The purpose of this research is to examine how Irish literature acts democratically to represent individuals in relation to each other, the nation, and the British Empire. As Ireland's political system shifted from colony to commonwealth to independent republic, literature helped shape national identity and individual agency. By analyzing literary contributions in Ireland throughout its political transformation, this dissertation reveals the progress and limitations of political and literary attempts to write agency.

In its study of agency and concepts of representation, this analysis relies on theoretical concepts developed in postcolonial and cultural studies, specifically those developed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Jacque Rancière. Their explanations of representation and the *demos* are placed into conversation with texts that take part in developing identity and agency in Irish literature, including works of the Celtic Revival, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Each of these literary texts is examined to identity how they take part in creating – and limiting – democratic agency.

While great strides are made in furthering democratic agency by each of these literary texts, this research reveals that individual agency in relation to the nation is complicated. Even so, Flann O'Brien's novel provides an alternative concept of how democratic agency for individuals can happen in relation to each other and how politics can learn from the dissonance of democratic voices.

DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENTS: IRISH LITERATURE

BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND MODERNISM

by

Kara Baldwin

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

To my mom, whose Irish eyes are always smiling.

This dissertation written by Kara Baldwin has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a student at University College, Dublin in 1929, Brian O'Nolan[1] vigorously

participated in meetings of the Literature and History Society (L&H). In *No Laughing*

Matter, Anthony Cronin describes the L&H as the only society with real tradition at the

college and as the place where James Joyce first introduced Stephen Hero and his

doctrine of aesthetics (Cronin 46). O'Nolan's role in these meetings was one of a satirical

observer who would not take sides in political discussions, but preferred to interject from

his place standing in the doorway (45). As part of the mob looking in on the gathering of

the elite group, he would blurt out unsavory nicknames for political leaders or point out

the absurdity of politics and how little changes under the control of new regimes. After

gaining popularity for his witty interjections, O'Nolan decided to run for office of the

L&H against Vivion de Valera, son of Irish President Éamonn de Valera. Prior to

university, young de Valera and O'Nolan had attended Blackrock College together and

had been educated by John Charles McQuaid, a teacher who perpetuated a style of

writing meant "to interest, to amuse, to elevate" (34-7). Even though O'Nolan lost the

election to de Valera - and lost handily - he remained a constant critic and participant in

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[1] Brian O'Nolan is one of many identities used by the writer, along with Brother Barnabas, Myles na
gCopaleen, and Flann O'Brien. For the sake of clarity, I use O'Nolan in regards to biographical information
and the name used for each published work as he chose, respectively.

L&H debates. Losing did not deter him from attending meetings or from finding a way to insert his voice. He returned to his place in the doorway, yelling across the crowded room, interrupting proceedings, and interrogating speakers to everyone's amusement. From the margins is where O'Nolan felt most comfortable and from where he would continue to speak his mind throughout his career.

O'Nolan's generation at University College, Dublin was "the 1st generation to be educated and to become possible critics of the society they confronted in an independent Ireland" (Cronin 47). O'Nolan disrupted L&H meetings with questions and critiques about how language crafted politics and a new Irish national identity. He questioned concepts of traditionalism and grand narratives of a romantic, unified Ireland. He continued this practice outside of L&H and beyond the student magazines of university. Using various pseudonyms and identities, O'Nolan analyzed the emerging Irish nation through newspaper columns, novels, and other literary pursuits. He donned the persona of Brother Barnabas in editorials and short stories in the student magazine *Comhthrom Féinne* (57), Myles na gCopaleen for most of his articles in the Protestant-leaning newspaper, *The Irish Times* (111), and of course, Flann O'Brien as author of novels like *At Swim-Two-Birds, The Third Policeman,* and *The Poor Mouth* (89). Each of his personae provides him another viewpoint, another voice to add to the dominant voices that made up the burgeoning nation.

Brian O'Nolan is just one of many artists and public voices that talked about how Ireland could be represented (and, perhaps, misrepresented) through literary means. He follows a long line of Irish writers whose works engage and interrogate the political

rhetoric shaping the nation. Alongside many momentous political tracts written in the midst of Ireland's long struggles for independence came poignant pieces of literature that focus on a human struggle: the pursuit of individual agency and autonomy. For instance, orators like Robert Emmet confronted the British Empire's control over Irish land and people during the 1798 Irish Rebellion through his "Speech from the Dock" on the eve of his execution (Emmet). At the point of partial independence, when Michael Collins, Éamonn de Valera, and members of Sinn Féin composed pamphlets, manifestos, and ultimately the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution, authors of the Celtic Revival, including W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J.M. Synge joined the cause by creating an Irish identity to progress a unified image of Ireland's past, present, and future. In contrast, James Joyce confronted the limited world created through their rhetoric and pushed back against the political version of national identity taking shape. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (*A Portrait*), Joyce returns focus to the individual and the question of how a democratic nation might elevate an "other" to a person with agency. This novel places Stephen and his experiences at the center of the Irish experience, allowing Stephen's voice to develop within and in contrast to the dominant voices in Ireland at the time. Stephen learns to speak for himself and his agency reveals how a colonized other can become a voice from the *demos*.

Brian O'Nolan follows a long line of writers whose works correspond (intentionally and unintentionally) with the politics of the time. He identifies a prevailing national identity in the political texts shaping the independent Republic of Ireland, and he rejects this identity that does not enact a democratic perspective. A singular concept of

national identity took shape with the help of the literature and culture surrounding the independence movement. Just as political leaders grappled with a desperate need for changes in political representation, so too did authors struggle to find new forms of representation in literature that reflected Irish experiences. Ireland's politicians and authors alike argued over who should be included in Ireland's narrative and how to represent people who had been ignored or stereotyped by the British for so long. The problem that arose was that neither knew how to break from the standards and values that the British canon had set. The convergence of these issues with the experimentalism of modernism provides a point of entry into O'Nolan's texts, which indicate the absurdity of exchanging one repressive outlook for another. What sets O'Nolan apart is an approach to writing that opens space for shared representation and authorship by means of a rebellion against how literature and rhetoric work. Like his interjections into L&H debates, O'Nolan's texts expose the limitations of a national rhetoric by providing alternate styles of shared narration and an interruption of the many overpowering political and literary styles of his time.

Introduction to Democratic Literature

The overall focus for my dissertation is how a work of literature can provoke a democratic interaction within a text, as well as across the author/reader divide, and I analyze works of Irish authors during the transition from colonialism to independence as instances of literary attempts to produce democratic agency. Before delving into literary analysis, I want to first define my use of the terms democracy and democratic agency. "Democracy," as we often use it today, takes on various meanings that intertwine politics

with economics, class systems, and individual rights, but my use of the term here is more deliberate. For my investigation, I rely on a concept of democracy structured from the origins of the phrase as Jacque Rancière explains in *Dissensus*: "Democracy" is a term given, not to a political regime, but by its opponents to denote those who have no right to govern or to speak (Rancière, *Dissensus* 32). Rancière illuminates the origins of the term democracy from the root-word *demos*, a name given to the people that do not count and have no access to representation. As I explain in detail later, Plato's act of naming the *demos* gave the un-represented a point of acknowledgment. From there, "democracy" becomes a term that enables the masses with the ability to speak and be counted.

