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Rewrite the Past and Remember the Future: How Expatriates Built an Independent Ireland

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Introduction

The Irish literary revival took place in the late 19th and early 20th century. It was characterized by a resurgence in Irish language, literature, and mythology spurred on in part by the growing feelings of Irish nationalism leading up to, during, and following the Irish War of Independence. The origins of the movement are credited to W.B. Yeats, specifically his collection of Irish fables and folklore entitled *Celtic Twilight.* The literary movement was referred to as such, and fell under other pseudonyms including the "Celtic Revival" and "Irish Literary Renaissance". In this project, I will focus on the literature that came out of the first half of the 20th century, leading up to and following the War of Independence. Specifically, we will be looking at literature composed by authors who spent a portion of their time writing about Ireland as expatriates, living abroad, most commonly in England or continental Europe. Even while outside the country, these authors still wrote about Ireland, imbuing their works with their opinions and anxieties concerning their homeland's independence.

The first half of the twentieth century is an especially important timeframe because of the war of independence, which led to Ireland becoming an independent country in 1921. The literature produced during this time idealized Ireland's past and potential future. It was inspired by, and in turn inspired, Irish nationalism. It was written with the purpose of creating an Irish identity, and yet, many of the authors who sought to do this were expatriates. Their status as expatriate authors, then, brings into question why they wrote about Ireland, and how effective their writing was in creating a national Irish identity.

The big question leading up to and following Irish independence was "What makes Ireland Irish?" The simplest answer was, whatever isn't British. The Irish were eager to distance themselves from British culture and influence, however, it wasn't enough just to be a "not-

England." By making everything not-British, Irish, the Irish were still defining themselves in terms of England. Many Irish writers, such as Yeats and Lady Gregory, turned to Ireland's past to help define the country. Others, like Joyce, remained in the present, focusing on Ireland's cities, and the individual's experiences with Irishness. Some others, like Beckett and Bowen, took a sort of middle ground, not adhering to a specific time and place. Irish writers were trying to write an Irish identity, but there was very little agreement as to what that looked like.

My research here is grounded in the postcolonial lens. Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, specifically the chapter "The subject of Violence: Algeria, Ireland " helped situate myself in Ireland's history as a colonized country, and the violence that accompanies it. As the first piece I read, it provided essential background information on Ireland's process of decolonization. Young argues that violence is "endemic" to Ireland, and violence was one of the only ways that Ireland was able to be taken seriously as an independent country (Young 299). I will use this chapter not only as background information, but also as a way to understand topics of violence, martyrdom, and freedom seen in Irish literature. It will also help in understanding Irish expatriate writers, as it positions Ireland and Ireland's influence on the world stage.

Another text that helped to familiarize me with postcolonialism was the chapter "On National Culture" by Franz Fanon on *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory.* This chapter really helped me understand how colonized countries underwent the decolonization process in terms of going back to a national identity. While the chapter is not explicitly about Ireland, its content and argument are still applicable. As we will see, some Irish writers felt that Irish identity lay in the past in times before English rule. Fanon argues that "this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in

the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped" (Fanon 37). Even though Ireland is still a Western country, many Irish feared becoming a second England. Fanon helped me frame the rest of my research and argument around the struggle for a national identity in the midst of colonization.

After situating myself with postcolonialism, I was then able to turn toward researching Irish literature. Declan Kiberd's book *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* informed a lot of my initial understanding of the Irish literary renaissance during the beginning of my research. His book is probably the most foundational text I used in beginning my research and crafting my argument. In this book, Kiberd sets out to understand how authors of the Irish literary renaissance worked to invent an Irish identity post-independence. Kiberd dedicates multiple chapters to his argument that, in seeking to build an Irish identity, it was futile to try and carve out an identity that was wholly separate from England. Because of centuries of British occupation, trying to exile all traces and influences of England would virtually erase Ireland itself. As I do in this project, Kiberd himself looks at many expatriate Irish authors. In speaking about Yeats, Kibard argues that "Ireland, for him, would be an 'imaginary homeland', that sort of place endlessly invented and reinvented by exiles who fear that, if they do not give it a local habitation in words, it may entirely disappear" (Kiberd 99). According to Kiberd, Irish identity was essentially crafted by expatriates who wrote about their home country for the sake of preserving it, not creating it. The title for this project, "Rewrite the Past and Remember the Future: How Expatriates Built an Independent Ireland" was inspired by Kiberd's phrase "Remember the future, imagine the past" (Kiberd 292).

In addition to Kiberd's scholarly approach, Fintan O'Toole's account of mid-twentieth century Ireland provided essential background from the perspective of an Irish person who grew

up in Ireland after the War of Independence. In *We Don't Know Ourselves,* O'Toole, in addition to his own experiences growing up in Ireland, focuses on the politics of Ireland, both national and international. This book contrasted greatly with others that I have read in that it doesn't romanticize Ireland's national plight and lack of identity following independence. O'Toole describes Ireland in the mid-twentieth century as "a figment of the Anglo-Saxon imagination…a lie, a state or place non-existent" (O'Toole 17). O'Toole focuses on the real life repercussions that independence had on the church, politics, and people of Ireland.

Norman Vance opens *Irish Literature: A Social History* by arguing that the tradition making process must be reevaluated in historical scholarship. He critiques the idea of nationalism and tradition in Ireland, saying that "Consciousness of tradition can't be comprehensive or constant" (Vance 3). He focuses on the themes of exile and escape in the works of Yeats and Joyce. This provides more context for why Yeats and Joyce left Ireland, and how that served their work. Similarly to Inventing Ireland, Vance argues that the Irish were selective about their mythology, and could not accept the Scandinavian influences in it. This continues to show how much Ireland is intrinsically connected to the rest of the world, and Vance's work points out the contradictions between what Irish writers wrote about and idealized, versus the reality of Irish culture. *Irish Literature: A Social History* was the most helpful in my understanding of how mythology, both Irish and not, was used by authors of this time period.

The authors that I am looking at in this paper are W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, Elizabeth Bowen, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett. These authors, collectively, have been writing from the end of the 19th century into the 1970s. I will only be looking at their writing from 1900 to around the 1950s. This time restriction helps focus my research on the effects the independence movement, war of independence, and subsequent gaining of independence had on

Irish authors. While each author is different, there are common themes that pop up in their work. I will be analyzing the subjects, or character types, that each author chooses to focus on, as well as where they choose to set their story, and their usage of mythology and language in their works. Across these five authors, I have noticed that the figure of the youth, martyr, and peasant are common amongst them. As for their settings, they vary widely, using a mix of urban, rural, suburban, and abroad. By analyzing how these authors use their subjects and settings, as well as if they mix in mythology and different languages, we can see how they reacted to Ireland's independence, before, during, and after the war. Before and even during the war, authors could only speculate about what independence would look like. Some saw Ireland on the brink of something great, while others wrote of a disappointing outcome. After the war, then, we see authors reflecting on the price of the war, as well as how Ireland is faring as an independent country.

While the modernist movement is not the focus of my work, I believe that it is important to note that these authors, while writing about Ireland, were also informed by this literary movement. Modernism helped shape the themes and stylistic choices of these authors, and helped to connect Ireland with the rest of the literary world.

Peter Howarths chapter "Why Write like This?" in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernist Poetry* served as my introduction into modernist writing. In this chapter, Howarth addresses the usefulness and necessity of modernist writing, as well as the difficulties in pinning down a concrete definition for the genre. Howarth argues that modernism is essentially grounded in a "desire for a unique rhythm" in one's writing (Howarth 3). This desire is one of the few unifying ties between modernist writers that transcended disagreements and individual styles. This chapter will be useful in articulating themes and stylistic choices seen in the literature I have

read. It is also helpful to see Irish authors be put into conversation with others, as it helps elucidate how Irish society, history, and nationalism has inspired Irish writers.

In writing about Ireland, modernist writers had to figure out *who* exactly to write about. What subject encapsulates what Ireland is, or, more fittingly, what Ireland could be post independence? Like many questions raised about Irish identity during this time, the answers are varied, with a distinct lack of consensus amongst writers. This variation, however, stems from differences in opinion over what an independent Ireland could and should look like, as well as each author's individual experience with being Irish. Three prominent subjects, however, appeared consistently throughout the writing of the Irish literary Renaissance; that of the youth, or child, the martyr, and the peasant. Each of these figures represents their prospective author's understanding, hopes, or fears surrounding Ireland becoming an independent country. This range of figures comes from Irish history, in the case of the martyr and the peasant, as well as hopes and fears, as conscious or subconscious as they may be.

The presence of youth during the Irish literary revival is representative of the country's status as a newly independent country. The prevalence of young characters in writing of this time suggests that the authors who are writing these stories are concerned with what their homeland will look like, and how it will handle itself, post independence. Ireland, despite its storied history, is now itself a youth. It is infantile and unsteady, unsure of itself. The anxieties about growing up and leaving home that are associated with the figure of youth also apply to the anxieties of the Irish people pre and post independence. The focus on children and childhood in Irish writing is a "sign of cultural despair," with writers and the Irish population alike wondering what Ireland will look like, and what aspects of their culture are enough to sustain the country post independence (Kiberd 108). Children often lack autonomy. They know "how to feel, but not

how to express" their feelings; their goals and desires are taken less seriously (Kiberd 110). The presence of youth as a subject in literature of this time points toward anxieties about Ireland being taken seriously as a country, and being able to sustain itself next to more established countries. Children and their innocence are easy to idolize. In writing about them, Irish writers are trying to assuage their own fears for the country by mapping them onto the youth as a subject in their own writing. What is an Ireland free of England? What will a mature, fully actualized Ireland look like?

Martyrs are figures commonly seen both in the Irish literary revival, as well as throughout Irish history. They are symbols, most commonly for nationalism, first, and for stories second. Martyrs are a tool, used for a purpose, rather than representing particular Irish concerns like the figure of the youth. Martyrs are made and used for nationalistic purposes. In Irish literature and history, martyrs are used to spur nationalist sentiments regarding independence, to show the Irish people that they can fight for a cause, and that cause is Ireland. Martyrdom creates a nation of heroes, in turn helping to shape Irish identity. The martyr and the youth can appear within the same character. A large part of what makes a martyr is that they die a premature death.

Despite their status as people who have died for Ireland, martyrs are also often used as scapegoats; they are tools, first and foremost. They are used as a way of coping with the violence within themselves and the Irish people, depicting it as a means to an end, and paving the way for more violence in the name of 'avenging' the fallen heroes (Kiberd 167). Martyrs make the perfect scapegoat because they have no way of defending themselves. Martyrs are made to excuse violence and to prove that Ireland is a cause to die for. Martyrdom in Irish literature combines Ireland's history and current events with literature. It is used to paint characters in a different light, making the audience question who is truly to blame for the violence that created

the martyr in the first place. Literature written about the martyr takes away the martyr's agency, instead putting the power and narrative into the hands of the writer. The individuals and their stories, although written down, tend to get swept up into the greater concept of "martyrdom" until their deaths are the most prominent thing they are known for. The writers of the Irish literary renaissance used that to question the violence of this era, but also to exalt those who died.

The peasant as a literary subject acts similarly to that of the martyr. There are real Irish peasants, although they are projected onto and idealized in the hopes of creating an Irish identity. Despite being a reminder of the landlord system and centuries of English colonialism, the image of the peasant was co-opted to be an idealized version of Ireland's past, one to be returned to after gaining independence. The peasant is often a symbol of a peaceful, traditional Ireland. It is a rejection of both modernity and autonomy, idealized in literature, yet ignored in reality.

The writers who were writing about the Irish peasant idealized the figure, but held little room for the experience of actual Irish peasants. In trying to write a work that represents the so-called "glory days" of Ireland, these writers are instead shutting themselves up in "a stereotyped reproduction of details" that ultimately ends with the writer "opposing [their] own people" (Fanon 42). The peasant figure is often stereotyped to the point of being a misrepresentation of Ireland, and represents it instead as a "Gaelic mystic," a childlike object of the past, ignoring the realities of the Irish peasant during this time (Kiberd 171).

The peasant is a polarizing subject, often catching the eye of writers as a means to explore an Ireland free from England and colonization. Authors often use the peasant to explore what Ireland's freedom could look like. Joyce uses the figure of the peasant to poke fun at those who idealize it, or herald it as a symbol of Irish identity. The reality of the Irish peasant is that

they are victims of English colonization, and have had their culture systematically taken away from them. The usage of the peasant as a symbol of Ireland only further separates expatriate writers from their home country.

The question of "what will a united Ireland look like?" loomed over the fight for independence. The settings in which writers choose to set their stories in, similarly to subject, are also used to point towards what Ireland could be in the search for Irish identity. Setting, in the literature of the Irish literary renaissance, can help point toward what authors wanted, or thought that Ireland would look like. There was a kind of push and pull, a back and forth between modern and traditional, urban or rural. Just like the subject, there was a lack of consensus amongst the authors, bringing into question their true motives for writing about Ireland. The different settings seen throughout Irish writing of this time set the stage for the question of what to do with the past. Some authors are keen to move on from the past, to modernize, while others want to hold onto it. The line between writing in a nationalistic sense, for Ireland as a country, and writing for Ireland's past, versus writing in a personal sense, for Ireland as a home, and for the writer's individual past, is blurred in the literary renaissance. Irish writers, especially those living abroad, feel the need to write about, and shape Ireland according to themselves, in order to preserve their homeland, to have something to return to, and imagine it in a more definitive way than it exists.

