to each other and like the asshole let us forever remain apart” (323).

The melancholic fraternity of paramilitary organizations like the I.R.A manifests itself in the scapegoating of homosexual desire. Hark represents the voice of homophobic nationalist condemnation when he attacks Dido in Scene One: “You are known as a queer in this town. I do not like being seen with queers. I do not like queers. I do not like you. Fuck off” (305). However, McGuinness, in attempting to loosen the Gordian Knot of male relations, revealingly scripts Hark’s flirtatious performance as one of seduction followed by betrayal: “Have you ever been picked up, Dido? Picked up, by the army or the police? Will I pick you up? Will I show you how to pick someone up? (Hark touches Dido on the face.) This is how, Dido. And after that, Dido, do you know

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82 Hereafter citations from McGuinness’s *Carthaginians* in *Frank McGuinness: Plays One*, Faber and Faber, (1996) 290-379, will be indicated by page number only.
what they do? (Hark kisses Dido.) Does it not turn you on? Answer to your wildest
dreams? Me, Dido” (314). Hark, however, immediately embarks upon a faux-military or
police interrogation: “Tell me the truth. Tell me who you’re involved with. Give me
names, Harkin. Give me addresses....That’s all we’re looking for” (314). Foregrounding
the erotic components of nationalist and Unionist discourses, McGuinness tenders an
allegory of homosociality’s contradictory functioning, which Hark has experienced
firsthand. This sadistic, voyeuristic spectacle of interrogation remains symptomatic of a
melancholic society that consolidates masculine power through violent homoerotic
disavowals. As Kenneth Nally records, gay men cruising Derry’s Foyle River are often
picked up by soldiers or police and blackmailed by threats to out them to their families
and friends if they refused to become informants (45).

Hark, burdened with his own sense of guilt for his involvement with both the
paramilitaries and the authorities, continues his castrating assault upon Dido by raising
the spectre of A.I.D.S. and demanding a confession:

Tell me what’s between your legs. Is there anything between your legs?
Is there one between your legs? (Hark grabs Dido’s groin.) Is the united
Ireland between your legs? What happens when cocks unite? Disease,
boy, disease. The united Ireland’s your disease. Does your cock want a
united Ireland? Will it tell me? Would you like it to tell me? Tell me
your disease. Tell me. Tell me. Tell me. (314)

Although elided in name, A.I.D.S, a blood-borne disease that functions just as much as an
ideologically-loaded discourse, displaces the specificity of centuries-old tribal hatreds
and draws upon the nineteenth-century Gothic tropes of the diseased Irish. Hark
questions Dido’s masculinity through a castrating fixation upon his genitalia, which Hark, no less, vigorously grabs, symbolically underlining the alleged incompatibility of Ulster’s two opposing homosocial cultures while registering nationalisms’ requirement of exclusive masculine heterosexuality. Hark attributes to Dido the disease of “a united Ireland” (314) although neither the context of the scene nor the man’s personality warrants a caustic Hark foisting a Republican label upon him. The emphasis upon disease indicates an internal threat to the homosocial order as Dido earlier notices when the British soldiers at the army checkpoint also suspect him of being a “health hazard” (301). McGuinness’s foregrounding of disease draws attention obliquely not only to the real menace of a pandemic, but also to the Northern Irish disease that afflicts the mind: a case of siege mentality.

As Carthaginians progresses, Hark’s attitude towards Dido undergoes a notable modification as shown by the homoeroticism of the bathing scene, where the slippage between heterosexual identification and homosexual desire occurs. Hark and Dido experience a therapeutic process through ritual cleansing on stage when Dido first batters and smears raw sausage meat all over his former tormentor’s chest and face, then, forcing Hark to remove his shirt, sensuously bathes Hark’s upper body and tweaks his nipple just for the badness of it (324-5). What is significant is Hark’s surrender to the gay man’s attention, remaining mostly silent during this ritual washing. McGuinness offers the audience the spectacle of mourning, which heals the Oedipal loss through a return of the repressed homosexual cathexis; in other words, Hark, it is implied, becomes more open to his own homosexual investments without abandoning his heterosexual identity. Later Hark is playfully flirtatious with Dido, asking if he has brought him any articles of
clothing or books from town: “Why have you brought me nothing, Dido? Do you not love me?” (360); what’s more, during the quiz competition as the repartee grows and the animosity diminishes between them, Hark inquires, “How’s your balls, queer boy?” (360).

Hark’s slow transformation is not entirely unexpected however, for Paul applies pressure to Hark’s “hard man” (371) persona that contradicts the fleeting signs of a more humane individual underneath his exterior. Paul scorns Hark’s cowardice by divulging that Hark is not a terrorist killer and never participated in any hunger strikes, obliging Hark to confess, “I couldn’t use the gun. I wasn’t man enough” (372). Significantly, Paul turns the tables on Hark’s own homophobic rhetoric when in a scene of mock-fellatio coerces a toy gun into Hark’s mouth and demands that he eats it, giving him a taste of his own medicine and plaiting together ciphers of sublimated *homoeros* and nationalist violence (372).

Paul, a teacher and occasional quiz master, claims that he endures a “war” (368) in his head and spends his time building a pyramid out of rubbish and plastic bags that will serve as an escape route from Derry (319). With Paul’s first entrance onto the stage, he condemns Derry through the language of scapegoating and sexual betrayal: “Pack of whores. Pack of queers. Pack of traitors. Look at the state of this town” (308). Additionally, a traumatized Paul introduces the Carthaginian theme to the play as he rebuffs the Roman *Catholic* Empire: “But I’m no slave. I am Carthaginian. This earth is mine, not Britain’s nor Rome’s. Mine” (311).