Where Rancière bases his definition on the origins of the word in Greek philosophy, Jürgen Habermas turns to a more contemporary view that is also significant to this discussion. In "1989 in the Shadow of 1945: On the Normality of a Future Berlin Republic," Habermas describes the two German nations after World War II: one that sought promise in the Communist party (east), and the other, which turned to western concepts of democracy to build a republic inherently linked to individual and human rights. He explains that a healthy, stable republic exists in West Germany after the horrors of World War II because the German people had the ability to learn from the atrocities of the war through a lens focused on human rights and democracy. Habermas defines human rights and democracy as "the simple expectation that no one will be excluded from the political community, and that the integrity of each individual, in his or her otherness, will be similarly respected" (Habermas 164). The Third Reich denied

acknowledgement of so many people as human beings, but in the democratic state of West Germany, the people's rights to self-representation were acknowledged.

Both Rancière and Habermas point to "democracy" as a word signifying the masses of people that had not counted within systems of political representation based on structures of power. Through democracy, people can act for themselves and in a socially affective way, which is the basis of "democratic agency." In a political system, such as a nation, democratic agency acknowledges the ability of each person to speak and act for him/herself, and for a speaker/listener relationship to exist among the people, which provides sovereignty for everyone. Politically, this could potentially occur through equal rights, equal laws, and the ability for everyone's vote to be equally counted.

Democratic agency within a literary context has great potential to inform the ways that individual voices can be acknowledged and given equal opportunity. Literature provides a microcosm in which systems of representation can be recognized, critiqued, and experimented with to reveal their advantages and limitations on democratic agency. This dissertation shows how democratic agency in literature changes, and often in reaction or response to limitations on democratic agency in the political. Where literature of the Celtic Revival generates a system of representing Ireland through a uniform view, other works of literature act as a counterpoint to this. What is gained through a study of Irish literature in the early twentieth century is a collection of narratives and perspectives that represent individual experiences of agency in relation to each other. The texts discussed here reveal how literature acts democratically by allowing multiple voices to speak through various forms of representation.

By interrogating traditional associations of collaboration and authority (authorship), a democratic text acts to re-shape how we can acknowledge the voices of the unaccounted. The value of re-shaping representation across spaces of literature and politics are obvious, yet extremely difficult to address. In postcolonial studies, "representation" is an important term because, as it recognizes the need for marginalized individuals to be able to represent themselves, it also points out the structural barriers that limit self-representation. In literature, barriers exist in form, authority over content, and access for both the author and reader. In politics, similar barriers arise when newly independent colonies attempt to create a national identity by defining who gets counted, represented, and protected by the political system. My argument in this dissertation is a postcolonial theoretical exercise, in that I build from concepts of aesthetic representation by postcolonial theorists and place them in conversation with current cultural theorists working on the role of aesthetics in politics. My goal is to add to the conversation by considering the impact of works of literature written amidst the formation of the Irish Republic that create alternative avenues for distributing acknowledgement, agency, and authority of the other.

Ireland provides a useful space to examine the relationship between aesthetic and political representation, as art and politics often intertwine in creating an identity that attempts to represent the unifying factor amongst people that make up a nation. Under British rule for centuries, Irish culture became inherently linked to characteristics that were distinct from the English in language, culture, and religion. The Irish language was in mass decline even before the Potato Famine (1840-1860) that devastated the Irish

population, because it was not used by the people in power. As is the case in many colonial states, the native language lost its position of primacy to the language of those who held political and economic control. This started within the education system, where English was the only language taught through the national school system. As Irish people sought work, they spoke the language of those hiring (English), and the Irish language began a terminal decline. Even so, Irish language and culture provided avenues for the Irish to differentiate themselves from the English. The foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 attempted to reinstate the use of the Irish language. Though its formation initially was intended to preserve the Irish language, it soon attracted Irish nationalists and became a rallying point for anti-British sentiment.

English culture and language were not the only influences on Irish culture during its time under British control. Seamus Deane explains in "Dumbness and Eloquence: A Note on English as We Write It in Ireland" that the language used in the colonial condition is one that absorbed surrounding authoritative structures; for Ireland, this includes "claims of Roman Catholicism, British political and cultural imperialism, Irish and local patriotisms." (Deane, "Dumbness" 118). It is important to note the influence of Roman Catholicism on Irish culture and life. For the second half of the nineteenth century, extreme changes in the practice of Catholicism shaped Irish culture. With the Penal Laws against the practice of Catholicism lifted, Roman bishops were sent to Ireland to diminish the use of pagan rituals and make Irish Catholicism more like Roman

Catholicism. By 1871, over 90% of people in the lower 26 counties[2] practiced Roman Catholicism, except in County Dublin, which was the political seat of the British Empire in Ireland (Moody, et al. xvii). The Roman Catholic Church sought to bring Irish Catholics into the fold, promoting a uniform practice of Catholicism that ignored some of the rituals and traditions that Irish Catholics held for centuries. The Church saw the use of Irish rituals, like the shamrock standing in for the Holy Trinity, as a departure from the values set by Rome. As another form of imperialism, the Roman Catholic church wanted to shape the Irish Catholic faith into a more Vatican-centric practice. Though the divide between Catholics and Protestants reveals another cause for the Irish Nationalist movement, the turn to Roman Catholicism placed more of the power for control of Ireland outside of its people and borders. The breadth of the Vatican's authority in shaping contemporary Irish culture is vast and its influence on the growing tensions between Irish-Catholics and Anglo-Protestants cannot go unstated.[3]

Irish culture was shaped in reaction to and under the mitigating forces that controlled Ireland at the time. With the help of the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, and traditions of Irish storytelling cycles, "Irishness" came to be a distinct concept of identity for people of Irish descent, both within and outside of Ireland's borders. Nationalists embraced components of Irish culture, especially language, religion, and storytelling, to distinguish Irish people from the British. They built these characteristics into a concept of an Irish identity that warranted its own nation. By the

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[2] The "lower 26 counties" refers to the region that became the Irish Free State and later the Irish Republic.
[3] However, the complexity of these tensions are well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

turn of the twentieth century, Irish nationalists were gaining support from people who related to the cultural program of Irishness, and cultural production played a significant role in developing an Irish politic.