The urban setting often reflects an embracement and acceptance of Ireland's independence and modernization. Instead of trying to idealize the past in an attempt to create an Irish identity, like the rural setting, the urban setting seems to do away with the notion of Ireland being a "not England" and instead focuses on how Ireland is currently operating. There lies a duality of understanding, that Ireland is its own, modern country, but also that "London was the

crucible in which the elements to make a modern Ireland were distilled" (Kiberd 99). Admitting that London, England had influence over how Ireland developed does not mean that Ireland, modern cities and all, is not still Irish. The urban setting shows that the Irish people help make Ireland more than just a "not-England." Despite cities being crowded and dense, stories with an urban setting tend to hone in on the individual and their personal experiences with being Irish. This then works to show that Irish identity is unique to each individual.

The rural setting ties heavily into the peasant as a subject. Whereas the youth and the martyr as subjects could fit into almost any setting, the peasant and the rural setting are somewhat of a package deal. There was a lot of "anti-modernity" sentiment leading up to and following independence, as well as in the Irish revivalism movement (Kiberd 144). Not the Modernisty writing style, but moreso the notion of Ireland having to adapt the the present and future. This led writers and regular Irish people alike to look to, and idealize Ireland's past. This can be seen in Yeats' poetry, but also in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, where he and Lady Gregory work to learn about and preserve Irish folktales. The rural setting, and the simple, Irish peasant, act as idealized players in a past rewritten for Ireland. In the search for an Irish identity, authors looked to the peasant and the rural setting as a way to "renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people" (Fanon 37). A time before cities and modernity was a time closer to an Ireland before English rule. Reaching for the peasant, reaching for the rural, was the author's way of reaching for what Ireland's identity was before England. This is not the only representation of the rural setting seen during this time, however. Moreover, the peasant is not the only symbol present in the rural setting.

The rural setting is a site of conflict and cultural exchange between classes. The "Big House" shows up as a key player in rural Ireland in literature of the literary renaissance. The

"Big House" is a tenet of the British landlord system in Ireland, with the peasant, of course, being the other half of it.

Elizabeth Bowen wrote an article on the big house simply titled "The Big House" in which she describes the good qualities of the big house, and questions its future. She believes that the big house system will be left to the youth, who must work to tear down the barriers between classes as well as between the English and the Irish. This article of hers helped inform how I read the big house as a figure of colonized Ireland coming into an independent Ireland.

The authors that write about the rural setting are often rewriting the past. Or, perhaps, they are trying to "remember the future" and "imagine the past" by writing of what rural Ireland could look like post independence.

The rural setting, taken at face value, is separate from the violence of the War of Independence. It looks like it could be a safe haven, but the reality is that it can only offer a different perspective from the other setting on Ireland's past, present and future. Rural Ireland offered writers the opportunity to wonder what Ireland would look like without British influence.

The suburban setting, while seemingly sitting between rural and urban, is instead its own area entirely. There is the lure of modernity in the suburbs, but that was not the reality for those moving into newly built suburbs. On the other hand, suburbs also helped with the proliferation of the nuclear family in Ireland, creating an "estrangement" from the older generations (O'Toole 60). The suburbs were neither traditional nor modern, making them the perfect setting to explore feelings of in-betweenness, disbelonging, and arrested development.

The suburban setting offers space to critique Ireland in the decades following independence. Suburbia seems like a move towards embracing modernity, and yet it ends up

highlighting Ireland's arrested development, trying to hold onto the past in order to build its future. In the end, however, Ireland during the 1940s and 1950s was facing another recession and mass emigration. The suburban setting gives space to explore the reasons and rationale behind Ireland's stunted growth. There is the push and pull between past and present in the name of Irish identity, with Ireland trying to be something greater than what it is. The suburban setting is an in-between setting, lying in the middle of the urban and rural settings, and yet belongs to neither of them. In order to find an Irish identity, then, Ireland must stop trying to resist one or the other, and instead embrace both the present and the past.

The following chapters are divided by author. The first chapter focuses on Yeats and Lady Gregory. I chose to group them together because Lady Gregory's text *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* was written in tandem with Yeats. I explore many of Yeats' poems, including "Easter 1916", "To Ireland in the Coming Times," "To Ireland in the Coming Times" and "Leda and the Swan". Yeats and Lady Gregory tend to focus on Ireland's past. Their subjects include the peasant and the martyr. And their writing is set in rural Ireland. With the exception, of course, of "Easter 1916" which Yeats uses to remember those who fell during the uprising. Ireland's identity, according to Yeats, lies within the past. He justifies Ireland's past by intertwining Ireland's mythology with Classical mythology. Yeats and Lady Gregory believe that the answer to Ireland's future identity lies within the past, to a time before English occupation.

Elizabeth Bowen, as we will see, also uses the past. She looks back at her own experiences during the war of independence and uses them to weave a cautionary tale of violence and forgetting in *The Last September*. Her novel, set in rural Ireland, specifically in a "big house" tells the tale of the youth and the martyr, and innocence lost. Whereas Yeats and Lady Gregory wanted to bring the past to the present, Bowen argues that we must learn from the past

in order to avoid to violence and loss that came with the war of independence. Bowen draws heavily from her own experiences and anxieties from when she lived in Ireland. Her distance, both physically and temporally, from Ireland and the war allow her to look back and learn from what happened, and to write a narrative that is sympathetic to both the Irish and the English.

I used two different sources when looking into Elizabeth Bowen and the 'big house" system in Ireland. The first was the article "Elizabeth Bowen, Modernism, and the Spectre of Anglo-Ireland" by James F. Wurtz. This article helped define the big house system in terms of how it functioned in Ireland, but also how it showed up in Irish literature. The article mostly focuses on Bowen's work on the big house, and how it is often full of foreboding and meshes Gothic and Modernist elements.

James Joyce is a modern man in both subject and setting. His collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, and novel *Ulysses* both take place in Dublin. Joyce positions Dublin as the center of Irish identity. Ireland is modern, and cosmopolitan, and cannot simply be called a "not-England". Joyce uses Dublin as a setting to show that Ireland has evolved past the point where it can completely separate itself from Ireland. He uses Irish and English characters and locations to make that point clear. Even though the city might come across as crowded, Joyce makes a point to highlight the individual experiences of all types of characters, focusing heavily on the youth. He does include the peasant as well, but in a much less stereotypical role. Joyce also likes to play with language and mythology, using them however he sees fit. Joyce plays by his own rules, and urges Ireland to embrace modernity.

I briefly used Wim Tigges' article "'Derevaun Seraun!': Resignation or Escape" to examine the meaning behind the phrase 'derevaun seraun" used in Joyce's short story "Eveline".

This article showed me the supposed translation, as well as how that translation was crafted from what, at first glance, comes across as gibberish.

Beckett is our latest author. He is nearly two decades removed from the war of independence, and it is obvious in his writing. He isn't exactly Ireland's biggest cheerleader. That doesn't mean, however, that he doesn't care for his homeland. Beckett is writing during a time of economic turmoil for Ireland, and his work reflects that. His short story "First Love" and play *Waiting for Godot* exemplify Beckett's argument that stagnation will not help Ireland. He features the subject of the youth and peasant, and focuses on their inexperience and lack of autonomy to make decisions for themselves. "First Love" takes place in the outskirts of Dublin, in a more suburban setting, highlighting the displacement Ireland feels as a newer country. "Waiting for Godot" takes place in the French countryside, yet still manages to speak on the Irish situation. Beckett's writing urges Ireland to act on its own behalf, and that doing so will help create its identity.

Alan Graham's article "'So much Gaelic to Me': Beckett and the Irish Language" introduced me to Beckett's position on language as a whole, as well as the Irish language and the Irish language revitalization movement. This article was helpful in seeing how somebody nearly two decades removed from the war of independence associates themselves with their home country and its native language.

Beckett uses the "abroad" setting in order for the Irish people to see Ireland the way that he does – from afar. Expatriate authors are able to offer a unique view on Ireland because of their geographical distance from the country. In addition to being able to see Ireland from an outside perspective, the abroad setting also allows the expatriate author to examine their own relationship with Ireland. Leaving Ireland does not mean completely turning one's back to their

homeland. Beckett, as well as other expatriate authors returned to Ireland, if only for a short stay, after leaving. The abroad setting, as exemplified in *Waiting for Godot,* acts as a means to examine how Ireland is coping with its independence, with Beckett urging the country to do something other than wait to be saved.

Declan Kiberd paraphrases Neitzsche's idea that "Those who haven't had a good father are compelled to go out and invent one" to say that "this generation of Irishmen and Irishwomen fathered and mothered themselves, reinventing parents in much the same way as they were reinventing themselves" (Kiberd 4). Ireland's position as a colonized country was unique due to their proximity with their colonizer, and having been under colonial rule for over seven centuries. Ireland was one of the first countries to free its native inhabitants from British rule. Because of this, there was no established guide or roadmap as to how to go about establishing Ireland as an independent country and ensuring that it ran smoothly. The Irish had to figure it out for themselves. Irish modernist writers, expatriate or not, wrote in order to preserve an image of their homeland for fear that it would disappear in the wake of independence. Despite attempts at homogenization from politicians and writers alike, Irish modernism varies drastically in terms of subject, place, and time. Differences such as the urban versus pastoral setting, individual versus collective subject, and emphasis on the present versus on the past point to a lack of cultural consensus on what an independent Ireland can and should look like. This lack of consensus meant that Irish writers were able to build an Ireland for themselves, to create their homeland in their own image.

1

W.B. Yeats & Lady Gregory

Out of all of the authors we are going to look at, Yeats' writing is the earliest. His poetry is set firmly before and during the war of independence. Yeats' use of subject, setting, and mythology evokes Ireland's past, even as it looks ahead into the future. He is doing two things: trying to fix both Ireland's past and future. By conflating Irish mythology and folklore to classical mythology, Yeats is reinstating Ireland's history with that of the rest of Europe. It is valid, and it is unique to Ireland. Showing that Ireland had its own culture, beliefs, and history in the past is Yeats' way of arguing that Ireland has stood on its own in the past, and it can do so in the future. Yeats also brings the past into the present in an attempt to rebuild that Irish identity post independence. Yeats and Lady Gregory created the anthology Visions *and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* in order to show that Ireland's past beliefs are still going strong, and share them with the rest of Ireland. Yeats wrote to share Ireland's past with the present; his work suggests that the past was the place to find answers for Ireland's future.

Yeats' view of Ireland's identity is set firmly in the past. He uses Ireland's history and antiquity to plan the country's future. The subjects of his poetry are mostly that of the martyr and the peasant. Yeats uses the martyr to recognize the violence of the war of independence and the Irish leaders who were executed after the Easter rebellion. The peasant appears as the subject for his work with Lady Gregory in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland.* The peasant is not a character, per se, but the speaker, as Yeats and Lady Gregory conduct fieldwork into the oral traditions and stories from Ireland's past that are still prevalent in the countryside. Yeats utilizes the rural setting to give himself space to look at Ireland as a whole, perhaps alluding to his time spent away from Ireland. Throughout much of his work, Yeats incorporates mythology, both

classical and Irish. He does this in order to show that Ireland's past, and therefore present, hold the same gravitas that the rest of Europe does. Yeats uses the peasant and rural setting along with mythology to look back into Ireland's past in order to rationalize the fight for independence and raise Ireland to the same position as other, free European countries.

Yeats' poetry varies in subject and time period. He does, however, portray the figure of the martyr in both modern Irish history, as well as classical myths. Yeats' wide poetic range accomplishes two things. First, the usage of classical mythology apropos of Ireland works to bring Ireland, its past, mythology, and present, up to the same level as the rest of Europe. It shows that Ireland has a storied past, and present, not unlike other, more independent and established European countries. The second reason is to imply the longevity of Ireland and the memory and impact of the War of Independence. His work set more in the present focuses heavily on Ireland and the War of Independence, combining Romantic ideals and styles of writing with Modernist ways of thinking. Writing about present Ireland in tandem with mythology shows that the conflict holds a real weight, and will not easily be forgotten.

Yeats' poem "Easter 1916" is a poetic retelling of the nationalist insurrection on Easter Monday. In this poem, Yeats combines the events of Easter Monday with images of classical mythology: "This man had kept a school/ And rode our winged horse;/ This other his helper and friend/ Was coming into his force" (Yeats 24-27). This is done both to remember those who were killed that day, but also to make a legend out of them. Making them legends, on par with classical mythology, garners sympathy for the fight for independence. It works to reignite passion and love for Ireland, as well as contempt for the British and their rule. The first stanza provides context for Yeats' relationships with the leaders of the Rising: "I have met them at close of day/ Coming with vivid faces… I have passed with a nod of the head/ Or polite meaningless

words,/… Or have lingered awhile and said/ Polite meaningless words" (Yeats 1-6). Yeats is familiar with the leaders, he has spoken with them before, but was always aware of their differences, writing "Being certain that they and I/ But lived where motley is worn" (Yeats). These two lines, along with the rest of the stanza, emphasize Yeats' relationship with the leaders, but also their status as everyday Irishmen. This shows that the leaders of the Easter Rebellion were ordinary people, and that all it takes to start a rebellion is a group of ordinary people willing to fight, and die, for a cause. The first stanza ends with the line "A terrible beauty is born" which is seen twice more throughout the poem, both also at the end a stanza (Yeats 16). This line laments the deaths and the violence that arose from the rebellion and consequently the war.