Likewise, Seph, a *supergrass* (paid informer) against the I.R.A., suffers from a “war” in his head (370). Seph barely utters a word during most of the performance, not
conversing until Scene Four when he shatters the group’s self-imposed silence concerning Bloody Sunday. Seph confesses his own self-hatred, desiring to serve as a sacrifice on revolutionary nationalism’s altar: “I talked. I ran away. 83 And I came back. I went to those I informed on. I said, kill me. Let me die. They said, live. That’s your punishment. Life, not death. Live with what you’ve done” (346). Seph’s price for survival is this living death accorded to him, not unlike Pyper’s fate to be haunted by memories of his dead friends at the Somme. Hypocritically, Hark considers Seph’s actions as an outright betrayal of the nationalist community and, hence, dismisses the younger man as a traitor (370), but Maela, more compassionately encourages, “Others did worse than you. Far worse” (329). Nationalist interpellation effects a traumatic despair in each of these three men, where the sacrificial demands of their ancestors confront growing resistance from the men through their experience of mourning in the graveyard.

A kindred in spirit to Pyper, Dido is another unequivocal gay outsider and a threatening figure at the very heart, in some respects, of the homosocial regulation of the nationalist imaginary. The catalyst for a substantial amount of the dramatic action and the healthy adjustments that the marginalized grave dwellers undertake, this motherly “queen of Derry” (364) runs essential errands, bringing food, clothing, cigarettes, and alcohol. Dido not only vibrates with a life-affirming force and sensitivity garnished with astute cynicism and sexual double-entendres but also, equally important, talks back to power with irony, insult, and camp. He is neither interested in respectability nor the ungrieved sorrows of melancholic Irish masculinity.

The happiest day of Dido’s life was a brief, bittersweet encounter with a Lebanese

83 Seph’s comment, “I ran away” (346), puns on the acronym I.R.A. This was a common Irish joke at the start of the Troubles in the late 1960s before the terrorist organization reorganized, expanding its ranks and support within the nationalist community in order to counter Loyalist aggression.
seaman called John who bestows upon the Derryman, his moniker, ‘Dido’ (326). As Elizabeth Butler Cullingford explains, “Dido’s Carthaginian and queenly identity appropriately conferred by a Phoenician sailor, involves the rejection of war and the replacement of homosocial masculinity (on which war depends) by a homoerotic carnival” (Others 123). Furthermore, according to Susan Cannon Harris, McGuinness’s Carthaginian myth of the homoerotic origins of Dido’s nomination twists tradition inside out with this parodic version of Mother Ireland insofar as Ireland “becomes identified with not only Dido but the ‘beautiful stranger’ of Dido’s sexual fantasy; Cathleen ni Houlihan is male and explicitly refuses the kind of blood-sacrifice that she is ordinarily supposed to demand” (par. 32). Although noticing the shift in symbolic genders, Harris overlooks the overdetermined masculine identity of Mother Ireland encrypted within nationalisms’ discourses; if the sacrificial command is declined in this instance, then it is only a temporary reprieve for the purposes of McGuinness’s illustration of alternative visions.

All the characters in Carthaginians have their own metaphorical closets that harbour brutal secrets, but Dido remains an exception; because of his position out of the closet, Dido is able to speak the truth, not mincing words. A non-conformist to masculine dictates of style—a long pink scarf, Doc Martens, and, occasionally, dressed in drag, Dido remains self-conscious of his own sense of identity for which he is responsible for constructing. “Dido shares Pyper’s knowledge of what is rotten about definitions and binarisms,” argues Susan Cannon Harris, “offering his audience, instead of the spectacle of the closet, the spectacle of drag” (par. 30). Dido continually makes the audience aware of his attempts to question the cultural order through his camp mien—a style antithetical
to tragedy. "It is Dido's honesty with the audience--the only member of the cast to tell the truth frankly and unadorned--which convinces....[S]urvival, the dominant theme of the play, is possible in Dido's case because of, rather than despite, his homosexuality" (Pine 30).

Dido strews his language with graphic sexual innuendo and self-deprecating comedy; in tying Dido's language to politically grave matters, McGuinness undermines the overdetermined trajectory of melancholic gender through Dido's resistance to a fixed hetero-masculine identity. Dido mocks the nationalist ethos of guerrilla warfare, claiming that his "ambition in life is to corrupt every member of Her Majesty's forces serving in Northern Ireland" (302). Dido campily elaborates,

It's my bit for the cause of Ireland's freedom. When the happy day of withdrawal comes, I'll be venerated as a national hero. They'll build a statue to me. I'm going to insist it's in the nude with a blue plaque in front of my balls. (Holds an imaginary plaque before himself.) This has been erected to the war effort of Dido Martin, patriot and poof. (302)

Brendan Behan's influence is clear in McGuinness's own disillusionment with Irish nationalism as Dido further jokes how he borrowed the balaclavas for his play from a Provo (Provisional I.R.A.), who had collected them after winning the "Terrorist of the year competition" (334)--where contestants supposedly pose in a balaclava and a bathing suit. Dido ventriloquizes Behan's feminizing deflation of patriotic rhetoric through the transformation of the male terrorist into, however problematically, a homoerotic object of desire.

Dido further lampoons the heroism of Irish national mythology and the
shibboleths of Easter 1916 in his play-within-a-play “The Burning Balaclava” (331)—a devastating satire packed with every cliché concerning Northern Ireland’s Troubles. Dido cross-casts the men and women on stage, and everyone’s character is dubbed a version of the surname “Doherty” (332). McGuinness revels in sexual anarchy here, destabilizing gender and national identities and the volatile sectarian signification of Northern Irish icons of violence: flags, guns, balaclavas (Cregan, “Camp” 29). Dido as drag double Fionnuala McGonigle (an impersonation of one of Yeats’s hermaphroditic friends involved in the occult) composes the dialogue and performs multiple roles (Liddy 282). Both McGuinness and his characters engage in a process of creating fictional worlds as a method of evading the material realities of the North and, paradoxically, contesting nationalisms’ own performative homosocial identities. Stimulated by the sardonically humourous effects of Dido’s satire, the squatters in the cemetery gradually divulge—through a series of confessions—the brutality of their lives and their buried guilt over Bloody Sunday, which hovers constantly in the background. To cope with their own personal and collective tragedies, the grave dwellers bring denial and an arsenal of distractions as a means of defence against the traumatic realities of the event that initially brought them there (Foley 36; Wilcox 6-7).