The Abbey Theatre, Ireland's National Theatre, is an example of this: from its beginnings in 1904, the Abbey Theatre performed the task of depicting Ireland and the Irish as a unified nationality. Authors like Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats voiced the definition of Irishness, and were thus given the responsibility of choosing plays that represented a version of Ireland distinct from the English culture that had dominated Irish life of the last two centuries. However, as the history of the Abbey proves, creating a national identity via textual representations presents many challenges and concerns over who and what is included in such representations. Amidst the initial break from England, Ireland sought to create a nation and identity that recognized a distinct Irish culture: one that had the right to distinguish itself from the control of England; yet, the dominant cultural representations of Ireland by many authors of the Celtic Revival and the Irish nationalist movement continued to push individuals beyond the pale. This dissertation sets out to examine some of these challenges to representation within the literary and political documents of an emerging Irish Free State; specifically, I will analyze how Irish political and literary texts claim authority over representations of Ireland and Irishness, and the problems that arose from such claims.

In order to address the forces at work on building a national identity, I must intervene into discussions on Irish literature and postcolonialism, specifically those conversations about representation, acknowledgement, and agency of the other. The

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characterization of Ireland as postcolonial requires attention; for instance, in Clare Carroll and Patricia King's edited collection *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, arguments tend to address the big question: what does it mean for Ireland to be postcolonial? Carroll contends that the strength of postcolonial theory with respect to Ireland is that it is "critical of both a blithe narrative of modernization and an unreflective narrative of nationalist traditionalism" (Carroll 2). According to Carroll, the Irish experience is too often analyzed from the perspective of western European modernization, with more emphasis placed on the impact of post-famine industrialization and labor as the driving forces behind Ireland's economic and political isolation and subsequent rise of nationalism. However, through a postcolonial theoretical lens, the sufferings of modernization and the continued struggle between the "nation" and the "other" become consequences rather than causes of subalternity and anti-colonialism.

In his chapter "After History: Historicism and Irish Postcolonial Studies," David Lloyd criticizes a limited historical viewpoint of Ireland that reduces the subaltern to exceptions to the norm. He argues that calling the colonization of the subaltern in Ireland an extraordinary circumstance minimizes the breadth and depth of the colonial impact on Irish people and their attempts at an independent nation. He argues that the historical lens omits the cultural component in Ireland that played a significant role in building an identity for Irish subaltern under British rule. By focusing on the arts and culture produced, Lloyd offers a more comprehensive view of the Irish experience. Luke Gibbons builds on Lloyd's discussion and focuses on the lack of cultural theorists in Ireland that are necessary to interpret postcolonial art. Their chapters build on the broader

connection between art and politics, and they argue that Ireland's history is selectively absent of very important cultural movements against the British.

Finally, Seamus Deane takes on language and the use of English, as it is written in Ireland, to point out how language hinders the ability to speak and be heard. Deane discusses the political implication of language as spoken by the uncivilized or child (the subaltern) and mentions Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* as examples of watching the inarticulate become eloquent (i.e., civilized): "Stephen Dedalus and Christy Mahon both begin in profound inarticulacy and both end in astonishing eloquence" (Deane, "Dumbness" 118). Deane focuses on how language can colonize and restrict independent voices from taking part in their own sovereignty. He argues that the Irish subaltern have never learned the language of freedom because, no matter which language they use (Irish or English), there are other forces in control of how they try to represent themselves.

These critics work to describe Ireland from a postcolonial perspective. In doing so, they lay important groundwork in a discussion of the formation of an Irish national identity that acknowledges a condition of anti-colonialism, postcoloniality, and the languages and cultures within these conditions that shape the cultural response to establishments of authority. From here, a critical analysis of how authority was conceived in postcolonial Ireland needs to continue, taking into account concepts of representation in both literary and political realms.

To clarify the direction of my argument, I think it is important to engage with theoretical concepts of representation, especially those developed over time by Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak. In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Spivak examines the connections and distinctions between aesthetic and political representation. In aesthetics, representation involves a material production or simulation that re-presents a "real" thing, where the relationship between the real and the representation must also be considered. Thus, in literary representations of the subaltern, Spivak analyzes who is involved in the act of representing and how these representations end up standing in for all. Political representation involves similar concerns regarding the relationship between citizens and the politicians given the responsibility to speak for them. Spivak distinguishes between "portraying" (aesthetic representation) and "speaking for" (political representation) to point out that representation is, in essence, an act empowered by a speaker on behalf of an other. When the subaltern are omitted from representation, they have no speaker. When they try to speak for themselves, no one acknowledges their voices because no one is listening. Actual representation requires collaboration: a speech act that requires both a listener and a speaker.

In a recent issue of *PMLA* in which current critics comment on Spivak's *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Spivak also responds to criticisms on "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She clarifies that her discussion of representation as portrait or proxy was not fully formed, and that the real problem for subalterns is that "their resistance is not recognized as such. They are not constituted, even locally, as a class" (Spivak "Response" 520). In her response, Spivak maintains a focus on the collaboration between the speaker and listener as the location of agency. From this understanding, agency necessitates a collaborative action, one that seemed fragile in the context of

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postcolonial Ireland. For example, the audience reaction to J.M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* signifies a rift between how the Irish people saw themselves and how they are portrayed on stage. Synge's play portrays the Irish characters as simple people who are easily duped by the main character, Christy. The locals of the western county where the play is set speak in uneducated forms and seem ignorant to the larger world around them. The author chose a form of representation the audience vehemently opposed. Their response was to riot, rather than to develop a discourse on who was being represented and how they felt these representations were misconstrued. Audiences watched their lack of agency in their own representations play out in front of them and sought acknowledgement by forcing their voices to be heard.

This is not to say that aesthetic and political representations are the same thing, but their influences on each other *must* be recognized, particularly in the spaces of newly independent colonies. Self-representation is ultimately a democratic goal, and so many questions arise during the process of nation creation and fair political representation that are also addressed in acts of aesthetic representation. What is the "reality" that is being represented? Who gets to be included in the act of representation? How do we interpret or read the representation?

Spivak's concept of representation and arguments about how it has changed over the years provide an important foundation for my discussion of a required speaker/listener relationship. Her examination of how representations can be limiting in scope changes the way we should read documents like the Irish Free State Constitution (1922), in that it brings into question how this document provides agency to some, but

not all of the people it supposedly represents. In *Strange Country*, Seamus Deane claims that the national identity that Ireland sought to create during early independence was based on old Irish legends – literal exaggerations and mis-representations of history – and as such, this imagined identity denies the reality of the living, real people of Ireland. Deane believes the dominance of Irish legend in literary texts of the Celtic Revival led to an imagined community ignorant of other Irish identities that deserve acknowledgment. Deane's position has a foundation in Benedict Anderson's notions of the imagined community, and it is helpful for this analysis to consider essential components of Anderson's theory. In examining the power of both literary and political documents to create a national identity, I rely on Anderson's theory that print capitalism and the ability to share a "simultaneous" consciousness via texts in many ways creates national identity. By analyzing literary and political texts through the lenses of the theories mentioned, it becomes clear that the developing Irish nation at the point of initial break from England was limited in its representations of the masses.