The second stanza opens with the image of a woman, whose "days were spent/ In ignorant good-will, / Her nights in argument/ Until her voice grew shrill" and continues on to describe, without naming, the leaders who were executed (Yeats 17-20). The descriptions range from heralding, "So sensitive his nature seemed, / So daring and sweet his thought" to rude and personal, "This other man I had dreamed/ A drunken, vainglorious lout./ He had done most bitter wrong/ To some who are near my heart" (Yeats 29-34). The anonymity contains a sort of suspense, and shows that Yeats knows who they are as a person rather than just their names. It shows the importance of their sacrifice for Ireland. The latter man Yeats describes is John MacBride, the estranged husband of Maud Gonne, who many refer to as Yeats' muse. This stanza also ends with the line "A terrible beauty is born" (Yeats 40). The repetition of this line underscores the tragedy of what has happened because of the Easter Rebellion. It shows that beyond the personal connections, the good and the bad, these men died for Ireland.

The third stanza strays from the established pattern. It feels fast paced compared to the previous two stanzas, as if it is capturing the final, fleeting moments before the Easter Rebellion.

It opens, still, lauding the rebels, “Hearts with one purpose alone/ Through summer and winter seem/ Enchanted to a stone” (Yeats 41-43). These lines show how dedicated the rebels were to their cause. A free Ireland was their one purpose. This stanza features the repetition of the phrase “minute by minute” used in slightly different ways. First, it’s “The horse that comes from the road,/ The ride, the birds that range/ From cloud to tumbling cloud,/ Minute by minute they change” (Yeats 45-48). There is a great sense of movement in these lines, as well as the feeling that this movement, this change, is leading up to something. The second time this phrase appears comes in the next two lines: “A shadow of cloud on the stream/ changes minute by minute” (Yeats 49-50). Here, Yeats flips the word order of the line, just as the clouds and the horses change, so does the poem. This line implies that a storm is quickly brewing. The violence of the Easter Rebellion and the War of Independence is fast approaching. The final time this line appears is at the end of the stanza: The long-legged moor-hens dive,/ And hens to moor-cocks call;/ Minute by minute they live:/ The stone's in the midst of all” (Yeats 53-56). Here, instead of using the word “change” Yeats uses the word “live” to describe the hens and roosters calling out to each other. Yeats does so in order to show that the “heart's purpose” from the beginning of the stanza is ready to be fulfilled. The chickens calling out acts as a sort of alarm in the poem, signifying the beginning of the Easter Rebellion.

The final stanza at last includes the names of some of those executed because of the Easter Rebellion. That is Yeats’ call to action, “That is Heaven's part, our part/ To murmur name upon name,/ As a mother names her child/ When sleep at last has come/ On limbs that had run wild” (Yeats 60–64). Yeats believes that it is his and all of Ireland’s duty to keep the names and spirits of those who died alive. He calls their deaths “needless” and ends the stanza, and the poem, with what their legacy will be: “I write it out in a verse—/ MacDonagh and MacBride/

And Connolly and Pearse/ Now and in time to be,/ Wherever green is worn,/ Are changed, changed utterly:/ A terrible beauty is born" (Yeats 74-80). Yeats can see that their deaths will have a lasting impact on Ireland, that is part of the reason why he writes down their names, so they will be remembered "now and in time to be". Yeats can sense a change coming, but is unsure of what exactly it is. The one thing he is sure of, however, is that "A terrible beauty is born." This terrible beauty being the violence of the rebellion and the war. Easter 1916 ensures that those who gave their lives for Ireland will not be forgotten. Their names, and their sacrifice, will be remembered "wherever green is worn".

Published in the same year as James Joyce's highly modernist and urban novel *Ulysses, Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland,* a collection of Irish folktales collected by Yeats and Lady Gregory, shows a disconnect between the Irish people and the country's past. This anthology takes Yeats away from the city and the violence from the Easter Rebellion and instead returns him to an idealized, simple, peaceful, Ireland. Yeats and Lady Gregory traveled to Ireland's countryside to gather this collection of folktales and beliefs that are still commonly held and talked about in more rural areas of Ireland. The disconnect, therefore, is not shared between all Irish people. Instead, it tends to be the landed gentry, those who have the time and resources to study Ireland's past and language, who are at a greater risk of falling into stereotyping Ireland's past and present peasantry. Lady Gregory herself admits that, "I had never thought of giving heed to what I, in common with my class, looked on as fancy or superstition. It was certainly because of this unbelief that I had been told so little about them" (Gregory 1). The "them" in question being the folktales she sought out to gather. Lady Gregory willingly distances herself and her class from these folktales, creating an "other" out of the "class" of people who do readily believe and know them. The peasant, then, acts as a sort of "Gaelic mystic" that is

alluring to those trying to return Ireland to its past (Kiberd 171). Even though the peasant is not an explicit character in this anthology, the stories are told by people who match the ideal of the simple Irish peasant. This, along with the stories being told, works to idealize that way of life. In addition to pushing for a certain way of life, *Visions and Beliefs* also helps create a backstory for Ireland. It vocalizes the country's past and beliefs in a way that is easy to cling on to. By writing down those beliefs and stories, it makes the pastoral way of life seem viable for Ireland's future and identity.

The subjects in Yeats' works are often inspired by, if not actually, real people. The Martyrs from "Easter 1916" are real Irish leaders who died because of the rebellion. The stories from *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* are told by real people that Yeats and Lady Gregory met and listened to. Some of these people's names are recorded; John Nagle tells the story of a ghost ship he saw years ago. Other storytellers are referred to only by their occupation; "A Man from Roundstone" tells of a vanishing woman, "A Schoolmaster" sets his story in the Aran islands, and "a Little Girl" recounts a story about a woman who was "some bad thing" (Gregory 14). Leaving a majority of the storytellers nameless might seem a little rude, considering that they are truly the writers of the book. It does, however, serve a purpose. There is, of course, the possibility that Yeats and Lady Gregory simply did not ask or write down their names. But using titles and vague descriptions makes the storytellers seem more relatable. Having the storytellers remain anonymous does take away their autonomy and individuality. In doing so, however, they are then transformed into representatives of Ireland. The story told by "a Little Girl" can be a story believed by all little girls in Ireland. The same can be said for all schoolmasters, or all men from Roundstone. This anonymity helps the stories and beliefs become more commonplace throughout Ireland. The subject of the peasant, or rural dweller, in *Visions*

and Beliefs is indicative of a potential future Ireland full of people who are aware of and proud of their past, folklore, and supernatural beliefs.

The rural setting, and the simple, Irish peasant, act as idealized players in a past rewritten for Ireland. The rural setting ties heavily into the peasant as a subject. Whereas the youth and the martyr as subjects could fit into almost any setting, the peasant and the rural setting are somewhat of a package deal. There was a lot of "anti-modernism" sentiment leading up to and following independence, as well as in the Irish revivalism movement (Kiberd 144). This led writers and regular Irish people alike to look to, and idealize Ireland's past. This can be seen in Yeats' poetry, but also in *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland,* where he and Lady Gregory work to learn about and preserve Irish folktales. In the search for an Irish identity, authors looked to the peasant and the rural setting as a way to "renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people" (Fanon 37). A time before cities and modernity was a time closer to an Ireland before English rule. Reaching for the peasant, reaching for the rural, was the author's way of reaching for what Ireland's identity was before England. This is not the only representation of the rural setting seen during this time, however. Moreover, the peasant is not the only symbol present in the rural setting.

Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland was inspired by Yeats' book *Celtic Twilight.* Lady Gregory "felt jealous for Galway" after reading his work, and wanted to hear the folklore for herself (Gregory 1). While Yeats was present for some of the collecting, the anthology was written mostly by Lady Gregory. In the beginning of the first chapter, Lady Gregory writes that, in creating this anthology, she "cared less for the evidence given in them than for the beautiful rhythmic sentences in which they were told" (Gregory 1). She notes that the way in which these stories are told are of some importance, she cares more about how it is being said, than the

viability of it. It is ironic, then, that she converts the folklore, traditionally told through the spoken word, into writing.

In writing down what is traditionally spoken, Lady Gregory and Yeats bring the past into the present. *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* was written to bring said visions and beliefs to the rest of Ireland, to share what tradition had been lost with the rest of the country. Writing the folklore down, however, fundamentally changes how it is taught and learned; it makes the stories more permanent and less susceptible to change over time. While this does give more power to Lady Gregory in terms of what the more permanent version of the story ends up being, it also makes Irish folklore available to the rest of Ireland. It is a way to connect all classes, and remind Ireland of its past and strong cultural ties to the landscape and one another.

Yeats' poem, "To Ireland in the Coming Times" is his way of recounting what his own writing has done for Ireland. In the poem, he alludes to Ireland's history and folklore. This appears mostly in the second stanza. He begins the second stanza by comparing himself to Thomas Davis, James Clarence Mangan, and Samuel Ferguson, all Irish writers who came before him. He writes that "My rhymes more than their rhyming tell/ Of things discovered in the deep," (Yeats 20-21). This is to say that Yeats's poetry is more inspired by Irish folklore, and "elemental creatures" than the past writers. He then goes on to differentiate between "measured" and "unmeasured" minds. He writes "For the elemental creatures go/ About my table to and fro,/ That hurry from unmeasured mind/ To rant and rage in flood and wind;/ Yet he who treads in measured ways/ May surely barter gaze for gaze" (Yeats 23-28). Measured and unmeasured, in this case, refers to minds open or closed off, respectively, to believing in the tales and figures of Irish folklore. He ends the stanza with a direct reference to Irish folklore: "Ah, faeries, dancing under the moon,/ A Druid land, a Druid tune!" (Yeats 31-32). He is evoking the figures often

seen in Irish folklore, fairies, as well as figures of ancient Ireland, druids, who were a part of the priestly class in ancient Ireland, and were responsible for sharing the stories and beliefs that are now considered folklore. Doing so conflates Yeats with said Druids. He is the one who is now responsible for sharing Ireland's past with its own people. Referring to Ireland as a "Druid land" and his poem as a "Druid tune" brings the past into the present. Ireland, and the poetry surrounding it, comes from the past. "To Ireland in the Coming Times" evokes the past to show that Ireland's history and folklore has a place in the country's present and future, and will help create an Irish identity separate from England.

Yeats, in his poems set both in urban and rural settings, often uses mythological allusions to bolster Irish pride and the country's history in comparison to its European counterparts. "A Prayer for My Daughter" utilizes the rural setting, as well as the youthful subject to construct a hopeful image of what an independent Ireland will look like. The poem takes place at Thoor Ballylee, a tower in rural Galway. This tower, built in the 15th century, along with the allusions to classical mythology set Ireland in the past, with Yeats praying for the country's future. Being set in a tower, Yeats and his daughter feel hidden away from anything else. The rural setting offers privacy to Yeats. Unlike what we will see in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, however, the tower does offer physical protection, while allowing Yeats and his daughter to look out onto the outside world. This gives Yeats enough distance to reflect on what he wants Ireland to be, without completely removing himself from the country. Yeats writes that "There is no obstacle/ But Gregory's wood and one bare hill/ Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,/ Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed" (Yeats 3-6). The rurality of the tower implies that it cannot be touched, not even by the rough winds of the coast. In addition to privacy, the tower also offers him a spot to view Ireland, what it is, and what it could be.

This poem combines the rural setting of Ireland with Greek mythology, comparing Ireland's situation to that seen in more well-known myths. Yeats uses Helen of Troy and Aphrodite as figures for both his daughter and for Ireland, writing "Helen being chosen found life flat and dull/ And later had much trouble from a fool,/ While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,/ Being fatherless could have her way/ Yet chose a bandy-leggèd smith for man" (Yeats 25-29). These references position the poem into the past, looking into the future. Yeasts hopes that his daughter, and, consequently, Ireland, don't have any "trouble from a fool" and instead can have a smooth future. In addition to being set in rural Ireland, Yeats utilizes imagery of nature to describe his daughter's future; "May she become a flourishing hidden tree" (Yeats 41). This extensive call back to rural Ireland and its nature seems almost like a call away from the urban cities, as if Yeats is saying that Ireland must be looked at from its countryside. This line is also a good example of Yeats' usage of Greek mythology. That he wishes his daughter could turn into a "hidden tree" is an allusion to the myth of Apollo and Daphne, where Daphne's father turns her into a laurel tree in order to avoid Apollo's advances. Looking at rural Ireland, and the country's past, is how to find what Ireland was and could be without British rule. Yeats uses the rural setting to separate himself and his daughter from the violence of the war, as well as to ponder on what Ireland's future could look like.