McGuinness’s balm of ritual mourning as a healing for trauma played out on the national stage remains a challenge to and refuge from sacrificial atavism and sublimated homosexual desires. The cast’s imaginary fantasy constructions, revealed in the telling of dirty jokes, the tale of Mustard Arse the cat, the playing of quiz games, the singing of songs, and, of course, the play-within-a-play, trigger Maela to begin to accept the loss of her daughter to cancer, Seph ending his silence, and the disinterring of memories of
Bloody Sunday from its collective psychic crypt (Wilcox 7; Foley 36). “It is a struggle with threat by means of unconscious fantasy,” writes Riana O’Dwyer, as “a natural tactic for dealing with the distance between the needs of the person and the reality of their situation....Yet there is a tendency to marginalize fantasy by the stigma of madness” (100). Indeed, Dido brings news from the outside world to the visionary watchers, informing them that the “Catholics think you’re mad, and the Prods think you’re Martians” (307). Melancholic silences in the play coincide with those moments where the private agonized memories of that day seep through. *Carthaginians* is a theatrical therapeutic exercise of mourning as the characters increasingly grow stronger and more capable of confronting the crippling horrors of the Troubles. As Eamonn Jordan recommends, “the characters must revalue the past, let go of ideals, shed instinctive responses, feel their pain and defy the forces which have hurt them” (192).

As a result of the performance of “The Burning Balaclava”, the players face up to homosocial nationalism’s own self-destructive tendencies and begin to heal the wounds left by Bloody Sunday:

Seph: ...Would it have been better to have been shot on Bloody Sunday? Did I want that to happen? Why did I want that? Why did we all want it? Did we want Bloody Sunday to happen?

Hark: How the hell could we want Bloody Sunday to happen?

Seph: So we could make sense of it all, make sense of our suffering.

*(Starts to wrap the tricolour around the guitar.)* Thirteen dead on Bloody Sunday. It could have been thirteen hundred. Thirteen thousand.

Thirteen million. One. One left alive, that one is me and I’m going to tell.
To make sense of the suffering endured by Seph’s community and to justify hatred and possible retaliation against British soldiers or Protestants seem an impossible task. Seph perceptively recalls, “[t]hey said after Bloody Sunday they wanted to avenge the dead but they wanted to join them” (370), illustrating that not only does a desire for eradication of the “enemy within” drive the cycle of violence in Northern Ireland but also the concomitant desire for self-annihilation. “And I would tell on the living who wanted to join the dead. I’d save them from themselves. I’d save them from the dead. I’d save you, Hark,” pleads Seph, disclosing his deep attachment to his erstwhile older friend (370). Seph’s actions break the circuit of sacrificial logic, demonstrating deeper motivations for the self-destructive hate and guilt behind homosocial nationalist discourses, analogous to the dance of death that the soldiers face in Ulster. In *Carthaginians*, McGuinness addresses the politicized Catholic community to observe the sons of Ireland marching in tune with the unconscious dynamics of nationalisms’ incoherent demands of murderous/suicidal service to the Fatherland.

Delivered incantation-style, Paul recites the names, ages, and addresses of those who fell in the streets of Derry on Bloody Sunday, functioning as McGuinness’s eulogy to the marchers. “The naming of dead obliterates the division between performance and reality and between audience and stage….Indeed, the audience may participate in the recollection of the dead” (Jordan 86). Afterward, Dido, who believes in the magical power of dead flowers, casts a spell over the sleeping others, pondering, “Why am I talking to myself in a graveyard? Because everyone in Derry talks to themselves. Everybody in the world talks to themselves” (379). Dido subsequently chooses exile: “I
believe it is time to leave Derry. Love it and leave it. Now or never” (379). Echoing Millen’s precise phrase before the battle of the Somme, Dido’s repeated injunction to “Watch yourself” (379) to those asleep places responsibility upon individuals to “make [their] own resurrections here, in this world” (Wilcox 8), to shape their own destiny as is possible outside of and against the prevailing strictures of Irish nationalisms’ conflicted homosocial ideologies. Mendelssohn’s music and Dido’s ritualistic on-stage actions affirm the transformational healing power of theatre and of play.

Des O’Rawe discerns that Dido’s action at the end of Carthaginians, however, “does not herald the necessary victory of the performative over the representational” (162). McGuinness portrays characters, whom, more often than not, audiences share little in common. By empathetically recognizing themselves in these representations of queer men on stage (among others), audiences can learn from them as a shift towards ameliorating melancholic prohibitions. Dido and Pyper present strategies for mourning losses and for humane remembrance through the rewriting of scripts of identity by suggesting that the audience “must reach an understanding of their identities as performative before they can reconstruct them” (Harris, par. 9). However, audiences also must acknowledge that being conscious of the performative nature of gender and national identities, or, for that matter, gender’s melancholic structure often will not suffice against homosociality’s interpellative power of wounding drives and discourses (Harris, par. 48).

For McGuinness, Derry is not just a symbol of Northern Ireland’s painful wounds: Derry is the world. McGuinness, sensitive to historical contexts, inserts homoeros unapologetically back into Irish history without anachronism. Pyper and Dido are, paradoxically, intimate outsiders at critical historical points in their respective times
and communities. Several of McGuinness's most compelling plays reflect the degree of openness with which gay characters inhabit the Irish stage in contrast to older sanitized or closeted representations. In Irish theatre, gay figures are no longer hidden in Irish society nor in need of sympathy because of their sexuality as was the case with Friel's lost visitors and Kilroy's Mr. Roche fifteen years earlier. McGuinness's landmark staging of a deconstructive homoeros paves the way for Jaime O'Neill's queer fictional revision of a crucial site in the origins of modern romantic Irish nationalism—the Easter Uprising.
EPILOGUE

The Word Known to All Men:
Jamie O’Neill’s Love Letter

‘Damn it all, MacMurrough, are you telling me you are an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort?’
‘If you mean am I Irish, the answer is yes.’


‘But what is Ireland that you should want to fight for it?’
...‘It’s Doyler,’ he said.
‘Doyler is your country?’
‘It’s silly, I know. But that’s how I feel. I know Doyler will be out, and where would I be but out beside him? I don’t hate the English and I don’t know do I love the Irish. But I love him. I’m sure of that now. And he’s my country.’