Other critics take up the conversation of Ireland in a postcolonial condition as it is conceived through literature. Seamus Deane's *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* tracks the development of national identity in Irish literature. He points to both progress and limitations of Irish identity from colonial times through independence to what he calls "Free State writing." The synthesis of literary texts and postcolonial theory is helpful here, in that Deane recognizes how the Celtic Revival is but one historical age in which questions of representation have shaped Irish history. He continues to examine the historical significance of creating a national

identity through literature when he introduces Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and

Edward Said to the discussion with their Field Day[4] enterprise in Northern Ireland, and

the resulting text *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*. In the introduction, Deane

explains that the purpose of their conversation is to open up to new ideas of the

relationship between individuals and communities. Deane describes the Northern Ireland

situation and the need for legitimation of all of the perspectives involved, including Irish

Catholics who want to be a part of the Irish Republic, Irish Protestants who want to stay

loyal to the British Crown, and the Anglo-Irish who have made Northern Ireland home,

yet want to remain a part of Great Britain. These authors argue that communities that

work together towards a legitimate representation of each person's perspective can create

a democratic nation.

Spivak also addresses this need to legitimate multiple perspectives and explains

that her work with subaltern groups throughout her life has been "trying to insert them

into the intuitions of democracy" (520). Before a speaker and listener relationship

develops, before collaboration can occur, and before communities can work together to

create a democratic nation, we must contemplate the existence of the other. Intuitions are

considerations, perceptions, and recognitions of an other that also exists. These intuitions

lay the foundation of democracy because they acknowledge that there is a public of

others and that each part of that public plays a role in building each other's and a nation's

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[4] Field Day Theatre Company in Derry, Northern Ireland has produced plays, essays, and pamphlets since 1980 about the political crisis in Northern Ireland. It takes the perspective that the political strife in Northern Ireland is a consequence of colonization, and it sees art as way to understand and analyze the aftermath of colonization.

identities and agency. For a circumstance like Ireland's, in which many people were not

perceived as political stakeholders under colonial rule, the first step to building a

democratic nation required visibility in the intuitions of everyone across the divides of

Ireland, England, and the world.

Helpful in this point of discussion are the theories of Jacques Rancière and his

ideas about giving voice to the *demos*, as defined earlier. In *Dissensus* and *The Politics of*

Aesthetics, Rancière works from concepts of the political in Plato and Aristotle to

contend that aesthetics and politics are actions in which the invisible can become visible.

He argues that the concept of consensus as the ideal political state is all wrong, because

its essence lies in the nullification of surplus subjects, in reduction of people and their

relations in an effort to build a united identity (Rancière, *Dissensus* 42). Instead, society

should strive for "dissensus" or the ability to sense differences and consider

disconnections from each other as associations that allow for heteronomy *and* autonomy[5]

(my italics). Amidst dissensus, a subject can speak and act for itself while maintaining a

relation to society by acknowledging the rules that both subject and society create

together. In the colonial experience, where subjects remain under control by another

society, colonized subjects do not take part in enacting the rules that they are forced to

live by. They are not recognized as agents of cultural or political production and their

differences are neither acknowledged nor are they sensed as differences. They do not

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[5] Rancière argues that is through the aesthetic regime of art that autonomy and heteronomy can co-exist: autonomy via experience of the art and heteronomy because the work of art must be experienced by someone else (*Dissensus* 116-7).

consent to the political state by which they are ruled, yet they also do not gain any recognition from their dissent because their association to the political is unnoticed.

Rancière builds support for acknowledging colonial subjects by drawing from Plato's *Laws.* In Book Three, Plato describes the parts of society supposedly able to govern and the qualifications via predetermined superiority and inferiority of those with authority to govern: birth right (aristocracy), the strong over the weak (tyranny), those who know over those who do not (oligarchy), and so on. But Plato also mentions the "drawing of lots" (as he calls democracy), which Plato describes as the complete absence of entitlement to govern (Rancière, *Dissensus* 31). To Plato, democracy describes the uneducated masses that cannot think and act for themselves, but instead must be ruled for their own good. He believes that a body-politic turned over to the whim of the masses will lead to complete chaos, which in turn leads to a situation that can be manipulated by a tyrant out for his own gain. Rancière expands Plato's definition by analyzing democracy and its origins in the root *demos*: "Before being the name of a community, the *demos* is the name of a part of the community: the poor. But the 'poor', precisely, does not designate an economically disadvantaged part of the population, but simply the people who do not count" (*Dissensus* 32). However, in Plato's act of acknowledging the *demos* as part of society, he essentially concedes the existence of a class that he claims does not count. By recognizing the *demos* via a written act, Plato enacts a representation of the unaccounted, which causes dissensus. The *demos* are anyone who do not fit into any one of the categories of people with claims to authority. His representation of the

demos means he has acknowledged them, and through a democracy they have the authority to take part in the political.

Rancière turns Plato's description of governed society against itself. He argues that by the very act of speaking the name of the *demos*, he enacts a moment of sensed difference that cannot be undone. Rancière claims that "to be of the *demos* is to be outside of the count, to have no speech to be heard," but Plato long-ago added the *demos* to the count; or as Spivak insists, he inserted them into the intuitions of the political. This concept lays the foundation of Rancière's discussion of aesthetic representation as a way to sense difference and count the unaccounted within the political. He points to Plato's written text as an action that re-distributes the sensible: Plato's text enacts recognition, description, and therefore, acknowledgement of the other.

From here, I argue that literary texts, especially, can enact democratic agency, via experimenting with authorship, structure, and collaboration, by re-distributing what we sense as part of the world. As such, these literary texts provide a model for creating a democratic nation through dissensus, where all parts are acknowledged and given agency. Each chapter of this dissertation examines a turn in Irish history where both politics and literature attempt to define Ireland's identity and acknowledge the *demos* as part of the new state. I work towards a comprehensive understanding of the historical, literary, and political influences in the case of Ireland's late-colonial and early-postcolonial circumstances. The overall structure of the dissertation (described in more detail below) builds from here into a chapter that sets the scene of Ireland leading up to its first Constitution. From approximately 1916 to 1922, the creation of a nation meant denying

British influence on Irish identity and highlighting the mythological legends of a specifically Celtic past. The literature and politics during this time painted a clear image of what Ireland was and "should be." Chapter three extends the discussion by focusing on James Joyce's influential work *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and how he employs techniques of the modernist art movement to question the traditional concepts of representation in literature. Joyce plays with the bildungsroman form to reveal the limitations of agency in the colonial condition, and his use of narrative voice allows for a voice from the subaltern to speak and be heard. Chapter four turns to a critical analysis of Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* (*At Swim*) and how it converses with the 1937 Irish Constitution, the Bunreacht na hÉireann[6], on how to acknowledge and provide democratic agency to the *demos*. The form and function of *At Swim-Two-Birds* accomplishes a democratic act of representation that moves beyond literary boundaries. Each chapter also goes into deeper analysis and critical use of Jacques Rancière's theories on politics and aesthetics, and how his arguments in *Dissensus* and *The Politics of Aesthetics* about the political state may directly correspond to the work of postcolonial theorists and the literary texts I have chosen for analysis and discussion here.