The rural setting is a place of respite for Yeats and his daughter. The violence occurring in the rest of the country cannot touch them here. It hearkens back to Ireland's past, away from the city and modernity. Yeats uses the rural setting to remind Ireland of its past as a potential route for the country to go post-independence. The rural setting, then, is Yeats' way of saying that Ireland's past will protect its future.

Yeats includes classical and Irish mythology in his poetry as a way to make them seem one and the same. Again, Yeats is looking to the past. Using Irish and classical mythology almost interchangeably conflates the two, suggesting that Irish mythology is just as rich and important as classical mythology. In “Leda and the Swan,” Yeats switches his focus to Greek mythology, retelling the myth of Leda, a young woman who is assaulted by Zeus, who comes to her in the form of a swan. The poem and the myth mirror the themes of loss of innocence seen in the subject of the youth. Yeats frames the myth as a tragedy that happened in an instant that had major repercussions. According to the myth, this assault leads to the birth of Helen of Troy, who is often posited as the catalyst for the Trojan war. Yeats alludes to this with the line “The broken wall, the burning roof and tower/ And Agamemnon dead” (Yeats). This exemplifies both Leda and Helen being blamed for the violence of the Trojan War, despite it being instigated by Zeus. This represents how the meaning of the violence is often lost, being shrunken down and pinpointed only at the killer and the killed. In reality, however, the cause for violence is often a stronger outside force. The poem ends with the narrator wondering “Did she put on his knowledge with his power/ Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?” (Yeats). The narrator is asking if Leda knew what Zeus’s “plan” was all along, if she knew what the violent and senseless act would lead to. It’s almost as if Yeats is asking Ireland if it knew the great toll that independence would have on their country. “Leda and the Swan” is not explicitly about Ireland, and yet its themes of violence and victimhood map on to the country’s fight for independence. “Leda and the Swan" allows Yeats to talk about Ireland’s past in more universal terms. Yeats is showing, then, that the violence in Ireland and the violence in Greek mythology are one in the same.

Despite focusing much of his work in the past, Yeats does not interact with the Irish language all that much. Yeats did not write in Irish, and did not speak the language. He referred to the Irish language as "my national language, but not my mother tongue" (Jones 167). Yeats was arguably the biggest proponent for constructing Ireland's future by analyzing the past when it came to the Irish literary renaissance. And yet, he did not learn the Irish language. Even though Yeats is consistently calling back to the past, to Ireland's roots, there is still a degree of separation between him and Ireland's past. By continuing to write in English, however, Yeats could be ensuring that his work is able to be read by any person in Ireland. It shows that, even though Yeats relied heavily on the past in his writing, that he is not advocating for Ireland to revert back to what it was before England, but instead to take inspiration from it, and use it to become its own country after independence.

Throughout his work, Yeats is consistently looking back. He uses the past to explain and build the future. In writing about and rehashing the past, Yeats is also rebuilding it. He is creating an Irish past from his own design, one that is full of Irish folklore and takes place in a rural, open area. Yeats is creating an Irish identity not by thinking about what future Ireland could be, but by creating a past that can be used as a roadmap for what Irish identity will mean post independence. Writing his own past then sets up Yeats' work set in the present, like "Easter 1916" to eventually become a significant part of Ireland's history. Yeats' writing dictates what Ireland's past is, and what it will be. He ensures that those who fought and died for Ireland will not be forgotten. Their deaths, and the war of independence will bear the same weight on Irish and world history as the Trojan war did for Classical mythology. Yeats' writing projects a future by reimagining the past. Writers who write after the war, like Elizabeth Bowen, are able to

examine the result of all the violence. The past now includes the war of independence, its violence and toll and outcome now must be reimagined to fit into an Irish identity.

2

Elizabeth Bowen

Elizabeth Bowen used her own personal experiences in Ireland to write *The Last September*. The book is set on an estate in rural Ireland, much like Bowen's Courts, the estate that Elizabeth Bowen grew up on. *The Last September* was published in 1929, eight years after Ireland gained independence. Because of this, the novel has a reflective quality to it. Bowen is removed from the violence of the war of independence, although to a lesser degree than we will see with Beckett. This space allows Bowen to look at the bigger picture of the conflict, and generate stories and sympathies for both the Irish and British. *The Last September* includes figures of the youth and the martyr, interspersing them through Irish and English characters. Bowen blurs the line between Irish and English in this novel, forcing the reader to feel sympathy for both "sides" of the conflict. In doing so, Bowen highlights the complex and volatile realities of Anglo-Ireland. There is no more turning back to the past, to an Ireland free of any English influence. The rural setting of the novel provides a false sense of security, giving the illusion of being separated from the conflict and war, but in reality, Danielstown, the estate where the novel is set, is still in danger. *The Last September* is Bowen's way of expressing the anxieties she experienced during the war, as well as her views on how to move forward after the war. Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* is her way of saying that Ireland's past cannot be reclaimed; the only way to cope with independence is to move forward.

Bowen is looking back on the violence of the war for independence, and using Lois Naylor, her young protagonist, to show how war affects youth and forces them to grow up. *The Last September* also takes place in the "big house"- a facet of Ireland's landlord system under English rule. These estates, inhabited by English landlords or Irish landed gentry, were deemed

"big houses" simply because of their relative size compared to the dwellings of Irish tenets on the property. During the war of independence, many of these estates were burned down by the IRA.

The isolation of the big house serves to protect its inhabitants from the war, but also to keep Lois's innocence and naivety intact. Lois begins the novel sequestered away from the war in the Irish countryside. She is innocent, both in that she is still a child, but also because she has not yet been exposed to the violence of the war. On top of that, Lois is also bored. When the Montmorencys, friends of Lois and her family, arrive in Danielstown, Lois's only reaction is to yawn, because "it was simply the Montmorencys" (Bowen, *The Last September* 5). Her reaction implies that this is a routine visit and experience, not one that would elicit excitement or a change of pace. Her days, often spent with her cousin Laurence, are portrayed as tedious. In a conversation with him, she asks what he is doing, to which Laurence responds with "'Nothing particular'" (Bowen, *The Last September* 6). There is a routine of monotony at Danielstown. This keeps Lois in her own personal sort of bubble. She is separated from not only the war, but also the rest of Ireland. In an essay she wrote about her own experiences living in a big house, Bowen wrote that "everywhere seems to have placed itself a long way from me" (Bowen, *The Last September* 85). The town is a long ways away, meaning that the only people around her are her family and visiting friends. Those who do come to visit, however, are keen to forget the war.

Whereas Yeats used the rural setting to reflect on the ongoing conflict and ponder what would become of Ireland, Bowen uses it as a place where people go when they don't want to think about the war. Those who come to Danielstown tend to do their best to ignore the war, going so far as to ignore rumors that there are guns buried on their estate. When asked to investigate, Sir Richard, Lois's uncle, exclaims "'And why would we want to know? You'll have

the place full of soldiers, trampling the young trees'" (Bowen, *The Last September* 38). The Naylors, and their guests the Montmorencys, want to keep the war off of the grounds of Danielstown. They assign more importance to the landscape than to dangerous weapons. This separation and refusal to acknowledge the war keeps Lois oblivious to the harsh realities of the war that is waging in her own country. Even though the residents of Danielstown want to pretend that they are safe from the war, they cannot. Bowen plants this rumor to show that the war touched all of Ireland, and that hiding from it was not a possibility.

As previously established, *The Last September* captures Elizabeth Bowen's personal experience with Ireland, having grown up in Bowen's Court, her family estate, in rural Ireland. Her novel shows the uneasy relationship that the Irish gentry had in the War of Independence. By having Lois fall in love with Gerald, a British army officer, Bowen blurs the line between Irish and English. This goes to show how deeply entwined Ireland and England are in terms of both culture and people. In addition to Lois being in love with Gerald, the Naylors are also friends with many other British officers, hosting them at Danielstown, their countryside estate in Cork. The rural setting might seem, at first glance, to be a site of isolation, a place separate from the war, for the inhabitants of Danielstown.

Danielstown, however, is not separate from the war, nor the violence that comes with it. The Naylors' relationships with the British army have major repercussions for the family. The parties and gatherings the Naylors hosted acted as a sort of neutral zone when it came to the war, especially with the British soldiers. Lois remarked that "No one could quite understand why Captain Vermont and the subalterns did not seem more appalled and interested" while the rest of the guests talked about an attack on a British army barrack (Bowen, *The Last September* 68). The officers visiting Danielstown feel that it detaches them from the war, even for a moment. The

inhabitants feel the same way, even if it comes up in conversation. Physically, they feel removed from and isolated from the war. While talking to Gerald, Lois complains, "How is it that in this country that ought to be full of such violent realness there seems to be nothing for me but clothes and what people say?" (Bowen, *The Last September* 70). Despite conversations about the war, Lois cannot feel its "violent realness" because Danielstown, up until this point, has kept them, and British army officers, tucked away from it. Lois, even within the presence of the British army within Danielstown, is still sheltered from the violence and realities of the war. So much so that it almost seems like she does not believe that there really is violence going on.

Even though she has not yet been exposed to the realities of the war, Lois is aware that she is being sequestered away from it. Lois refers to her situation, stating "I might as well be in some kind of cocoon" in reference to her sheltered state (Bowen, *The Last September* 66). As youth are wont to do, Lois is ready to grow up. She is ready for love, excitement, and freedom. While Lois uses the term "cocoon" to express how restricted she feels, a cocoon is a place of growth and transformation. When Lois does eventually leave Danielstown, it will be as a changed person. This could be Bowen referring to a pre-independence Ireland, tired of being colonized, and ready to strike out on its own. Frantz Fanon writes that "the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness" (Fanon 37). Ireland, however, just like Lois, knows that there is more beyond the "light" provided by England, or the protection provided by Danielstown. To ignore the war, like her family does, would mean to stunt her own growth. Ireland wants something more, even though it does not know what exists outside of its own bubble, or what it will have to sacrifice in order to pop it. What is clear, however, is that the War of Independence will change Ireland. It

will be a different country, and must undergo a transformation in order to sustain its independence.

Bowen writes from a place of reflection; she is looking back on the price that had to be paid in order to achieve independence for Ireland. In a preface added to a later edition of *The Last September*, Bowen writes that her book is "to a degree, a 'recall' book" (Bowen Preface). Bowen is writing using her own memories of living through what she refers to as "The Troubled Times." Bowen lived in a big house herself, and used Danielstown as a site for all of her anxieties that she experienced during the war. She uses Lois, too, not as a stand-in for herself, but as a representative of the growth and loss that occurred during the war. Lois's protective bubble bursts on two occasions; the first is when her lover, Gerald, a British army officer, is killed in the line of action. The second is when her home, Danielstown, burns down. Both of these events force Lois out of her youthful innocence as she is exposed to love, war, and loss.

The death of her lover, Gerald, and the burning down of Danielstown abruptly make Lois aware of the horrors of war, and forced her to leave her youth behind. Bowen writes about Danielstown burning down, comparing it to her own home, Bowen's court, saying "so often in my mind's eye did I see it burning that the terrible last event in *The Last September* is more real than anything I have lived through" (Bowen preface). Bowen is taking her real life experiences from the war of independence and mapping them onto Lois. Lois is a stand in for the youth of Ireland, both in the actual children that lived through the war, but also as Ireland as a young country. She is representative of the loss and maturing that many children had to go through during the war.

Gerald's death is Bowen's way of sitting on the fence, almost. Him being a British army officer and still dying a tragic and sympathetic death shows that Bowen is writing about the pain

that both sides of the war experience. Gerald's death, however, exemplifies the notion that the violence of the war has lasting effects, and that the past cannot be changed. Daventry, a fellow British army officer, after delivering the news of Gerald's death to Lois and her family, reminisces on the parties they attended at Danielstown, thinking that "it pleased him to think of Gerald, socially circumspect, under the portraits" (Bowen, *The Last September* 277). All Daventry can do, however, is remember Gerald. His death cannot be undone, even in a place supposedly removed from the war. Lois, too, reflects on the impact Gerald left on her: "But she thought of Gerald in the surprise of death. He gave himself to surprise with peculiar candor" (Bowen, *The Last September* 276). Lois thinks of Gerald dying not in shock, but having some semblance of peace or acceptance during his final moments. Daventry and Lois react to Gerald's death by remembering him as he once was. This shows that neither are truly able to come to terms with his death. Bowen portrays Gerald as, first and foremost, a person. She does not denote, in his death, that he was a British soldier killed by an Irishman, because it does not matter to her. What does matter is that he was a victim of the war. Gerald's death accomplishes two things. Firstly, it demonstrates that the past is permanent; the only changeable variable is how it is remembered. Secondly, Gerald's death equalizes the pains of both the British and Irish during the war of independence.

Gerald's death can be seen as one of a martyr's, given that he died so young, and for a cause greater than himself. Although he does not die for the cause of Ireland, Gerald's death is still premature, and he is caught between opposing forces bigger than himself. His death is portrayed as random, and almost meaningless. Daventry describes what happened to Lois, telling her that "The officer – [Gerald] – was instantly killed, the NCO shot in the stomach. The enemy made off across country, they did not care for sustained fire" (Bowen, *The Last September* 275).