Jamie O’Neill’s recent critically-acclaimed third novel, At Swim, Two Boys (2001), is a milestone in Irish writing, firmly marking gay literature on the Irish map. Simon & Schuster paid £250,000 in advance for the British publishing rights alone to the novel, and Scribner tendered a further £1,000,000, which is thought to be the highest advance ever paid for an Irish novel (Copestake, par. 1; Robinson, par. 2). Both a queer rewriting of and a paean to Joyce’s Ulysses, At Swim, Two Boys shares various characteristic elements with the modernist text: a setting in early twentieth-century Dublin, Sandycove, and Glasthule; striking parallels of disposition and preternaturally conscious behavior between Leopold Bloom and Arthur Mack and between his son, reticent schoolboy Jim Mack, and Stephen Dedalus; the plot device of coincidence; and both writers’ use of

stream of consciousness, free indirect style, and Irish-English rhythms and syntax. In addition, O’Neill’s title playfully revises that of Flann O’Brien’s phantasmagoric modernist comedy *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939).

With prodigious Edwardian period detail, O’Neill chronicles the intersections of diverse militant nationalist and cultural movements “competing for ideological supremacy in the struggle to define Ireland and Irishness” (Cronin 32). Against this historical backdrop, O’Neill’s tale involves the romance of a motherless Jim Mack and the coarse, yet witty, Doyler Doyle, both bright sixteen-year-olds, as they become sexually aware and fall in love—“pal o’me heart” (O’Neill, *Swim* 337) as Doyler refers to Jim. “The boys come out of the Irish cultural tradition,” remarks O’Neill in a *Newsday* interview, “they play Irish music, they speak Gaelic, they’re Catholic, they’re interested in hurling. It’s as natural for them to be in love with each other as it is for them to be Irish—I wanted to show that” (Beer, par. 4). Set in the years 1915 and 1916, the novel represents the young men’s budding relationship fostered by intellectual Anthony MacMurrough and intertwined with the Easter Uprising. In comparison to the other texts examined, O’Neill’s novel most visibly foregrounds the homosocial construction of modern Irish male identity and makes explicit the architecture of *homoeros* operating within nationalist cultural imaginaries. O’Neill’s overall agenda is to incorporate a modern gay identity within a re-imagined liberal and pluralist version of Irish national identity to compensate for decades of sexual repression and for the horrors of the conflict in Northern Ireland (Cronin 37).

O’Neill’s gay, reluctant revolutionary, MacMurrough, has been recently released from detention for crimes of gross indecency committed with a chauffeur-mechanic. The

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85 Hereafter all further references to *At Swim, Two Boys* is by page number only.
text tracks MacMurrough's recovery from the trauma of imprisonment and the loss of his lover Scrotes—an Oxford professor of classical learning who is similarly convicted and worked to death—to his attempts at reintegration into Dublin society with the help of his Aunt Eva. Moved by the teenagers' passion for one another, MacMurrough's mounting involvement in Doyler's and Jim's lives facilitates his rather ambivalent embrace of a modified strain of Republicanism as "it seemed too extravagant to equate his plight with the humdrum consequences of nationalist agitation. And yet he was Irish—as much as he was anything much" (194). Along with the maieutic memory of Scrotes, a motley assortment of voices—the Chaplain, Nanny Tremble, and Dick (his personified libido)—haunt MacMurrough's mind. The wise Scrotes functions as "a sort of conscience for MacMurrough, needling him to a truthfulness and a nobility of the soul which his poor actual soul, earthbound and wanting, is not sure it can reach" (O'Neill, e-mail 16 February 2005). Scrotes presents a counter-memory to militant Republican "truth" in the form of philosophical exposition that critiques homophobia and its articulation within Irish culture by reiterating Edward Carpenter's espousal of homosexuality as the noble "comrade love" (286).

Although outside the narrative action, Oscar Wilde and Roger Casement influence MacMurrough's world through a relationship of queer generational inheritance. Casement affects MacMurrough through his Aunt Eva's role in the smuggling of German arms for the imminent rebellion as well as through her long-time infatuation with "Roger". Out of a bemused respect, MacMurrough remains quiet regarding his suspicions about Casement's sexuality. The association of Ireland with disgrace registers in MacMurrough's mind: "Parnell and Wilde, the two great scandals of the age: both
Irish. It’s good to know Ireland can lead the world in something” (308). MacMurrough’s relationship with Wilde is far more profound as they have suffered the ignominy of prison for the same “crime”, were tried under the same statute by the same lawyer--Wilde’s old ‘friend Sir Edward Carson—and were similarly vilified and spat upon by public mobs. Combined with the life-changing experience of incarceration is the sexual education garnered from Scrotes; MacMurrough assimilates these lessons and passes them onto another generation of young men, Jim and Doyler, who struggle with their heart’s desires and their stations in the world. This transmission of sexual knowledge from one Irishman to another nurtures a fledgling modern gay self-consciousness in the novel.

MacMurrough exacts revenge on his prosecutor, and, ironically, his next door neighbour, Carson, by first saving him from drowning and then by grabbing the disoriented man and kissing him lavishly on the lips at a public beach (441). O’Neill queers Carson via this staged scene of desire, condensing notions of Unionism’s homosocial imaginary and the homophobic scapegoating of Wilde and MacMurrough by a fellow countryman. Additionally, Robert Caserio informs us of Carson’s connection to F. E. Smith—a “bosom associate in the formation of the Ulster Volunteers”—who served as Casement’s trial judge and who circulated his ‘black diaries’ (144). MacMurrough’s audacious embrace places Carson in the intolerable position of being indebted to a quare for saving his life, a man whom he had helped to convict. Situated historically at several nexuses of nationalism and sexuality both real and fictionalized, Carson’s own volatile sexual identity remains an open question.