The literary texts analyzed throughout this study all build towards a re-ordering of power among authors, characters, and readers who are forced into new kinds of relationships with each other. As a result, each part begins to recognize the symbiotic roles they all play in a democratic, aesthetic community. A prime example of how literary

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[6]Ireland's 2nd Constitution intended to sever all ties to the former colonial power and to create an independent Irish nation rather than the previous circumstance of British commonwealth state.

form can function in such a way is Flann O'Brien's novel, *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Published in 1939 and written at the same time as the Bunreacht na hÉireann, *At Swim* usurps conventions of representation and agency in traditional novels, especially in the relationships between authors, characters, and audience. It is a compilation of stories told by various characters, collected in a novel by a main character, whose story acts as a frame in O'Brien's novel; and yet, boundaries do not exist between these components. Characters in one take control of authorship in another and share their stories with other characters, some of whom do not belong to the same literary and cultural history. One character is even given the task of a bloody revolution in being asked to write the death of the author who created him!

The collaboration of authorship in *At Swim* is a metafictional technique that poses essential questions about authorship and authority, acknowledged voices and agency, and re-writing or re-presenting various perspectives. The characters in the novel represent national and global identities in relation to each other and function as singular voices with the revolutionary contention that they all be acknowledged. O'Brien's novel criticizes the problems of the new "democratic" regime of the Republic of Ireland by pointing out the absurd boundaries of the new republic. At the same time, the form of the novel allows for alternative methods of engagement that may model what we need for a more literal (i.e., political) representation. What this novel proves, is that literature is indeed capable of revolutionizing relationships between the author and reader (speaker/listener) in such a way that it affects how we see ourselves and how we understand our relations to each other.

These chapters will work together to support the following thesis: in the midst of Irish independence and postcolonial politics, works of literature fought alongside political rhetoric to acknowledge the agency of the *demos*. Influenced by prior literary texts, Flann O'Brien composed *At Swim* to act democratically within and across the boundaries of the novel in order to re-imagine the agency of the individual (character/author/reader) in self-representation and to acknowledge the voice of the *demos* in the creation of a democratic system of representation. Finally, O'Brien's novel provides readers a better understanding of the national and global identity problems facing emerging postcolonial voices as they attempt to accomplish sound, democratic representations of the multitudes of voices of the nation.

Chapter Two: Literary and Political Representations and an Emerging Postcolonial Identity

Chapter two provides the historical context of Ireland during its complicated separation from England and examines how literature plays a large role in creating an Irish national identity. This chapter lays the groundwork for an analysis of the legal and political situation leading up to and including the writing of the Irish Free State Constitution of 1922 and the role of literature in creating a national identity. It focuses on the rhetoric of representation in politics and literature and how significant rhetorical choices are in identifying, defining, and - to some degree - limiting the voices represented as part of the national imaginary. Today, as we continue to see postcolonial nations struggle to find political systems that are inclusive and fair in their representations of people, we must look at recent examples of the process of becoming democratic.

Ireland's recent history reveals complications that are not unique to their struggle for independence. Between 1916 and 1922, rebellions against British control in Ireland were fought on both aesthetic and political fronts, and to varying degrees of success. I analyze a selection of literary works in context with political texts and in relation to theories of representation and nation-building to consider how authors (of both literature and political documents) responded to and reacted against concepts of Irish nationhood. In the midst of political upheaval, vocal members of the Celtic Revival and the Irish nationalist movement claimed authority over representations of Ireland and Irishness. While they are somewhat successful in elevating the subaltern to a *demos* that is acknowledged, these authors also placed new limitations on the agency of the individual by created a narrow concept of nation identity that was not based on the reality of the public. As a result, the national identity narrative developed during this time period leads to an Irish Free State Constitution that is limited in its agency and narrow in its scope of defining who counts in this delicate, new democracy.

Throughout this chapter, I rely on literary examples from the time to illustrate the complex nature of trying to create a voice that both represents the colonized culture but that speaks and can be heard to the overlying cultural constructs of the empire. Many of the poems included speak from the *demos* but like the empire, in that they use traditionally English poetic forms of the English literary canon, but they counter it with voices from below. Authors of the Celtic Revival merge traditionally English poetic forms with stories of Irish myths and legends to legitimize the case of a long-standing Irish culture distinct from England. However, the new Irish national identity formed

reveals a vision that is indicative of the myths and legends from ancient Irish history, and it is not reflective of basic principles of democracy that would include stories of modern experiences of the masses. These complexities arise in both the literary and political attempts to reconfigure agency of the *demos* amidst questions of authority.

To understand these complexities fully, I introduce theories from Spivak and Rancière regarding the status of the subaltern and the *demos*, as well as theories by Benedict Anderson and Seamus Deane about how the development of a nation adheres to concepts of the imagined. The discussion turns to how the literary texts – viewed through lenses provided by the theories mentioned – help shape the nature of the political state. As constituents of a free Irish nation develop their concepts of the nation via political texts, they rely on imagined concepts of Irishness to define the people that deserve rights under a free Irish state. This chapter examines the language and structure of literary and political texts in how they seek to create and protect a specific Irish nation and citizenry. This lays the foundation for an examination of who is represented, who is left out, and how different voices can respond to the move towards democratic agency.

Chapter Three: Nation and Self: Locating the Singular Voice in the Battle for Democratic Agency

Chapter three builds from the literary context provided in chapter two and focuses on an Irish text that brings up questions regarding voice and narration: James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce's modernist novel is important to this discussion for two main reasons. First, Joyce experiments with narrative styles of dialogue, interior monologue, and third-person narration to include elements like

fragmentation and spatial dissonance, which broadens the scope of how literary styles can reflect unique perspectives in relation to self and others. As Brian Richardson explains in *Narrative Theory:* "This kind of multiperson narration forces together opposed narrative perspectives that mimetic authors rigorously keep separate" (52). For Joyce, giving a distinct tone to different narrative styles allows the reader to rethink the meaning of identity: what shapes it, what protects it, and how it relates to the political structures surrounding it (family, nation, the world, the universe). The purpose of interrogating Joyce's narrative techniques for this discussion is to pinpoint how this text works within the form of the novel to consider varying attempts at representation, but also breaks from the traditions of the novel, and thus opens the door to further experimentations.

Much of the literary debate about Joyce's understanding of identity in *A Portrait* revolves around the idea of the novel as a bildungsroman. Andrew Gibson argues that what Joyce was saying about his own (Stephen's) formation or bildung in *A Portrait* is what was also happening in the formation of independent Ireland. Gibson sees Joyce's work as an argument to look internally (inside self or own nation) to try to understand this new being. In *Unseasonable Youth*, Jed Esty builds on Gibson's stance that Stephen's bildung is a stand-in for Ireland's, yet Esty believes that both are halted by modernist and colonial forces. On the other hand, Gregory Castle argues *A Portrait* is the perfect example of a modern bildungsroman because it alters the narrative to consider new experiences of human development that are marginal or heterodox (365). By focusing on *A Portrait* as a bildungsroman, these authors recognize the significance of Joyce's novel in the discussion of Ireland's independence, and they appreciate the

modernist approach of questioning literary traditions, yet there is still room to consider exactly how Joyce's novel makes space for alternative forms of representation.