Gerald did not die in a battle. He died while on patrol, unexpectedly. His death shows that the war was about much more than individuals; it was either side fighting for dominance in whatever way possible. Gerald's death reminds the reader that the enemy is bigger than individual soldiers. The enemy is colonialism, and the freedoms of the Irish people being stripped away by England that led to the war in the first place. The youth and the martyr, in the case of *The Last September,* are treated similarly. The loss of innocence and the loss of a life stem from the same conflict. Lois's life is turned upside down with the death of her lover, and the burning down of Danielstown. Gerald's life is taken from him, he is not given a chance to grow or face the future.

With her lover dead and her home burned down, Lois must ask herself, "What now?" A question that had to be asked of Ireland once it achieved independence. Bowen's usage of youth takes inspiration from her own experience during the war. She focuses on themes of loss of innocence in order to show both the toll that the war took on Ireland, but also to show that Ireland itself as a country now has to mature, while still remembering all that was lost in the war.

By the end of the novel, Danielstown is burnt down, supposedly by Irish nationalists. During the War of Independence, approximately 275 Big Houses were burned down by Irish revolutionaries between 1916 and 1923 (Dorney). Bowen herself feared that Bowen's Court would be burnt down, too. Although the estate ultimately escaped that fate, Bowen uses Danielstown as an outlet for those anxieties. This destruction was "a sign after all that the past really was finished and that a new order was being born" (Dorney). The burning down of, or as Bowen describes it, the "execution" of Danielstown, proves Bowen's argument that the past really is gone, all that can be done is remember it (Bowen, *The Last Septemebr* 282). Using the word "execution" to describe how Danielstown is destroyed gives the estate an almost human quality, and therefore, death. Danielstown can also be seen as a sort of martyr, likened to the

Irish revolutionaries executed throughout the war. Danielstown died in the name of a greater cause, literally giving its "life" to usher in a new era of independence for Ireland. With Danielstown gone, The Naylors now must face the reality of the war. Both the characters, setting, and Ireland are being brought into more modern times. Ireland and the Naylors can no longer hide from Ireland's independence, and the changes that will come with it, in the rural countryside. Even if the rural setting is a vestige of Ireland's past, even it, too, is subject to modernization. Bowen utilizes the rural setting to show that even remote corners of Ireland were affected by the war. Her use of the rural setting is similar to how Yeats uses it. At first glance, both authors have rural Ireland acting as a place separate from war and violence, a place to watch the conflict play out and ponder Ireland's future. Bowen, however, takes it a step further in order to show that the war of independence affected everybody in Ireland. The decision to have Danielstown burn down shows that all of Ireland suffered in the name of independence, and that all of Ireland will have to face a modernizing country.

Bowen believed that the future of Ireland lay with its youths. While she believed that the past ought to remain in the past, she also felt that the past could and should be able to influence the present. In examining the future role of the Big House in Ireland, Bowen writes, "the good in the new can add to, not destroy, the good in the old" (Bowen, "The Big House" 91). Bowen writes of the goodness that came with the Big Houses, the sense of community that once was. She wants the present owners of the Big Houses to build upon the best aspects of the past, and combine them with the best aspects of the present. The new owners of the surviving Big Houses are the young people of Ireland. Bowen warns that the young people "cannot afford to be stupid – they expect the houses they keep alive to inherit, in a changed world and under changed conditions, the good life for which they were first built" (Bowen, "The Big House" 91). Ireland

is drastically different now that it is an independent country. In order to dignify the existence of the Big House, those who now own them must realize what they once stood for, and that now, that purpose is gone. She ends her essay saying "From inside many big houses (and these will be the survivors) barriers are being impatiently attacked. But it must be seen that a barrier has two sides" (Bowen "The Big House" 91). The Big House will only survive if the divide between Irish and English can be overcome. That is the two-sided barrier she alludes to. The notion of rejecting an Anglo-Ireland, a "Not England" must itself be rejected.

The Last September is Bowen's way of reflecting back on the war of independence, using her own experiences and fears to show how all-encompassing the violence of the war really was. Lois's love for Gerald, and his inevitable death are indicative of Anglo-Ireland. They show that after, and even before the war, Ireland and England are intertwined. Ireland cannot be a complete "not-England" because both sides suffered tragic losses. It is futile to try and separate English deaths from Irish deaths because they are both equally as tragic. The conflict, as Bowen argues, is bigger than individual soldiers and citizens, it is on a national and historic scale. In this way, Bowen is advocating for the remembrance of the past, with the hopes of not having to repeat it. More specifically, Bowen believes that the past can be used to help the present, the present which lies within the hands of the youths who grew up and were exposed to the violence of the war. Her relationship with the war and Irish independence is complicated further by the fact that she lived in England at the time she wrote this book. By taking a step away from Ireland, she was able to truly reflect on her anxieties surrounding her homeland during the war. The only way for Ireland to carve out an identity unique to itself then, is to reflect on its past, while acknowledging that the past is indeed gone. Ireland must cope with more modern times as it becomes an independent country.

3

James Joyce

In his works, James Joyce explores his anxieties about a yet to be fulfilled independence through a lens which emphasizes modernity and invention. He utilizes the subjects of the youth and the peasant to highlight the reality of Ireland's situation pre independence. Ireland is a country ruled by another. That comes with frustrations, a lack of autonomy, and a loss of culture. His stories are set firmly in Dublin, positioning it as, essentially, the heart of Ireland. It is a place of modernity and individualism, where Joyce's modernist and at times absurdist writing style can be mapped over the real image of Dublin. His usage of language and mythology is unique to him in that he doesn't follow any set of established literary rules or usages. He invents and combines the past and present to create something new, something that is wholly Joycean. Joyce, throughout his work, highlights the individual in hopes of projecting a more holistic image of what Ireland currently looks like under English rule, as well as what it would look like post-independence. By drawing inspiration from the past while writing in a highly modernist style, Joyce creates an Irish identity that is distinctive, while combining different languages and cultures.

James Joyce explores the concept of youth in terms of the frustration and lack of agency that comes with being young and surrounded by adults. *Dubliners* is a collection of short stories written between 1904 and 1907, and formally published in 1914. In the short story "Araby" the narrator, an unnamed schoolboy, is in love with his friend's sister. The boy wants to visit the titular Araby, a bazaar taking place that night, in order to buy a gift for his crush. The story follows the boy's anticipation and excitement toward visiting the bazaar, and the disappointment at not being taken seriously by his uncle, and finally, the letdown of making it to Araby only

after it had closed, failing to achieve his goal. The varying emotions and tumultuous familial relationships that the boy goes through represent Ireland leading up to its independence.

The biggest obstacle that the boy encounters in "Araby" is that of his uncle. After promising the boy that he would be able to visit the bazaar, something comes up, and the uncle makes the boy stay at home longer, telling the narrator that "'The people are in bed and after their first sleep now" (Joyce 22). Throughout the story, the uncle does not respect the boy's time. The uncle only pays attention to his own time, and that of the assumed adults at the Araby. The uncle's lack of attention and care toward what the boy wants is indicative of how young adults and children are often not taken seriously; their wants and needs are seen as less important than that of the adults around them. This is representative of Ireland under England's rule; not taken seriously, and infantilized to the point of a loss of autonomy (Kiberd 104). When the narrator is finally allowed to visit the bazaar- Joyce's stand in for a free Ireland- he finds that the majority of the stalls are closed. One of the few that is still open is run by an Englishwoman, who, as the narrator describes her, "seemed only to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty" (Joyce 23). Again, we see the young narrator not being taken seriously, and treated as more of a nuisance than a paying customer. Even though the narrator came with money and a plan to buy something, the Englishwoman running the stand only sees a child.

The narrator is completely underwhelmed, and too late to fulfill his desire to connect with his crush. "Araby" ends with the narrator shrouded in the darkness of the now closed bazaar, his eyes burning "with anguish and anger" (Joyce 23). This could be Joyce's prediction of what independence will look like once Ireland achieves it. Independence will be underwhelming, and Ireland will still be kept out of reach of the "Araby" or the luxuries and privileges that other, non colonized countries get to experience. The fact that the stall is run by an Englishwoman

exemplifies this notion. Ireland's independence will continue to be affected by English rule. The presence of the Englishwoman, who continuously looks down on and ignores the boy reflects a continued English influence even after independence. The narrator of "Araby " is similar to Lois from *The Last September*. Where Joyce was projecting, Bowen was reflecting. Lois was forced to grow up, having her love killed and home burned down. The narrator of "Araby" was subject to the frustrations that come with having a lack of agency. When that agency was finally granted, it was disappointing. Both looking forward and looking back, Joyce and Bowen show a wariness when it comes to finally facing independence.

In the case of "Araby," youth is used to project a rather depressing image of what independence could mean for Ireland. *Dubliners* was written seven years before Ireland gained independence from England. Joyce imbues the youthful narrator with the hopes of the Irish people; of gaining independence in the first place, but also what that independence might look like. The image of independence that Joyce paints, however, is quite dark. The narrator came to the bazaar as it was closing up, potentially showing that independence might not hold for Ireland everything that its people hoped it would. Not only does the boy leave with nothing, but he had to pay to enter the bazaar in the first place, complaining that "I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile" (Joyce 22). Even though Joyce supported Irish independence, he disagreed with the violence that came of it (Kiberd 152). The narrator having to pay to enter the bazaar, only to leave with nothing, is indicative of the price that Ireland had to pay during its fight for independence. Joyce might be speculating that the cost of independence might not outweigh its benefits. The figure of the youth, in both writing and reality, holds a lot of potential, serving as an image of the future. The failure to make it to the Araby in time shows the anxieties about what happens after

independence. The innocence of the young narrator and his first love underscores the narrative; he is naive and hopeful, yet not taken seriously, his hopes ultimately dashed by a paternalistic figure. It is here that paternalism and colonialism collide. Ireland's independence will come only when England grants it. As Joyce portrays independence in "Araby," there may not be much waiting for Ireland on the other side. Joyce's portrayal of youth is indicative of Ireland's position, a country being ruled by another, stripped of its autonomy, doing whatever it can to grow up and free itself from their paternalist ruler.

Joyce positions the city, more specifically Dublin, as the heart of Ireland. The urban setting is an embracement and acceptance of Ireland's independence and modernization. Instead of trying to idealize the past in an attempt to create an Irish identity, like the rural setting, the urban setting seems to do away with the notion of Ireland being a "not England" and instead focuses on how Ireland is currently operating. There lies a duality of understanding, that Ireland is its own, modern country, but also that "London was the crucible in which the elements to make a modern Ireland were distilled" (Kiberd 99). Admitting that London, England had influence over how Ireland developed does not mean that Ireland, modern cities and all, is not still Irish. The urban setting shows that the Irish people help make Ireland more than just a "not-England." Despite cities being crowded and dense, stories with an urban setting tend to hone in on the individual and their personal experiences with being Irish. This then works to show that Irish identity is unique to each individual.

Dubliners by James Joyce offers detailed glimpses into the individual lives of people living in Dublin. In the short story "Counterparts," Joyce creates an image of Dublin life that is stressful, disappointing, and suffocating. Farrington, the protagonist, works at a law firm as a copy clerk. His job is unfulfilling, and fills him with the urge to "rush out and revel in violence"

(Joyce 69). This is concerning, but ultimately shows that Farrington is operating under constraint. After Farrington leaves work for the day, he makes his way to the pub. Joyce uses his walk there to describe parts of the city, describing the streets as "narrow" as he walks in "Darkness, accompanied by a thick fog" (Joyce 70). Joyce's descriptions of Dublin are unpleasant, a proper accompaniment to Farrington's foul mood. Farrington's desire for violence is somewhat fulfilled at the pub. He and his friend, Paddy Leonard, arm wrestle each other. Farrington loses twice, which causes his "dark wine-colored face [to] flush darker still with anger" (Joyce 73). Joyce writes Dublin as a place where violence can be found, but no satisfaction will come from it. It is here, again, where Farrington feels unfulfilled, having lost a feat of strength to a man younger than him. Farrington's home, too, offers little respite to his stress. This is where his violence explodes for the worse.

Joyce portrays Dublin as a city built upon small, yet suppressive hierarchies. Farrington works under a suffocating boss, and his one respite, drinking, is tarnished when he loses an arm wrestling match to a younger, stronger man. Once in his own home, however, Farrington is the person who has the most power. After realizing that his son let the fire burn out, Farrington begins to beat him, "striking him vigorously with the stick" and says "'Take that, you little whelp!'" (Joyce 75). Farrington is now able to "revel in violence" as he wanted to before, being pushed to the brink (Joyce 69). This violence, however, is directed at his young, innocent son. Farrington's outburst toward his son could be in direct correlation to being beaten at arm wrestling by somebody younger than him. It is also Joyce's way of showing that, yes, cities are full of the stressors of modern times, and that stress ultimately ends up hurting the most innocent people, those who have no way of defending themselves. Joyce's writing positions Dublin as the center for Ireland. In this case, then, Dublin acts as a stand in for the whole of Ireland. Ireland is

suppressed by England. It is not allowed to have its own culture or language. This suppression, as Joyce demonstrates, will ultimately lead to violence, with the most vulnerable and innocent people getting hurt the most.