Nonetheless, MacMurrough’s primary function is to aid Jim’s and Doyler’s
growth to sexual self-awareness through serving as their mentor, protector, and lover. In conjunction with a sexual education, MacMurrough teaches Doyler how to dive and Jim how to swim so that the two boys can achieve their goal of reaching Muglins rock at Easter time. Jim expresses how lucky he is to have met MacMurrough: “It’s a gift you’ve gave me. It might have been so different. How empty it would be if we didn’t know—it’s like a secret really—didn’t know how we could be” (551). As thematic threads of sexuality and swimming interweave, Jim realizes that he “had found his element....Swimming: it was a kind of pilgrimage to our earliest beginnings” (427, 430). Significantly when Doyler is confronted by a lisping James Connolly, commander of the Irish Citizen Army, Doyler pictures himself naked running “to the blue, to the sea, swimming to the sea” (493). The heroic independence of movement experienced in the sea is imbued with a sexual freedom in the boys’ minds against the constraining authority of family, religion, and the state but without being fully conscious of the attending risk of drowning.

*At Swim, Two Boys* charts the overlapping psychosexual and political development of Jim and Doyler. Fleeing an impoverished home life, Doyler turns to the promise of Larkinite socialism and enlists in the Irish Citizen Army in the anticipation of a proletarian revolution. On the other hand, Jim is driven more by his tender affections for Doyler and by what he learns from MacMurrough and his ideals of camaraderie—a notion of a loving friends-in-arms. Jim is receptive to similar sentiments reaffirmed by a lisping Pearse in the restaged oration over Wolfe Tone’s grave: “Jim knew this man’s heart was deep and true, for he made Jim wish for an equal love and an equal truth in his heart. He was swept by a great desire to take hold Doyler’s hand and tell him in his ear,
That’s how I think of you, that’s exactly how I think of you” (228). Being naïve, Jim is oblivious to the darker implications of Pearse’s inspirational rhetoric and mistakes his love for Doyler as being equivalent to his feelings for Ireland yet not without reservation: “I don’t hate the English and I don’t know do I love the Irish” (435).

The crucial importance of fellowship as articulated by Scrotes’s premise that “[f]riendship tending to love may tend to desire” (265) insinuates a productive confusion of sexual and national categories of identity. The loyal devotion of friends feeds into the intense homosocial barriers yoked onto male companionship. O’Neill “deliberately exploits the traditions of comradeship and solidarity indigenous to the Irish male world,” remarks David Halperin, “and makes the homosexuality of his protagonists piggy-back on their homosociality. In other words, he presents homosexuality under the sign of romantic friendship” (“Pal o’ Me Heart” par. 18). The teenagers’ immediate goal is to plant a green flag on Muglins rock off the Forty Foot, a site where men swim and sunbathe in the nude, claiming the rock for their own in a new founding mythology: “When we swim out there we’ll bring us a flag to raise. We’ll raise the Green and claim the Muglins for Ireland,” declares Doyler (221). In the boys’ imaginings, Muglins rock is transformed into this fantasy queer space and set apart from the outside world, for it is here that Jim and Doyler make love (532-4), asserting their hopes for both national and sexual freedom to the degree that they are capable of conceiving this alternative place but, if ever revealed, undoubtedly risking Republican scorn. O’Neill is a master of manipulating readers’ responses to the pathos of Jim’s and Doyler’s doomed love affair. As is the case in the narrative, Irish nationalism betrays these young men, costing them their lives. O’Neill’s explicit outing of the homoerotic depth charges lurking within
patriotism and the deconstruction of Irish male sexual identity challenges the conventional imagery of revolutionary and romantic cultural nationalism.

The notion of romantic companionship also extends to the homosocial fellowship between Doyler’s father, Mick Doyle, who considers Jim’s father, Arthur Mack, his own “pal o’ me heart” (12). Arthur Mack, depicted in some respects as a “West Briton” bar none, attributes his behavior to the homosocial institution of the imperial army: “Nothing you wouldn’t do for a pal. Nor nothing he wouldn’t do in return. End of the earth you’d go,” claims Mack (359). For example, when Mick Doyle fell ill while sailing the Arabian Sea, Mack had to “cradle him in [his] arms...and drip the water on his tongue” (359). Jim absorbs this masculine code of loyalty as it applies to his growing closeness with Doyler. However, once Arthur Mack was promoted up through the ranks, he humiliates Mick Doyle by criticizing his uniform’s greasy buttons, which, twenty years later, Doyle claims, “took the heart out of me that day, you did....What you see before you is the close of that day’s work” (392). Mick Doyle’s life is in freefall, for he is enduring chronic unemployment, alcoholism, and, most likely, tuberculosis. Unable to work or function, Doyle’s family remains hungry and destitute in a Dublin slum. What is fascinating about Doyle’s castrating wound is the revelation that he blames Mack’s breaking of their connection as the source of his current pathetic state of decay, which strongly hints that the psychic bond between these two veterans is more intimate than supposed. Furthermore, the elusiveness of sexual identity pervades *At Swim, Two Boys* as the sexuality of its historical and fictional cast of characters such as Edward Carson, James Connolly, Patrick Pearse, Aunt Eva, and several minor figures remains indecipherable.
Homosocial sacrifice materializes in *At Swim, Two Boys* when MacMurrough fathoms that Pearse’s Ireland is represented by “those gossamery boys who thumped the stage….See him reign, king of boys, master of all his desires” (326). MacMurrough repeats Yeats’s famous caveat about Pearse—“[t]his man is dangerous” (O’Neill 325; Edwards 335). Pearse’s romantic nationalism wills the sacrifice of the boys that he loves for Ireland’s freedom in the pursuit of some fantasy of legitimate (meta)physical union that is barred in life usually by masculine strictures and homophobia. The sacrificial machinery of Irish romantic nationalism is most honoured by MacMurrough’s fanatical aunt, who resembles a combination of Eva Gore-Booth, Maude Gonne, and Countess Markievicz. Aunt Eva is an unmarried, cross-dressing suffragist involved in smuggling activities for the Irish Volunteers. As her nephew prepares to leave for the trenches on the Western Front, Eva sinisterly ruminates over his departure and over a dark-haired server at Easter mass, whom she identifies as “a chosen lad” (543):

> And it seemed of a sudden inevitable that his love should be so. Inevitable that such love should send him to war. Inevitable as war was inevitably male. It was a preserve she had struggled all her life to touch, yet never had reached. Nor had any woman touched it, Kathleen nor Rosaleen nor the Shan Van Vocht, for all their summons and goad. They knelt beside her, Casement and Pearse and her nephew, each feasting upon this lad, and this lad performing with a significance secret to their eyes: and she felt a little ashamed, feminine, a folly. (543)

As a woman with impeccable nationalist and social credentials, Eva is excluded subsequently from the male homosocial ‘preserve’ of nationalism, which perhaps
explains her acute investment and mimicry of its ethos.