My second main premise tries to address how *A Portrait* reconfigures what representation means and looks like for the subjects of the novel. Joyce is clearly influenced by techniques of authors before him, like Flaubert. In *Madame Bovary,* Flaubert elevates the regular, everyday person of the *demos.* As a modernist author, Joyce escalates the democratic ability of the novel to represent the *demos* by moving away from representing a type of individual within a political system to pointing out the problems with such an overall representation. Here I must introduce the literary analyses of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* in order to show how modern texts, like *A Portrait,* approach representation and subjectivity in a much more democratic way than their predecessors. Auerbach's goal is to present examples of representation in western literature from *The Odyssey* up to his contemporary writers in the modernist era and analyze how changes in style and form make space for alternative forms of representation that are equally as interesting and valid. What this does for my discussion is point out how Joyce fulfills the progress and limitations of representation in modernism and paves the way for Flann O'Brien's text to attempt true democratic representation. Joyce's *A Portrait* clearly impacts O'Brien's approach to shared narration and to acts of representation.

Chapter Four: "All things stand apart from each other:" Building a Democratic Nation of Authoritative Selves

As the struggles surrounding Irish independence reveal, gaining independence and figuring out how to become a democratic nation is no easy feat. The Irish Free State

Constitution of 1922, which designated Ireland as a commonwealth with its own parliament that was still subject to the British crown, left the nation of Ireland divided on many fronts. In an attempt to completely separate Ireland from British control, the Oireachtas[7] composed a second Constitution titled the Bunreacht na hÉireann geared towards dissolving almost all marks of a relationship to England. This 1937 Constitution sets out to define the complete independence of southern Ireland from England, to leave room for the potential annexation of Northern Ireland, and to define who gets to be counted as an Irish citizen. To do so democratically, the Oireachtas called for a referendum of the people on accepting the Bunreacht na hÉireann as the constitution of the land. The results reveal how very complicated democracy can be.

The Bunreacht na hÉireann is but one text that impacted the creation of an Irish nation. As Benedict Anderson points out in *Imagined Communities*, print capitalism in the form of newspapers and literature influenced the creation of national identity and national politics immensely. The second component of chapter four builds from a rhetorical analysis of the Bunreacht na hÉireann to the critical analysis of the literary culture and texts at the time. Four major newspapers reported on the political and cultural events in Ireland, and they each had specific audiences and opinions that they were trying to capture. One of these, *The Irish Times*, became an avenue for Brian O'Nolan to interrogate and satirize the attempts at creating a unified national identity. O'Nolan reacted to political and literary culture he saw as exclusive, elitist, and parochial. At this

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[7] Irish Parliament

point, we also start to see the influence of modernism and the works of James Joyce in shaping O'Nolan's concepts of aesthetic representation and perhaps the use of literature to point out the limitations of traditional literary forms of it. This chapter describes the political independence of Ireland as the country begins to emerge from the grips of England and sets out to solidify the intended national boundaries and a national identity.

Rancière's texts turn to the aesthetic as a viable space in which a reconsideration of relationships can occur. Fiction, as Rancière describes, "is a way of changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation; of varying frames, scales and rhythms; and of building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective" (*Dissensus* 141). Fiction acts politically when it brings to the forefront the different modes and operations of representation. By re-framing or adding perspectives, parts of the community previously left unrecognized become noticed: "The practice of fiction undoes, and then rearticulates, connections between signs and images, images and times, and signs and spaces, framing a given sense of reality, a given 'common sense'. It is a practice that invents new trajectories between what can be seen, what can be said, and what can be done" (149). Rancière's change of approach allows us to consider fiction as democratic political action.

Finally, I turn to Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* as an important site in which the aesthetic regime takes on political significance. *At Swim* erodes traditional approaches to authority in making meaning within a text by sharing narration and writing between characters on various planes of composition. Each story within the novel represents a different plane of existence, yet characters work together to intertwine their

stories and create new worlds for themselves. Metafiction provides an interesting

backdrop for a reimagining of representation because it starts from an understanding that

knowledge of the text influences representations within and across textual boundaries. As

such, a network of ideas exists that intertwines (rather than delineates) representations of

a self by authors, narrators, and readers. Through both form and function, *At Swim*

provokes a democratic reading in reaction to, and in interrogation of, the political

changes occurring in postcolonial Ireland in the late 1930s. *At Swim* has multiple authors

collaborating in this novel. Rather than distinguishing between these categories, O'Brien

sought to muddle the differences between them in an effort to point out the true nature of

human experience in the political climate of the twentieth century: that of a collaboration

of voices.

　　　Twenty years ago, arguments ensued about whether to classify O'Brien's novel as

modern, postmodern, or postcolonial. In the midst of the post-post debate waged in

literary studies at the time, *At Swim* offered an intersection of modernist and

postmodernist narrative techniques and postcolonial subject matter. Critics took sides; for

instance, M. Keith Booker argued with Jed Esty and Joseph Devlin that O'Brien's refusal

to take an outright political stance about independent Ireland makes it a weak

postcolonial novel. Joshua Esty, on the other hand, argued that *At Swim* takes on the

binaries of postcolonial culture and captures the in-between predicament of the

postcolonial subject's condition. Both sides of the argument make valid points, yet very

little progress resulted on this topic since the debate between the two schools simmered

down. It is worthwhile to return to these critics' discussions because they scratch just the

surface of what it means for a novel to respond to anti-colonial, nation-creation through a literary style that recognizes and acknowledges various layers of postcolonial and postmodern influence.

O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* takes part in reconfiguring the master-author into a shared, democratic authorship. Whether written in response to the issues arising out of political change or not, the work emulates a shift in agency of the meaning-making experience. We see this in the text in not only the various components of authorship taking place, but also through the local, national, and global identities represented and intermingling with each other throughout the novel. Characters function as various voices from different times and places and their actions affect each other. How the different authors, narrators, and readers acknowledge these characters also affects their world and those collaborating to build it. Brian Richardson explains how the technique of appropriation via interpretation opens up possibilities for more voices: "Antimimetic narratives, by contesting conventional or official accounts, invite us to imagine alternative narratives of the world we inhabit," which "help to expose the unreality of conventional ideas of order" (*Narrative Theory* 178). As a metafictional text, *At Swim* accounts for the voices of subjects, of objects, and of representations of both. How this novel is written *and* what it says is a democratic act in response to the lack of voice in political representation in Ireland at the time. The novel does not stand in for political representation, but through its aesthetics, it forces us to see the problems and absurdities of the shape of democracy in a postcolonial nation.