Ulysses was written over ten years after *Dubliners.* During that time, Joyce had traveled back and forth between continental Europe and Ireland (Irish Embassy). At the time he wrote *Ulysses,* Joyce hadn't been back to Ireland in six years. The modernist writing movement had also ramped up. Joyce's distance from Ireland and the independence movement, as well as the modernist movement contribute to the more absurdist and satirical tones of the novel.

Joyce's *Ulysses* distinctly works against the stereotype of the "Gaelic mystic" peasant. Where Yeats and Lady Gregory relegated the peasant to a more rural, past place and time, Joyce shows the reality of the Irish peasant class. They still exist in modern times, and are real people who were affected by the English just as much as anybody else. Writing a more "realistic" peasant situates *Ulysses* in present-day Ireland, rather than an imaginary past or present. Where many authors of this time were rewriting Ireland's past and present for the sake of its future, Joyce chose to embrace the present in order to comment on the flaws of both English rule and the independence movement. A peasant woman appears in the first chapter. She defies the expectations of the characters in that she cannot even recognize the Irish language, much less speak it. It is Haines, an English student, who speaks to her in Gaelic, and she responds "Is it French you are talking, sir?" (Joyce 12). Here, Joyce is playing with the irony of an Englishman being able to speak Gaelic, while an Irishwoman can't even recognize the language. He is showing the reality of the Irish peasantry; they are more similar to the rest of the Irish population than other expatriate or upper class writers would assume. The moment also brings into question how Irish peasants can be expected to know the Irish language, as this work was set before Irish

language revitalization programs took place. Irish writers tend to pick and choose their history, idolizing a vestige of colonialism, while not recognizing the effects that said colonialism had on the colonized.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* embraces the urban setting, for better and for worse. He strived to make the Dublin that appeared in his novel as accurate as possible, noting that if Dublin "one day suddenly disappeared from the Earth it could be reconstructed out of my book" (Budgen 69). *Ulysses* is set in 1904 Dublin, a time when middle and upper class families were leaving Dublin, leaving it to the lower classes (Brady). Instead of utilizing vivid descriptions of the city, however, Joyce depends on the geography of the city, as well as how its inhabitants affect it and in turn how they are affected by the city, to portray what urban life was like in Ireland during the early 1900s. What descriptions do exist are often accompanied by the descriptions of the people inhabiting them. The city and the people within it are practically inseparable from one another. In episode one, Stephan Dedalus, Buck Mulligan, and Haines "followed the winding path down to the creek" (Joyce 18). This sentence is immediately followed up with "Buck Mulligan stood on a stone, in shirtsleeves, his unclipped tie rippling over his shoulder" (Joyce 18). Joyce treats setting and character descriptions as one in the same. The people inhabiting Dublin are as storied as the buildings and landscape, which in turn has as much personality as the people. In *Ulysses,* the character is the setting. This ties the characters to Dublin, showing that Dublin only is the city that it is because of its inhabitants.

Joyce's Dublin is a city of change. Put into more American terms, it acts as a sort of melting pot. The Dublin of which Joyce writes about is not a "not-England" city. It is a modern city, a site for repentance, even. *Ulysses* was Joyce's "definitive account of the 1922 European mind" (Kiberd 327). *Ulysses* is modern, it is cosmopolitan. The 1922 European mind exists in

Ireland. This modernity and perceived homogeneity only exists in Ireland, however, because of outside influences. The character of Haines is an English student that Stephen believes only came to Dublin as a way to assuage the guilt he feels for how the British have treated the Irish. Haines himself admits that "We feel in England that we have treated you rather unfairly. It seems history is to blame" (Joyce 17). Haines does not take any personal responsibility, blaming it, vaguely, on history itself. The concession is not much, but it's a start. The three men, Haines, Stephen, and Buck Mulligan live in Martello tower, a decommissioned defense tower the British built around the British empire during the 19th century. Joyce chooses this tower as the home for his protagonist purposefully. The tower is a vestige of England in Ireland, currently occupied by both English and Irishmen. This shows that, not only is Ireland presently a mix of English and Irish, but so is its past, which continues to leak into and influence the present. In Dublin, Joyce mixes English and Irish, past and present. Joyce sees Dublin as a site for change, where Irish independence will come from. He does not see Irish independence, nor Irish identity as something new and wholly removed from British influence. Instead, he sees it as an acknowledgement of the past, and letting it exist, but not control, the present.

Despite being an expatriate while writing about Dublin and the urban setting, Joyce still managed to imbue it with accuracy of geography and the everyday lives of the individuals who lived there. Joyce is able to dissect the crowds of people in between narrow streets and extract individual experiences from the masses. Dublin, according to Joyce, is not a monolith. People can share experiences and feelings, yes, but their story is their own. The city can be a site for repression and violence, yes, but also a place heavy with the potential for change. The urban setting is a place of acceptance, a place to move forward not from the past, but with it.

Joyce's usage of language is indicative of somebody who does not want to be constrained to a single way of thinking or writing. He includes English, Irish, Latin, and his own made up sayings in his works. He does this in order to avoid "enclosing [himself] in a tradition" (Vance 193), that tradition being the English language. He felt that English was "alien" to him, and that he couldn't fully express himself using English (Vance 193). It is in this way that Joyce is able to avoid constraining himself to one mode of expression. The usage of different languages highlights Joyce's views on Irish nationalism, but also on where Ireland needs to go after independence in order to create its own identity. One of his more confusing phrases comes from the short story "Eveline" from *Dubliners.* In the story, a dying woman whispers "Derevaun Seraun" in her dying breath (Joyce 27). The phrase, as written, is gibberish. It is a made up phrase from a made up language. Some readers, however, seem to recognize the language as Irish. The phrase has just been anglicized. When converted to the Irish "dearbhán saothrán" the phrase can then be translated to mean "the end of pleasure is pain" (Tigges 102). It is unclear what Joyce's intentions with this phrase were, if he really meant it to be gibberish, or if it was supposed to be recognizable as Irish. His usage of this phrase is an example of an anglicized Ireland, its language stripped away and mutilated by the English.

In addition to mysterious languages, Joyce utilizes Latin as if it is the vernacular. That might be a stretch, since the majority of the Latin used in *Ulysses* comes from the academic Stephen Dedalus. He uses it in dialogue and thought. When he wants to move on from a conversation topic, Stephen thinks to himself "Amplius. Adhuc. Iterum. Postea" (Joyce 170). These all translate to some form of "next". Stephen also speaks Italian, having an entire conversation in the language. Having Stephen speak a supposedly dead language does point to his academic nature, but the addition of Italian, Latin's closest lingual relative, is interesting. It

shows the new and the old coexisting. One does not replace the other. They each have their own respective uses, and there are times where one is more appropriate than the other. This could be how Joyce views that past versus the present. Modern times and languages are necessary, but there is still room for the past. They exist separately, yet work together. It also points to the intermingling of the English and Irish, both unique entities, yet still similar, drawing on each other as they change and grow. Joyce's use of language is confusing at times, yet is indicative of a changing Ireland. Joyce uses language in new, confusing, and yet cohesive ways to, of course, flex his talents as a writer and express himself more, but also to demonstrate that an independent Ireland can never be just Ireland. It will be a country full of different cultures and influences. These differences, however, are not a bad thing. They instead work together, fill in each other's weaknesses, and create something entirely new.

While Joyce's usage of mythology is not as extensive as Yeats, he does incorporate it into his work. *Ulysses* is a retelling of the Odyssey. Coming from Greek mythology, Joyce takes inspiration from similar places to Yeats. Joyce uses the Odyssey as a type of scaffolding for *Ulysses.* This is seen quite literally in the chapter titles, taken from episodes of the Odyssey, for example, the Lotus Eaters, and Cyclops. The purpose of using the Odyssey as a loose inspiration in *Ulysses* serves the same purpose as the mythology in Yeats' poetry, although through different means. Joyce does use classical mythology, yes, but he ties it inextricably to Ireland by having it set in Dublin. Joyce quite literally equates classical mythology and history with that of Ireland in a passage from *Ulysses.* Leopold Bloom gets caught in a conversation about the revival of ancient Gaelic sports. They talk about sports as well as "the importance of physical culture, as understood in ancient Greece and ancient Rome and ancient Ireland" (Joyce 260). Joyce, through his characters, lists these ancient cultures in the same breath, as if their importance is one in the

same. This, of course, is very similar to how Yeat's uses mythology, linking Irish and Classical to the point where their history and cultural weight are seen as equal. The classical myth itself, however, all but disappears save for chapter titles and story structure. What also happens, however, is that, by turning to a classical epic, Joyce is essentially contradicting Celtic mythology and heroism (Vance 206). Yeats uses classical mythology to bolster the perception of Irish mythology. Joyce uses it to create a whole new entity, a mix of classical mythology and Irish modernism and thought, that is neither completely one or the other. This conflates the two, while positioning it firmly in the present. Yeats' usage of mythology is to idealize Ireland's past enough to bring it into the present. Joyce uses mythology as a way to show that Ireland was not built by itself. Irish identity stems from the mixing of histories and cultures.

It's important to note, as well, that the Odyssey is a story of homecoming. Odysseus travels all over the Mediterranean, desperate to get home to his wife, Penelope. The scope of *Ulysses* is smaller; the characters traverse Dublin. A city may seem small compared to a whole sea, but remember that Joyce wrote *Ulysses* while in continental Europe, mainly Switzerland and France. The distance seems greater when looking at the author and their setting, which just so happens to be Joyce's homeland. *Ulysses* is still a homecoming, in some regard. The novel switches its focus from Stephen Dedalus to Leopold Bloom, and ends, after a long day traversing across Dublin, with Leopold in bed next to Molly, his wife. It is with Molly that Joyce ends the novel, with a chapter long sentence. She recounts when Leopold promised to her; "and then he asked me would I say yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me" (Joyce 643). Even though it is a memory, the novel ends with Leopold uniting with Molly, perhaps as a nod to Odyssesus fighting off Penelope's suitors. This modernist, borderline absurdist retelling of the Odyssey reflects Joyce's distance from his

homeland. The writing of *Ulysses*, which took place over seven years and three countries, was Joyce's odyssey (Gabler xv). Instead of physically traveling back home, he used his writing to return.

Joyce never returned to Ireland after 1912. *Dubliners* was written while he still lived in Ireland, but ultimately published in 1914. *Ulysses* was written between 1918 and 1920, with first ideas emerging around 1907, and writing beginning over a decade afterward. He is writing from a distance narratives that are indicative of the Irish situation. This could be part of the reason why he utilizes language in such an esoteric way. He is, at the same time, distancing himself from Ireland, using English, Latin, and Italian, while still maintaining his ties to it through the usage of Irish. Joyce left Ireland, yet he was still concerned for his homeland. His concern, however, was often taken as criticism, as he wasn't afraid to point out the hypocrisy of Irish nationalists, and portrayed Dublin, and Ireland, as a conglomeration of both Irish and English cultures and experiences. Joyce writes to express his anxieties about what will become of his homeland. He predicts that independence will be disappointing, while still writing about how the English suppress the Irish. His words and usage of mythology are indicative of somebody who is not loyal to one place. However, his writing always returns to Ireland, Dublin, to be specific. Joyce writes for the future. He sees the potential Dublin has as a site of cultural exchange. An independent Ireland, according to Joyce, will be an amalgamation of western culture, or else it will be utterly disappointed and alone. Joyce is, of course, only predicting what independence will mean for Ireland. His writing comes closer to the end of the war, yet *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* were both written before independence, meaning that Joyce's predictions were just that. There was no space to analyze or react to the coming independence. Samuel Beckett, in the following

chapter, has that temporal space. He is able to take a step back, also writing abroad from Ireland, and comment on a presently independent Ireland.

4

Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett, much like Elizabeth Bowen, is writing from a place of reflection. Where he differs, however, is in the time between his writing and Ireland gaining its independence. "Waiting for Godot" and "First Love" were written around twenty years after Ireland gained independence. Beckett is not necessarily reflecting back on his own experiences like Bowen. Instead, he is able to analyze how Ireland has operated in the two decades since gaining independence. He uses the figures of the youth and the peasant to show just how young, naive, and even helpless Ireland is. His settings reflect the kind of stasis that Ireland is operating in post-independence, unsure of whether to cling to the past or to move on. Beckett's writing shows his own distance from Ireland. Ultimately, Beckett's writing acts as a sort of plea to Ireland, to learn from the past, but to continue moving forward.