The novel’s ultimate sacrificial figure, though, turns out to be the narrative’s other dark-haired lad, Doyler, who is hit by British machine-gun fire while trying to save Jim’s life during the rebellion (631-2). Doyler’s death appears as a historical inevitability and as a foreordained outcome of the spirit of martyrdom; moreover, in the final paragraph of the novel and several years later during the Irish Civil War, a disillusioned Jim fastens upon an image of Doyler in his fever dream before succumbing to injuries (643).

O’Neill’s novel queers Irish nationalist mythology and excoriates the hypocrisy surrounding homoeros within Irish social conventions and silences. Breaking with the Irish texts discussed in my previous chapters, *At Swim, Two Boys* does not veil nor distort the male object of homosocial desire, but rather, it specifies that the object is not only presumably coded as male but, in this instance, marked by homosexual desire too. Not that this insight somehow ameliorates or transforms nationalist ideology or practice as represented in the novel, which is to a large degree grounded in the genre of nineteenth-century realist fiction with modernist aspects. Given the ample historical research that went into the creation of *At Swim, Two Boys*, O’Neill does not misrepresent the historically given romantic parameters of nationalism; instead, he works from inside the Republican tradition to draw attention to the disavowed sexual tensions underneath the surface, implicitly critiquing nationalist claims and spawning debate.

David Halperin observes that “it is the crisis of gay identity that O’Neill invokes to convey the impetus behind Irish nationalism—the shattering, world-making, nation-building thrill that comes from discovering ‘that we did indeed exist’ as a people” (“Pal o’ Me Heart” par. 6). Moreover, Michael Cronin contends that O’Neill exploits
nationalism in two ways to legitimize modern gay identity:

One of these is analogy; gay identity is like nationalism. If modern gay identity is a ‘necessary fiction’ a political and social identity and a form of human subjectivity shaped by the operations of power and resistance to it, this is something it shares with the nation, the ‘imagined community’....The other is participation. According to Socrates, an integral part of creating a nation—either ‘Irish Ireland’ or ‘of the heart’—is the recovery or construction of a history....By having MacMurrough, Doyler and Jim fight in the Rising, O’Neill is grafting on to the narrative of the Irish nation a historic narrative for Irish gay men—even down to having two martyrs to place alongside the executed leaders of 1916. Their participation in the Rising and their ability to prove themselves as fighters, also seeks to resolve any anxiety that there might be about those terms—Irish, gay, man—and their mutual exclusiveness. (36)

Michael Cronin’s identification of the novel’s running concern with establishing legitimacy for modern gay identity within the Irish nation by means of drawing parallels between the histories of each community bolsters O’Neill’s elegiac version of the dream of liberal inclusion of Ireland’s queer minorities (31).

O’Neill additionally presents a picture, however, of a captured MacMurrough and Jim lying together in a makeshift prison barracks, where MacMurrough envisions a possible place of domestic homosexual “normality”: “He closed his eyes, and wove through the pain till he summoned the form of an island home. He would build that home for Jim. Brick by brick he would build it. He had never built before, but now he would
begin” (641). This gentle island home is a new Ireland. “For maybe it was true,”
MacMurrough hypothesizes, “that no man is an island: but he believed that two very
well might be” (641-2). Earlier in the text, Doyler and Jim ponder the “mad idea” (582)
of both becoming schoolteachers and fantasizing about making a life together as a couple,
which fulfills MacMurrough’s speculative model of a new dispensation and proposes
something worth living for.

O’Neill demonstrates that one of the foundational sources for configurations of
Irish nationalisms is a conflicted homosociality with its purchase on sacrificial violence,
misogyny, homophobia, and xenophobia, but through the novel’s trio of sympathetic gay
men, a counter-narrative of the possibility of freedom and of male-male love resonates.
O’Neill injects his mournful revision of Easter 1916 into Irish cultural discourse,
presenting his country a glimpse of his alternative Utopia’s “patterns of the possible”
(607) paired with the stunning contradictions and evasions inherent within Ireland’s
“constitutional” identity. “Love between men is for once not a limit but a starting point,”
notes Michael Pye in the New York Times; “It does not require excuses or boasts or
provocation. It can be tragic and comic, but all in the context of the wider world of
rebellion, courage, idiocy and history” (par. 17). At Swim, Two Boys is an innovative
portrayal of the love story of Jim and Doyler that deconstructs Irish nationalist identity
through queer reconfiguration, which, according to Michael Cronin, superficially
coincides with some of the current ideological needs of the Irish state. For as the state
shifts towards a liberal inclusivity as a sign of its progressive, tolerant modernity, the
state also distances itself from Ireland’s revolutionary nationalist past with the notable
exception of this past’s symbolic and commercial value: “Romantic Ireland maybe dead
and gone but that has not prevented it re-emerging in commodity form” (Kirby et al. 10;
Cronin 6, 9).

O’Neill’s ambitious undertaking manages “to cross the codes of Irish identity and

and gone but that has not prevented it re-emerging in commodity form” (Kirby et al. 10;
Cronin 6, 9).

O’Neill’s ambitious undertaking manages “to cross the codes of Irish identity and
gay identity, making each figure for the other, thereby producing at one stroke a gay
genealogy of Irishness as well as a specifically Irish image of homosexuality—a romantic
vision of the gay male world as ‘a nation of the heart’” (Halperin, “Pal o’ Me Heart” par.
3). In an interview with the Sunday Times upon the launch of his novel, O’Neill
laconically explains that “I like to think I’ve put a tinge of pink in the green” (Heaney,
Mick, par. 25). Nevertheless, Michael Cronin objects to the author’s attempted analogy
between gay identity and the nation because, as he understands it, ultimately identity is
imagined in the novel as a personal one of liberation without any political import—
specifically an engagement with non-egalitarian class-based hierarchies and
stratifications (37-8). The analysis of nationalisms in At Swim, Two Boys, which lays
bare their homosocial/erotic foundations, however, is of enormous political consequence
in understanding the construction of Irishness and identity’s functioning by and large
within a global cosmopolitan community. Homoeroticism has come to a healthy fruition
in O’Neill’s love letter to Ireland, where same-sex love, in of itself, is accorded its dignity
but not without reminding Ireland of the sad road traveled to reach this mark.