Conclusion

The middle of the twentieth century saw important moments of interrogation of political and democratic systems and the decisions about who can be involved in their creations. As England's powers in Ireland waned, the country took advantage of creating its own government based on democratic concepts of representation. These political changes coincided with a shift in authorship and narration within fiction and literature produced in Ireland at the time. The nature of the relationship between art and politics is one in constant production. Art and politics interact through action, reaction, and interrogation, which ultimately lead to an evaluation of the act and process of representation. Art concerns itself with the act of representation by creating meaning through the depiction of subjects and objects, and with the process of representation by considering how meaning and subjectivity are made. Politics deals with many of these same issues. Political systems involve defining the subjects they are meant to serve and the form of representation by which to serve them. Through these shared concerns, art and politics are connected, but their relationship becomes essential when art creates possibilities of democratic representations from which we can create a better politics.

Self-representation and democratic agency are defined across economic, cultural, and moral landscapes within the nation, as well as beyond and across national boundaries. After the modernist art movement championed the originality of the individual, authors could situate the individual into a social context, considering how s/he can be original and autonomous while at the same time an integral part of a collaborative planetary network. My goal for this dissertation is political in my effort to engage with

the changing concepts of community (the polis), democratic representation for the individual in respect to community, and how literature cultivates alternatives of representation and relation that we must consider. A nation has boundaries, a novel is bound, and yet democracy is not straightforward within either one of these imaginaries.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND AN EMERGING
POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY

"The Unwritten Epitaph"

Far more than death or any pain of dying
      He feared degenerate days,
When men upon the grave where he is lying,
      Should come in throngs to gaze,
Heedless of Erin, in her fetters sighing,
      And idly read his praise.

And reading, say: "Such love and valour blended
      Availed for Ireland naught.
Then how can we by victory be attended
      Where he in vain hath wrought?
Nay, with this noblest victim strife hath ended,
      Be peace hereafter sought."

But, no! whilst Ireland enslaved and fettered
      In shameful bondage lies,
The voice that bade us leave that stone unlettered
      Throughout the ages cries
Till England's strongholds in the land are shattered,
      Demanding sacrifice.

This his appeal, whose heart was Ireland's solely!
      Hear him! he died for you.
Hear him! he fell in Freedom's battles holy,
      When Freedom's friends were few.
His voice, Oh, Irishmen! ye high or lowly,
      Is calling unto you.

To work in bonds of brotherhood uniting,
      Till victory's certain year;
To wait the Sunburst o'er the ocean smiting,
      And, oh! the dawn is near!

And in the dawn by freemen's hands a writing
     To have engraven here.
          (Anonymous, *Nationality*, 1916)

With the passing of the Home Rule Bill in 1913 in English Parliament, many Irish freedom fighters thought an independent Irish nation[8] was on the verge of conception. World War I delayed the implementation of Home Rule and complicated its cost to the Irish cause because of the conscription laws attached to the bill. By spring of 1916, Irish Republicans formulated a plan to take Home Rule by force in what is now known as the Easter Rising. Weeks before Easter Rising, with the publication of "The Unwritten Epitaph," a voice of the *demos* spoke up about sovereign rights. In the March 4th, 1916 edition of *Nationality*[9], an anonymously-penned poem sought to give a voice to the unaccounted voices of the past. "The Unwritten Epitaph" was written about Robert Emmet, an Irish Nationalist captured and beheaded by the British in 1803. Emmet gave a speech on the night before his execution where he declared:

> Let no man write my epitaph: for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them. Let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times, and other men, can do justice to my character; when my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done. (Emmet n.p.)

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[8] The Home Rule Bill passed with respect to the 26 lowers counties that now make up the Republic of Ireland.
[9] Weekly Irish Nationalist paper edited by Arthur Griffith; this edition was published just five weeks before the Easter Rising.

Emmet calls for his grave to be unmarked because he does not trust that a fitting proxy exists that can speak for what his death means. He understands that his voice, and the voice of all subalterns under British rule, remains unacknowledged. His final request is that his epitaph remain unwritten until a voice that can truly represent him and the voices of subaltern Ireland gain agency.

This chapter lays the foundation for understanding how literary and political representations in Ireland gain authority between the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Irish Free State Constitution of 1922. Composers of political texts and authors of literary works during this time engage in the formation of a nation and identity distinct from the control of the colonizer. Rhetoric takes precedence in walking the fine line between rebellion against a country that still holds some power and acceptable representation of a group of people that waited a long time to be free. During this time in Ireland, the Irish subaltern slowly emerge as the acknowledged *demos*. Ideas of the *demos* take shape in the poetry of the people, as we see in "The Unwritten Epitaph" and the high production of literary texts in the Celtic Revival. And ideas also take shape in the political documents forged to represent the people and move the land towards a democratic ideal. The paramount charge of the authors – in literature and politics – is to enact fair and democratic representation of the *demos*. Much of the progress made during this time relies on the creation of a national identity, an Irishness that withstands outside influence and rests in ancient heroism and legend. The Celtic Revival defined Ireland against a backdrop of long-standing subjection and provided a center around which authors and politicians could find unity. The texts discussed in this chapter seek to take charge in the

fight against colonial suppression. Each work takes part in signifying what a free Ireland means and looks like. They attempt to enact a new Irish identity, and in doing so, to enact democratic representation of the Irish people.

With the publication of the poem "The Unwritten Epitaph," a voice speaks up for Emmet and his cause. The speaker alludes to Emmet throughout the poem, yet leaves him unnamed. This, in conjunction with the poet speaking from an anonymous position, emphasizes the voices represented here as the voices of the anonymous. There is no moment of acknowledging a particular name, because the voices are of all those that have gone unnamed and unnoticed for so long. Emmet's speech before execution essentially acts as his epitaph by voicing protest to his subjection and ultimate death. But his words in a speech (or on his grave) point to the complexity of the situation of the unacknowledged: he can represent himself aesthetically but holds no political agency to make his voice heard.

The anonymous author of "The Unwritten Epitaph" takes up Emmet's claim, adding his voice to the aesthetic representations of the next generation of Irish freedom fighters. In the first stanza, the speaker of the poem voices Emmet's fears that the fight for freedom by the Irish people has been extinguished. He describes their lack of care degenerating over time to a point where they are not enlivened by Ireland's past, and certainly not its future. The speaker worries that the centuries spent "fettered" by British chains has left the masses ambivalent to the restraints holding them down. The second stanza reinforces the dire situation, as the speaker worries that any form of epitaph will only reinforce the power of the British to suppress rebellion through scaring them into

inaction. It argues that the people of Ireland are unsure that they can accomplish anything different than Emmet or any of the lost voices of the past. The speaker hears the fears of his contemporaries, who believe Emmet's unacknowledged death is "Availed for Ireland naught" (Anonymous, line 8). A century later, they still feel as if they have no agency.