Samuel Beckett's display of youth in "First Love" comes mostly from the experience of the narrator's first love, and his naivety and devotion towards her. The narrator is not as young as Lois or the narrator from "Araby." Out of the authors and literature covered, Beckett's is the latest, written in 1946, but not officially published until 1970. Beckett, then, is a degree more removed than Joyce and Bowen. "First Love" was not written during or immediately after the war of independence, but after over two decades of independence. He is able to look at Ireland, albeit from France, and write about a character that is the same age as his home country. The difficulties that the narrator faces, and the decisions he makes mirror how Ireland stumbled during its first two decades of independence. Ireland did not hit the ground running after the war. During the time "First Love" was written, Ireland was undergoing its fair share of problems. "First Love" is at its core a narrative of innocence and innocence lost, similar to how

Ireland went through a violent war in order to achieve independence. This correlates with the narrator's age. The narrator has more experience than many of the other youthful figures shown in Irish literature, but can still be considered young, especially in regards to love. "First Love," then, can act as a sort of cautionary tale about Ireland. Despite having its independence, the country still has a lot of "firsts" to experience that will change and shape the independent yet young country.

The narrator's titular first love is a woman named Lulu, whom he later refers to as Anna after growing "sick and tired" of the name Lulu, and deciding to "give her another [name], more like her" (Beckett 32). This could be an attempt to control Lulu/Anna, trying to keep her pristine in his mind, molding her to the image and standard which he holds her to. New name or not, however, Anna remains the same person. This could be Beckett's commentary on independent Ireland, perhaps suggesting that it is not vastly different than prior to the War of Independence. The narrator is obsessed with Anna, to the extent that he etched her name in the cowplats in the barn he is staying in after becoming homeless. He uses this act as an example of how strong his love is, asking "For had my love been of this kind would I have stooped to inscribe the letters of Anna in time's forgotten cowplats" (Beckett 34). It's an attempt to honor her, but falls flat because of the vulgar medium of the commemoration. This shows that the narrator does not know how to express his love, and considers this crass act as a grand gesture. His inexperience with love shows Ireland's inexperience with independence, and how this inexperience led to a recession and another wave of emigration. The narrator later moves in with Anna, and even stays after finding out that she is a prostitute. Despite Anna's imperfections and cold attitude toward him, the narrator remains in love with her. It is only after he learns that Anna is pregnant with his child that the narrator decides to leave her.

"First Love" is about imperfection. It's about how much one is willing to put up with in the name of love. The narrator has an idealized image of Anna, going as far as changing her name to better suit his vision. This could refer to the visions of what Ireland could be as a country, of what its full potential is, and the disappointment at not living up to that potential. "First Love" was written following World War 2, when most countries were experiencing an economic boom, Ireland was facing the opposite (O'Toole 2). Anna is a stand in for Ireland. The narrator builds her up in his own mind, only to be let down in the end by the reality of who she is. The narrator can only withstand a certain amount of imperfection, and once Anna reveals that she is pregnant, and expects him to help, he flees; "It went to my heart to leave a house without being put out. I crawled out over the back of the sofa, put on my coat, greatcoat and hat, I can think of nothing else, laced up my boots and opened the door to the corridor" (Beckett 60). The narrator even admits that he still has a home and a place to stay with Anna, and that leaving her is his choice alone. He is fleeing from the future that exists in the child. The child is, in fact, another figure of youth. The narrator abandons his child because he does not want the responsibility that comes with raising a child. This is Beckett's way of portraying the anxieties of the Irish people in trying to bring Ireland out of its economic recession and make it a prosperous country. In "Araby" and *The Last September*, the youths presented were the stand-ins for Ireland. The narrator here, however, is a stand-in for the Irish people, looking at Ireland as a perfect entity built up in their minds, before eventually leaving their country, fleeing from an uncertain future to a country that, hopefully, offers more certainty of prosperity. Beckett pokes fun at himself, almost, as well as other expatriates trying to shape Ireland from the outside.

The narrator fleeing Anna mirrors the mass emigration rate that took place during the time "First Love" was written. This short story then, could be a criticism of the Irish people,

fleeing the country when the country needs them the most. Or, more specifically, it is a criticism of expatriate authors, fleeing Ireland, yet still casting judgment upon it. The version of Ireland that Beckett portrays through Anna is imperfect. Even so, Anna, just like Ireland, is still getting projected onto by naive Irishmen. The narrator's youth leaves him vulnerable to disappointment and heartbreak.

First Love utilizes the suburban setting to mirror the feelings of in-betweenness that the protagonists feels. There's a certain disbelonging that is pervasive throughout the story, with the protagonist often finding himself in ill-fitting living arrangements. The majority of the story takes place in the outskirts of Dublin, not quite a part of the city, not quite a distinctive place. The first sense of disbelonging the unnamed narrator displays is amongst other people, society. While visiting his father's grave, the narrator notes that "I take the air there willingly, perhaps more willingly than elsewhere, when take the air I must" (Beckett 8). The narrator feels more comfortable amongst the dead than the living. This is a sense more so of societal disbelonging, as though the narrator feels that it's easier to exist around the dead than the living. Shortly after his father's death, however, the narrator is evicted from the room he rents, contributing to a physical disbelonging. With nowhere else to go, he ends up on a park bench, which is where he first meets Lulu. The suburban setting, while seemingly sitting between rural and urban, is instead its own area entirely. There exists an "in-betweenness" that can easily lead to feelings of disbelonging due to a lack of history holding the community together (O'Toole 7). The Irish suburbs of the 1950s were places of displacement and in-betweenness, yes, but also sites of pretending, a sort of play acting at being modern. As of 1960, two thirds of suburban homes still did not have electricity (O'Toole 60). There is the lure of modernity in the suburbs, but that was not the reality for those moving into newly built suburban developments. On the other hand, the

suburbs also helped with the proliferation of the nuclear family in Ireland, creating an "estrangement" from the older generations (O'Toole 60). The suburbs were neither traditional nor modern, making them the perfect setting to explore feelings of in-betweenness, disbelonging, and arrested development.

Despite Lulu being the narrator's titular first love, their first couple of encounters enforce the narrator's separation from those around him. He notes that "The mistake one makes is to speak to people" (Beckett 21). It is only when the narrator finds some sort of shelter, an abandoned cowshed, that he is able to recognize and name what he feels for Lulu- love. It is right after the narrator comes to this realization that he notes "What constitutes the charm of our country, apart of course from its scant population, and this without help of the meanest contraceptive, is that all is derelict, with the sole exception of history's ancient faeces" (Beckett 29). This is one of many ways in which Beckett likens Lulu to Ireland. The narrator, after realizing he loves Lulu, goes on to call Ireland "derelict" except for its history. The cowshed that he is taking shelter in, even though it sits on the edge of Dublin, does bring to mind rural Ireland. Here the narrator is toeing the line between past and present Ireland, not fully existing in either one. Beckett connects the narrator's feelings of love, but also of disbelonging, to Ireland.

The narrator eventually does move in with Lulu, but is still kept separate from her, living in different rooms. Lulu's apartment rests on the outskirts of Dublin, "with a view of the mountains" (Beckett 44). The apartment is neither completely in the city, nor completely rural, much like the cowshed, it continues on with the theme of being in between two places. The same night he moves in, he admits that "already my love is waning" (Beckett 50). The narrator has moved from an in-between setting with an emphasis on the past, to one with an emphasis on the present. Still, he is unhappy. He has it all, a place to live, a woman who cares for him, and an

incoming child. And yet, he is rejecting them, and in turn, rejecting security and belonging. What he is also rejecting is the nuclear family. Since the nuclear family was a symbol of modernity in Ireland, this could be Beckett showing how Ireland often rejects modernity, even if it is for the country's benefit. The birth of his child is "What finished me... It woke me up" (Beckett 59). The narrator then leaves, choosing to face Winter while homeless than to stay with Lulu and his child. In this instance, the narrator is actively choosing to separate himself from the place where he finally found human connections, and now has obligations to those people. Instead of learning to cope and thrive with Lulu and their child, he chooses to not belong anywhere, to have no place to call home. If Beckett was criticizing the way Ireland holds onto its past, here he is criticizing the Irish people's inability to accept the present. Looking back to the scene with the narrator in the cowshed, he explicitly calls out Ireland's "scant population" (Beckett 29). And yet, the narrator does not want any part in repopulating Ireland, or helping raise the next generation. Again, the narrator chooses to not belong to any group. It seems here, then, that Beckett is criticizing Ireland for not fixing any of its own problems, something that comes up again in his play *Waiting for Godot.* In both, he makes it clear that Ireland must take control of its own future. In "First Love," Beckett shows how Ireland's progress as an independent country is being hindered because of its grasp on its past and hesitation to become modern.

The suburban setting offers space to critique Ireland in the decades following independence. Suburbia seems like a move towards embracing modernity, and yet it ends up highlighting Ireland's arrested development, trying to hold onto the past in order to build its future. In the end, however, Ireland during the 1940s and 1950s was facing another recession and mass emigration. The suburban setting gives space to explore the reasons and rationale behind Ireland's stunted growth. There is the push and pull between past and present in the name of Irish

identity, with Ireland trying to be something greater than what it is. The suburban setting is an in-between setting, lying in the middle of the urban and rural settings, and yet belongs to neither of them. In order to find an Irish identity, then, Ireland must stop trying to resist one or the other, and instead embrace both the present and the past.

At the time "First Love" was written, Beckett had moved abroad to Paris. The feelings of disbelonging, and looking back on Ireland's past could be Beckett projecting onto his homeland his own feelings of leaving. They could also be a critique, however, of post-Independence Ireland, more specifically, Ireland's push to revitalize the Irish language. In a letter to Hans Naumann, a German translator, Beckett writes "I do not consider English a foreign language, it is my language. If there is one that is really foreign to me, it is Gaelic" (Jones 164). Beckett felt disconnected from the Irish language, acknowledging that English was his first language, and that he wrote in French "in order to change" (Jones 164). This scene in the cowshed, then, pokes fun at the revitalization movement, and Ireland's proclivity to return to its past in order to create an identity for its present. Beckett urges Ireland to move away from its past as an answer to its future, and instead step into modern times.

Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* is a testament to the hopefulness of the Irish, yet highlights the country's lack of decisiveness in the wake of independence. The play features two peasants as the play's protagonists; they are, as the title indicates, waiting to meet Godot. Who Godot is is never specified, but it can be assumed that he will offer help or relief to the two central characters, Gogo and Didi. A prominent motif throughout the play is that of forgetting. Gogo and Didi often forget what happened the day before, and they also forget what exactly they asked Godot for. Gogo asks Didi "what exactly did we ask him for?" to which Didi responds "Oh… Nothing very definite" with Gogo adding on "A kind of prayer" (Beckett 1). Neither the

reader nor the characters know what they asked from Godot, or what Godot has to offer. It's the fact that Gogo and Didi continue to wait day after day that hints to Godot being able to offer some help to the two of them. Their forgetfulness is indicative of Beckett's feelings toward his homeland. On a personal level, it is possible that Beckett fears forgetting his homeland. It is also possible, however, that *Waiting for Godot* is a cautionary tale, reminding Ireland to not forget itself or its past. It is a different take on Ireland than "First Love". Whereas that short story urged Ireland to accept modernity, *Waiting for Godot* shows that there is power in the past, as long as those who revel in it are willing to help themselves.

The play has some absurdist elements to it. Gogo and Didi have their share of hijinks and ways of coping with the seemingly endless amounts of waiting that they do. They talk about hanging themselves, and Gogo mentions that hanging themselves would "Give us an erection… With all that follows Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up" (Beckett 10). All of this waiting gives the two time to think and talk about anything and everything. And yet, they continue to wait for Godot to fix their problems. There is a sort of stuckness, and a comfort in the absurd instead of reality. These elements highlight how useless it is to wait for an outside force to fix Ireland's problems of emigration and their economy.

The two protagonists spend the play waiting in the same place, contemplating suicide, and coming back again and again to wait for Godot. They lack any agency, being forced to wait for Godot day after day with little to no explanation. Their only communication with Godot is by proxy. Each day, Godot sends a young messenger boy to tell the peasants that they will have to wait until tomorrow to meet with Godot.

Again the figure of youth pops up, albeit in a much smaller role than seen before. The young messenger represents the hopes of Gogo and Didi, and is then held responsible for their

disappointment at not being able to see Godot. Just like we see with Joyce and the young protagonist from "Araby", the figure of the youth represents potential, specifically in this case failed potential. In this case, that failed potential is the chance to meet Godot. Gogo and Didi, then, have less autonomy than a child. The two fall into the stereotype of the "childlike Hibernian peasant" in that they are not able to provide for or stand up for themselves (Kiberd 105). The childlike peasant stereotype is one that many writers tried and failed to avoid during the Irish literary renaissance. In an effort to reminisce about simpler times, authors wrote simple characters which made Irish peasants, and Ireland as a whole, seem incapable of taking care of themselves.