O’Neill’s At Swim, Two Boys is informed by the two major grounds of Irish
nationalisms’ intense homosociality: the hegemony of the Catholic Church and the
impact of racial discourses of disease and of effeminization, both engendering a
hypermasculine reaction to compensate for this “humiliation” by way of an intense
politicocultural desire to achieve nationalist agency. This is yet another occasion of the
endless competition amongst oppressed peoples to not be at the very bottom of the social pecking order. Additionally, the widespread cultural power of Catholicism provides its own millennial-long forms of homosociality and homoeroticism now laid bare daily by the international media through a myriad of clerical sex scandals.

_Homoeros_ shapes Irish nationalisms in some measure by taking as their governing phantasy a symbolic male object. Strife amongst bonded groups of men serves to exploit women as figurative mediators whose emblematic function is to keep homoerotic potential in check: the more tightly Irishmen become bound to the notion of Ireland, the more probable that conscious or unconscious transgressions or betrayals may transpire, whether in the flesh or in the political sphere. Some Irish writers posit that the object of nationalist and Unionist homosociality is a veiled man (or boy)—in drag as it were—in the semblance of Dark Rosaleen, Britannia, Cait ní Dhuibhir, or the Poor Old Woman. Conversely, this cultural and ideological stage management is destabilized by Martyn’s dramatically explicit male ideal, McGuinness’s all-male Ulster cadre, and O’Neill’s homosexual patriots engaged in a struggle for both a queer and a national community.

The gendered motility of this masculine object of desire routinely produces erotic friction, homosexual panic, and/or self-loathing in men bent on destruction. The discrepant pretext between the imputed Ireland as Woman and the homosocial/erotic Man behind this trope manifests as a treacherous betrayal of gender and nation. It is within the distorting effects of normative masculinity’s constitutive double-bind—the unstable relation between an identification _with_ and the desire _for_—that the quandary over Irish identity partly lies. Nationalisms banish the emblematic homosexual to the boundary of their thought but, paradoxically, are compelled to police the community from a fear of the
return of the queer "enemy within". As the liminal zone between one type of Irishman and another becomes blurred and indistinguishable upon close inspection, nationalist discourses rely upon the circulation of degraded stereotypes to execute their customary affective power in maintaining the status quo. Michael Cronin, for instance, highlights the controversy that transpired when in late 2001 the publisher of a new glossy gay magazine called GI put up large billboards around Dublin depicting two men dressed in hurling/Gaelic football outfits kissing each other. Hemmed in by the overdetermined images of Irish masculine bodies, the Gaelic Athletic Association could only ineffectively complain to the Advertising Standards Authority that the images promoted a "lifestyle which is alien" (2).

Across the Irish texts examined here, one detects a movement where representations of the emblematic homosexual become increasingly embodied within Irish literature and culture. Previously, in the nineteenth century, the queer figure was variously refracted through and judged by discourses of the Gothic, the sentimental, the melodramatic, and the respectable until Oscar Wilde precipitously offered up his body and reputation for Victorian society on both sides of the Irish Sea to collectively project their fears and desires onto. Nationalist homoerōs is almost an unconscious facet of Martyn's closeted dramas as it remains disembodied as figuration constantly slipping along a chain of evasive displacements. As part of a new nationalist theatre movement with, ironically, a unionist bent as Lionel Pilkington asserts, Martyn's cultural nationalism presents its respectable conservative face.

During the revolutionary period in Ireland, Roger Casement and Patrick Pearse remained incorporeal homosexual figures insofar as a nationalist cordon sanitaire
safeguarded Pearse’s posthumous reputation, and the nationalist rejection of the ‘Black
Diaries’ protected Casement for a time. Joyce’s reaction against the Irish Revivalist
project through Bloom’s and Stephen’s ironically “queer” perspective satires the
parochial paranoia and absurdity of nationalist figures such as the citizen, the men in the
pub, the rebels at the gallows, Skin-the-Goat, and the sailor Murphy. Joyce comically
derides the nationalist emphasis on masculinity and homosocial bonding which he, ahead
of his time, demonstrates as having more complex relations. Joyce represents homoeros
as subversive play, a strategy of revealing nationalisms’ scapegoating of their own
internal “queerness”.

Brendan Behan’s homosexual outsiders that mischievously romp across his stage
are caricatures in contrast to the author’s more hard-hitting prison narratives that defy
Republican hypocrisy. A decade later, Thomas Kilroy and Brian Friel employ gay
characters as a tool for directly critiquing nationalisms, yet still, there is an unreal quality
to their treatments of Shane, Peter, and Mr. Roche. The tensions between modernity and
tradition and rural and urban experience coalesce in the revisionist diagnosis of romantic
nationalism’s problematic psychosexual sacrificial dynamics. Friel’s realistic dramas
bitterly depict a primitive tribal society on verge of collapse, perhaps partially echoing
the anxiety one registers in Martyn, albeit for a different tribe. Kilroy’s deconstructive
approach to urban culture illustrates, amongst other things, how little his group of men
have adapted to modernity, remaining nostalgic for de Valera’s cultural vision. Like
Joyce, Kilroy details the discursive maneuvers of how the closet works with its silences
and complicit denials. More directly in Double Cross, Kilroy imbricates nationalist and
sexual identities, albeit, refracted through two ex-patriots who identity with British
power.

It is not until the advent of Frank McGuinness’s theatre that these outcast men representationally solidify into flesh, blood, and bone to the same degree as any other character on stage. Like Friel, McGuinness feels compelled to address the Northern Irish Troubles through displaced perspectives, mapping the intersection of melancholic masculinity with the wounds left by Unionism and Republicanism, advancing from the point where Kilroy’s intuition left off. Tackling the *homoeros* of both tribes’ cultural imaginaries, McGuinness demonstrates that the peoples of Northern Ireland are far more alike than they care to admit. Finally, O’Neill’s achievement lies in his return to 1916 and the comprehensive gay embodiment that he accords to his male figures, which clearly had been unthinkable during the Irish Revival. Reading the signs of nationalisms’ own internal *homoeros*, O’Neill binds the queer and the nationalist together in his three protagonists, forcing a rereading of the Republican tradition and Irish writing.

Nationalisms are akin to theatre: a reiterative series of performances obsessed with re-enacting the incoherence of a volatile masculine identity and the alleviation of male insecurity over what it means to be heterosexual/homosexual and male/female. The seeming homogenous stability of the Irish nation owes a debt to queer men who have been routinely sacrificed as guarantors of this particular homosocial order. To appropriate the title of Judith Butler’s *Bodies that Matter*, queer men (and their lived bodies) have not mattered at all in the official version of nationalist realities; however, their symbolic presence within the functioning of a reiterative sacral scapegoating economy remains enormous. Irish writers grapple with these forces yet at the same time display caution, not pushing their audiences to fully understand the logical implications
of their insights.

This dissertation argues, to adapt Benedict Anderson, that ‘the nation’ is a form of homosocial comradeship which for nugatory and imaginary rationales historically has lead to so much death and destruction from Auschwitz to Srebrenica to Omagh (7). The dark promise of romantic nationalism’s “will to atrocity” clarifies the contempt Leopold Bloom suffers for being out of step with the Zeitgeist of the Irish volksgemeinschaft, espoused by the citizen and turn-of-the-century racial hygienists, later implemented by the Nazi regime. Bloom’s celebrated assertion of citizenship—“A nation is the same people living in the same place” (Ulysses 12.1422-3)—falls on deaf ears in Barney Kiernan’s. Irish writers not only symptomatically reproduce or are scripted by romantic nationalism, but also resist the tenets and the effects of nationalisms in a desire to modernize their society or to represent such an option. Their opposition has partially taken the form of foregrounding male love and friendship and the cultural, psychic, and behavioural maleness of Irish nationalisms.

Along the seemingly unlikely axes of sexual desire and identification, queer theory speaks to a crisis in masculinity, a crisis in Irish definition, and to a crisis in notions of identity itself, for here queer theory has outed nationalisms from their glass closets. “‘Queerness’ explodes the centrality and assumed certainty of straight versions of behaviour,” explains Lance Pettitt, “by showing that there has always been a transgressive element within, and as an essential component of, straight culture” (“Pigs” 275). The precariousness of Western models of national and sexual identity have been destabilized and rendered as a type of narrative fiction by a battery of intellectual and artistic critiques as well as the birth of powerful new social and cultural movements. The
turmoil over identity has precipitated epistemological and ontological uncertainty, which continues to motivate violence, bloodshed, and terror in the name of nationalist ideologies. Nonetheless, identity’s powerful fiction of belonging has served as a nucleus around which Irish resistance and solidarity has accrued in the face of hegemonic forces of oppression, illuminating the prevailing male character of Irish nationalisms with all of their attending homosocial ambivalences.

“The discourse of the nation in Ireland is admittedly caught in a bind,” write sociologists Patrick O’Mahony and Gerard Delanty; “[t]he ground on which it stood—the anti-modern values of a conservative social order—have declining salience, but the emotional substance of collective belonging which the older nationalism created lives on” (181). This tension between a feeling of belonging within national communities and the refusal to submit Irish identity to a thorough critical appraisal surfaces in the controversy over Irish Studies’ existence and orientation. What is being studied exactly if Irish as a categorical marker no longer is anchored upon customary racial or geographic foundations? The answer remains indeterminate as, for example, when Moynagh Sullivan faults Irish Studies’ inability to earnestly engage in dialogue with feminist theory. Sullivan argues that the field conceptualizes itself as an agonistic study of Otherness—namely, in Declan Kiberd’s words, “Britain’s Other or unconscious” (248). Irishwomen’s writing still remains cordoned off from, or sometimes appropriated by, mainstream Irish Studies in the name of yielding to the impetus behind postcolonial paradigms of Irish decolonization. For Gavan Titley though, the academy’s misprision of Irish popular culture and youth voices remains most problematic, for it is here, he contends, that the principal struggle for Irishness is being waged (252).
Amidst this healthy debate however, *queerness* seems something alien to Irish nationalisms and Irish Studies. Nonetheless, homosocially-inflected nationalisms are primarily a matter situated within a dissonant nationalist identity, and the corresponding fierce denial of sexual diversity remains an internalized phenomenon. A sample of the scope and variety of Irish texts that could be productively examined employing queer rubrics draws attention to a new horizon in Irish Studies: Frank McGuinness’s *Innocence, Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me, Mutabilitie*, and *Gates of Gold*, Brian Friel’s *Faith Healer*, Thomas Kilroy’s *The Madame MacAdam Travelling Theatre* and *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde*, James Joyce’s *Stephen Hero, Exiles, Dubliners*, and *Finnegans Wake*, John Millington Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*, Samuel Beckett’s *Murphy, Endgame*, and *Waiting for Godot*, Patrick McCabe’s *Breakfast on Pluto*, Tom Murphy’s *A Whistle in the Dark* and *The Gigli Concert* to name just a tiny handful of texts. Comparative literary studies of Irish nationalist *homoerotic* with that of British, Canadian, American, or German writers would be a productive future direction for scholarship. Nations are very queer enterprises, indeed, and not only Ireland’s. As my analysis emphasizes the *maleness* of the nation, another project might consider examining male and female homosociality to achieve a more nuanced, comprehensive picture of how the definitional systems of nation, gender, sexuality work in concert to produce various lived “realities”. What is vital is that while a nation must be in contact with its history, it must not be held hostage to its past; furthermore, a nation must be willing to conceive of multiplicity at its presumed “origins”.

Because the literary texts under discussion address the unacknowledged homosocial dimension of Irish nationalist cultural imaginaries, queer diversity in Ireland,
as elsewhere, does not remain a discrete set of irresolvable impasses exclusively germane to a persecuted minority but, rather, a question which goes to the heart of the construction of the nation.

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