The titular *waiting* that comprises the entirety of the play takes the form of deep conversations that more often or not lead to arguments between Gogo and Didi. At one point, Gogo asks Didi "if we're tied… Down…To your man" (Beckett 1). The waiting does not come without doubts. Gogo questions their own freedom, if they even have any, or if they are tethered to some unseen force. This encapsulates the plight of the Irish peasant, tied down to a landlord who offers little to no help to their tenets. In addition to the peasant, their dependency on Godot is representative of Ireland as a country. Even though Ireland was in economic turmoil when this play was written, it seemed like the country was doing little to help itself, instead it tried to get help from other western countries (O'Toole 38). There is a push and pull in *Waiting for Godot* between hope and despair. Gogo is able to realize that he and Didi, in waiting for Godot, are tying themselves down to him. The only other option, in their eyes, is to hang themselves (Beckett 1). *Waiting for Godot* portrays the peasant as trapped, lacking autonomy, but aware of their positions and lack of choices. The only choices they do have are either to keep waiting or to die. Even the waiting has its downsides, it continues the cycle Gogo and Didi are caught in. They

continue to wait and not help themselves, with nothing but hope keeping them going. Godot acts as a beacon of hope to Gogo and Didi, something to look forward to, something to keep living for. Gogo and Didi actively choose to keep waiting for Godot, choosing hope over despair.

Godot never appears to help Gogo and Didi. His absence hangs heavily over the two of them, influencing their decisions and essentially forcing them to stay in the same spot for fear of missing Godot if and when he shows up. The two are prepared to continue waiting for him: "And if he doesn't come?/ We'll come back tomorrow./ And then the day after" (Beckett 7). Gogo and Didi have nothing to do but wait. They cannot and will not do anything to improve their impoverished situation besides wait. Where Beckett criticized Ireland for being stuck in the past in "First Love," here he is criticizing Ireland for not helping itself. *Waiting for Godot* was written shortly after World War II, a war in which Ireland stayed neutral, and therefore did not experience the post-war economic boom that many other European countries did (O'Toole 2). What Beckett is trying to get across in *Waiting for Godot* is that Ireland needs to stop waiting for some outside power to come and help solve the economic and emigration problems. Waiting around is useless, and will serve only to exacerbate Ireland's problem.

The notion of ownership in *Waiting for Godot* mirrors the themes of displacement seen in "First Love." While waiting, Gogo and Didi encounter Pozzo, who claims that he owns the land the two have been waiting for Godot on (Beckett 18). Pozzo calls their presence a "disgrace," but lets them stay, agreeing that "The road is free to all" (Beckett 18). The road here acts as a stand in for Ireland. Ireland, then, is "free to all." Beckett, although not living in Ireland, is trying to claim ownership over his homeland, and therefore, be justified in writing about and critiquing Ireland. It is now Beckett who feels displaced, more so than his characters. As Pozzo leaves Gogo and Didi, he says that "the road seems long when one journeys all alone" (Beckett 19). The

two are reminded of this at the end of the play, when they want to split up, but decide not to, deeming it "not worthwhile" (Beckett 49). There, again, is a push and pull between being together or apart, simply waiting for help or being proactive. *Waiting for Godot* fluctuates between hope and despair. The audience, however, knows that the waiting is futile, and that Godot will never come to help Gogo and Didi. This is Beckett, hinting from afar, that the Irish people know that there is no outside help coming, but continuing to not do anything to help themselves.

During the play, it is revealed that Gogo and Didi use fake names. Didi's real name is Vlad, and Gogo's is Estragon. Using fake names is Beckett's way of hiding the real Irish peasant behind the literary one. They went from simple names to more complex ones, showing the real depth of their character and their situation. The play ends with the two deciding to wait another day for Godot. The final stage direction, after Didi says "Yes, let's go" is "*They do not move" (Beckett 49).* Beckett ends his play in a state of stasis, where nothing has changed, and the character's hope seems futile. This is representative of the state of Ireland during the time the play was written. There was very little economic movement, and a high unemployment rate. Vlad and Estragon, then, represent the Irish people, unsure of their own identity, and left, waiting for some form of relief that is not guaranteed to come. Even so, above all else, the Irish have hope. They have hope, and they have each other. In *Waiting for Godot,* Beckett urges Ireland to stick together, but also to not be complacent. The play ends with Gogo and Didi agreeing to "go," although where they will go is not specified. It doesn't matter anyways as the final stage direction notes "They do not move." (Beckett 49). While *Waiting for Godot* does offer criticism of Ireland, it also reminds the Irish of their fortitude, and to lean on each other, instead of some unseen, outside force.

The setting of a literary work does not necessarily have to be in Ireland for it to be considered Irish, or, at least mapped on to Ireland. Just as Beckett wrote in both English and French, his works do not stick to one country. *Waiting for Godot,* written while Beckett lived in France, takes place in the French countryside. Even so, the themes of hope and stagnation are very applicable to Ireland. Beckett uses the "abroad" setting in order for the Irish people to see Ireland the way that he does – from afar. Expatriate authors are able to offer a unique view on Ireland because of their geographical distance from the country. *Waiting for Godot* teeters between hope and despair, and includes glimpses of Beckett's feelings toward his own expatriate status. In addition to being able to see Ireland from an outside perspective, the abroad setting also allows the expatriate author to examine their own relationship with Ireland. Leaving Ireland does not mean completely turning one's back to their homeland. Beckett, as well as other expatriate authors returned to Ireland, if only for a short stay, after leaving. The abroad setting, as exemplified in *Waiting for Godot,* acts as a means to examine how Ireland is coping with its independence, with Beckett urging the country to do something other than wait to be saved.

Beckett's writing reflects the displacement the author himself felt toward his home country, but also Ireland's displacement as an independent, yet struggling country. His portrayal of youth in "First Love" is indicative of how inexperienced Ireland is. Ireland, as Beckett posits in his short story, does not "belong" because it does not yet fully know itself. The country wants to be both modern and ancient, and is struggling to find an identity for itself. The peasants in "Waiting for Godot" also show Ireland's lack of autonomy. He urges Ireland to stop waiting for some other outside force to come in and save the day. Using the suburban setting hints at Ireland's shaky relationship with modernism, but like the abroad setting, there is a distinct feeling of disbelonging. Ireland, from Beckett's perspective, is floundering, unsure of how to

proceed with its independence. Beckett's writing is his way of calling attention to the Irish plight. Even though Ireland was independent, it was still dealing with a recession and large amounts of emigration. "First Love" shows that the only way out is to embrace modernity and commit to a decision. *Waiting for Godot* shows that Ireland cannot afford to continue waiting to be helped, because it will be waiting indefinitely. Beckett only returned to Ireland through his writing, whether it be set in Ireland, or based on Irish problems. He still cared for his home country, and felt that the only way to remedy Ireland's problems was for the Irish people to embrace all of the changes that came with independence and help themselves.

Conclusion

The easiest and most obvious conclusion to draw from examining these three authors is that there is an overall lack of consensus apropos creating an Irish identity post independence. That is bound to happen, however. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Bowen, Joyce, and Beckett are five different writers who come from different backgrounds, with different experiences with the war of independence, and different ideologies.

What we can see with these authors, however, is an acknowledgement of Ireland's past. The past played a pivotal role in the struggle to find Irish identity, both in that it happened, but also in what to do with it in the present. Yeats and Lady Gregory feel that the past is an answer to Ireland's present and future. Returning to the past meant returning to an Ireland before English occupation, a fitting ideology in the wake of independence. Bowen more so believed in learning from the past so as not to repeat it. She is, however, looking at a different past than Yeats and Lady Gregory. She is looking at the violence caused by the war of independence, and hopes to never repeat it again. Joyce acknowledges the past, specifically in how it emerges in the present. His writing suggests a combination of the past within the present. The past has occurred in such a way to create a more modern Ireland in the present. Beckett is not necessarily dismissive of the past, he just feels that wallowing in it will lead to stagnation. If Ireland wants to survive as an independent country, then it must embrace the present.

What does connect these authors, however, is their status as expatriates. At some point in their writing career, they lived abroad, most commonly in England or continental Europe. Even while living abroad, these authors continued to write and think about their homeland. This shows a desire to preserve and build an Ireland for them to return to both physically, which most of them did not, but also theoretically. Writing about, and creating an independent Ireland meant

creating a homeland accessible to all. We saw this most clearly with Joyce and *Ulysses,* as well as with Beckett in *Waiting for Godot.* Those texts were ways for the authors to return to their homelands. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Bowen, their work exemplifies their ideals of what Ireland should look like or do after independence. Doing so builds up this idealized Ireland, making their writing the most concrete version of their homeland that they have.

Whether an independent Ireland was born out of the past or of the present it is apparent that independence offered Ireland the opportunity to be able to move forward, and modernize, while celebrating its heritage and past. There is a balancing act to this. Hyperfocusing on the past results in stagnation in the present. Conversely, only focusing on the present and modern times would only be distruthful to the experiences of the country and its people. Despite an initial desire to be, an independent Ireland could not be an Ireland completely free from English influences. Bowen and Joyce exemplified this most throughout their works. Instead, Ireland is a country that continues to build its past, recognizing and rewriting in the name of identity, while continuing to acknowledge those responsible for writing it in the first place.

This paper on Irish literature during the first half of the 20th century began as an idea to research the Irish language from ancient to modern times. My honors committee somehow managed to convince me to narrow it down to more modern times. We struck a balance, with them allowing me to look at fifty years of literature, which they still thought was a bit much in terms of scope. I'm not exactly sure how I got from Irish language to literature. I assume the war of independence, which quickly became my focal point, made me curious about nationalism in Ireland. This, in turn, led me to look at how literature of the Irish literary renaissance responded to and amplified Irish nationalism.

In choosing which authors to read, and later, which of their works to read, I often felt like I was blindly throwing darts. Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett seemed like obvious choices. I wanted to include more diverse voices. In early 20th century Ireland, that pretty much meant white women. This is where *Inventing Ireland* by Declan Kiberd really came in handy. This source introduced me to Lady Gregory and Elizabeth Bowen. My list of authors was now complete, encompassing my chosen time period.

As for what works of these authors I read, that came down to a mix of more initial research, my prior knowledge about these authors, as well as my honors committee. During our first meeting together, Dr. Argondezzi put a copy of *Dubliners* in my hand. That was the first piece of literature I read for this project, and it was difficult returning it to her at the end of it. I chose to read *Ulysses* because I felt that, if I were going to talk about Joyce, I couldn't not read *Ulysses.* I read a lot of Yeats. Dr. Argondezzi also loaned me an anthology, which included some of Yeats' poems, which I spent a good chunk of time reading through. *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, as well as *The Last September* were decided on relatively late during my research. This included a lot of digging to see what would fit best in this project. I think I chose well. Deciding what to read for Beckett was relatively simple. I knew I wanted to read *Waiting for Godot.* When he heard that I had decided on Beckett as one of my authors, Dr. Shelat told me "you have to read 'First Love"". So I did.

Researching and writing this project was unlike anything I have ever done before. I was under the impression that the research aspect would just be reading on top of reading on top of reading. I was right, for the most part. However, on top of all of that reading, was writing. In addition to notes and ideas, I wrote an annotated bibliography, and multiple, multiple draft theses, arguments, chapter ideas, outlines, and more.

What really surprised me about the writing portion was how much my argument came together seemingly before my eyes. Before I even started writing, I felt like I didn't have enough "stuff" to write this project. Dr. McShane assured me that a big part of writing is thinking. I think this was most clearly exemplified in the structure of this paper. When I first set off to write this paper in January, I had planned to have three chapters, one about the subject, one about setting, and one about both language and mythology. I got about two chapters in before Dr. McShane and I realized that that format was not working, and decided to switch to the way it is now, with each chapter focusing on an author. I feel that this change made it a lot easier for me to understand each author's positioning on an independent Ireland, and then put them in conversation with each other, mapping the trends and changes in their writing throughout the decades. I felt like my arguments about each author came together much more succinctly, in a way that was easier to understand for myself and the reader.

In addition to the new experience of researching and writing a paper of this scope, I was also introduced to the Modernist writing movement. I've had brief encounters with it before, having read "Araby" my freshman year of college. I'm sure there were other instances, but not with a decided emphasis on the Modernist style of writing. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Elizabeth Bowen do fit into the Modernist tradition, but continue to take inspiration from previous writing movements and styles. Even *Dubliners* can be considered somewhat tame to *Ulysses* and Beckett's writing. I read "First Love" from a PDF I found online. It only took me until the third paragraph to question whether I had the right PDF or not. The vulgarity seen in Beckett's writing was something new to me entirely, and really put into perspective for me just how much changed throughout my chosen timespan.

When I first read these authors, Beckett especially, I was a bit disappointed by the fact that they were expatriates. I think this struck me most with Beckett because he seemed to fit so seamlessly into the Irish tradition, and is considered a pivotal Irish author, even though his writing could be taken as critical toward Ireland. His rejection of the Irish language, too, rubbed me the wrong way. However, I realized that this is a part of the Irish diasporic tradition. It's what I ultimately argue that these authors write to have some place to return to. They still continue to honor their homeland, even while away from it.

Just as the authors I've studied for this paper recognized the past, I feel that it is important to acknowledge what I consider to be the catalyst for this project. My grandmother emigrated from Ireland to the United States in the early 1950s. She has continued to keep Ireland alive in America, founding our local branch of the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann with her late husband. She continues to play the bodhrán at the Irish American Home Society, and has passed her Irish pride to my mother, and in turn, me. This project has brought me closer to my heritage. It has been an honor to create a project that goes this in depth about Ireland. I hope that this paper acts as a sort of imaginary homeland, akin to those these authors were trying to build. One with which the Irish diaspora is able to learn about and return to their homeland.

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