But then, a call to arms rings outs when the speaker revolts and there is a turning point in stanza three. The speaker makes a call to action to awaken the people. He frantically tries to enrage the reader against British authority by emphasizing the imprisonment of the whole country. The first line of this stanza beats the reader into subjection with images of "enslaved," "fettered," "bondage" (Anonymous, lines 13-15). But the speaker revolts, arguing that the voice of the unnamed dead continues to scream out against the English and will do so until the voices of the *demos* are heard and accounted for (lines 15-18). He pleads with his countrymen, repeating "Hear him!" "Hear him!" so that others will notice and pay attention (lines 20-1). The voice appeals to present-day Irish people, pleading for them to break free. The speaker and poet join the voice to take a stand. They argue that for too long, Irish freedom has been ignored, but together their voices can be heard. By the last stanza of "The Unwritten Epitaph," the poem reclaims the bondage of the Irish, not as manacles to keep them enslaved but as bonds to each other that make them stronger. He addresses his audience definitively acknowledging that his listeners are not just members of the elite, not just politicians: "His voice, Oh, Irishmen! ye high or lowly, / Is calling unto you" (lines 23-4). These final lines of the poem address all people of Ireland; the voices (Emmet, speaker, and poet)

attempt to speak to the Other as *part* of them, and wants to unite them in their common cause for freedom and political representation.

"The Unwritten Epitaph" was published in a weekly newspaper edited by Arthur Griffith, an Irish writer and founder of the Sinn Féin political party. The poem is clearly speaking to and for an insurgent voice against British imperial control. What is interesting is the choice to write the poem in such a traditional structure. The poet uses alternately rhymed lines, in alternating iambic pentameter and tetrameter. This accomplishes many effects for the poem. First, it elevates the poem into a form recognized by the culture in control; using rhyme schemes and meters that are part of the English literary canon proves that the anonymous poet can manipulate imperial culture for rebellious purposes. Secondly, for an Irish audience that has deep pride in a reputation for oral storytelling, a poem with this pattern and rhyme scheme shares a connection to oral tradition[10]. It is catchy and easy to remember, so it can spread by word of mouth throughout the *demos*.

But, and I argue most importantly, the poem also acts to effect change. The last two lines read: "And in the dawn by freemen's hands a writing / to have engraven here" (lines 29-30). The epitaph, written by a free Irishman, takes place in the present perfect. By writing the action of engraving as "to have engraven," the poet allows the action of writing the epitaph – which comes after independence – to be at any given time. The

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[10] For more information about oral traditions in Ireland, see *Hereditas*, Eds. Bo Almqvist, Breandán Mac Aodha, and Gearóid Mac Eion (1975); *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, Eds. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (2005); and *The Irish Storyteller*, Georges Zimmerman (2001).

poem is the writing of the epitaph, the time is now, and it will always be so. The poem

enacts a declaration of revolution by fulfilling Emmet's call for a suitable epitaph and

writing in stone that the author is a free man. Acts of coercion are at play in the

publication of this poem, as it speaks for the *demos* and legitimates its voice in a form

that the political values and acknowledges. It unites the Irish subaltern through a literary

message for the imminent physical battles that lie ahead.

Concepts of the Political in Ireland's Situation

Ireland's history as a colonized land dates back centuries, where political tensions

arose over land and religion. Never having been invaded by the Romans, Ireland was a

pastoral society with four family branches dividing the island into four areas of power

(Moody, et al. xvii). The Irish lords over these areas originally hired Anglo-Normans as

mercenaries to protect their land from various invaders, but quickly the Anglo-Normans

saw a weakness and wanted land for themselves. A clash of culture and politics between

the native Irish and the Anglo-Normans also occurred, as the Irish pastoral culture varied

drastically from the feudal systems the Anglo-Normans knew (Lydon). Battles over land

waged across Ireland, and the Anglo-Normans held the advantage.

By the 1600s, England saw Ireland as a strategic weak spot, where Catholic

empires like France and Spain could gain an advantage to invade England. The link

between religion and national consciousness is very close in Ireland: "The Irish only

came to be identified with Catholicism when they failed, or perhaps refused, to follow the

English into the Reformation, and massive colonization of part of their country by

Protestant settlers who took away their best land was not likely to convert them"

(Hobsbawn 69). Tensions grew between the Irish Catholics and the English Protestants because of policies like Elizabeth I's Plantation policy, which confiscated land from Irish-Catholic ownership if there were any signs of dissent or rebellion against the crown. Confiscated land was given to an Anglo-Irish class that was loyal to the crown (and Protestant); consequently, Ireland was marked by an "Anglo-Irish Ascendancy" in politics, literature, the arts, and architecture (Lydon).

By the eighteenth century, penal laws prohibited the building of Catholic churches, criminalized the priesthood, and forbade access to education, land ownership, or government positions for Irish-Catholics. The seeds of conflict were planted between the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland because of these laws, and tensions based on religion continue to pervade the shape of Irish politics. However, in the midst of the American and French revolutions, democratic ideals entered British culture, changing their response to the Irish rebellion[11]. Instead of giving Irish Catholics an Irish Parliament, the British government saw a way to acknowledge the Irish Catholic population as part of Britain's people, while still maintaining power by incorporating them into Britain's population. The Irish gained rights, and moved out of subalternity into a *demos*; however, their numbers did not threaten the majority of the English Protestant population. By the early nineteenth century, Ireland had been subsumed into the United Kingdom. Defined by their religion, culture, and anti-British politics, Irish people were not emancipated but subjugated to continued oppression. Thus, continued attempts at

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[11] For more on the influence of the Revolutionary period on Ireland, see Alvin Jackson's *Ireland: 1798-1998* (1999).

rebellion pervaded the Irish condition and experience throughout the nineteenth century, and an Irish nationalism grew in opposition to England.

The role that religious tensions played in the development of Irish nationalism and imperial resistance cannot go unstated (though an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation). Put simply, the Penal Laws decimated opportunity for Irish-Catholics to not only speak for themselves, but to provide a home and standard of living for themselves, as well. Irish-Catholics made up the Irish subaltern, where their economic power was negligent and their desires ignored. The Irish subaltern situation is far too complex to simplify into religious tensions, because the impact of laws against Catholics pervaded so many structures of society that they no longer had access to. While the English may have based these laws on strategic defense efforts against other Catholic nations, their implications overwhelmed an entire population who lost all forms of acknowledgment by the British government. This substandard of living continued to impact the economic growth-potential of Irish-Catholics for centuries, and the building Irish national movement saw this as one of their main reasons to rebel.

Perspectives from political theorists about the economic development of Ireland are integral in a conversation about agency and representation. Many of the political examinations of the developing Irish nation focus on the economics that shaped the tensions between Ireland and England at the time. Former Taoiseach[12] Garret FitzGerald describes the political birth of Ireland as a free state in *Reflections on the Irish State*.

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[12] Prime Minister

FitzGerald focuses mostly on the economic controls that produced a scenario for Ireland to seek independence in the early twentieth century. While he mentions cultural differences as significant, he does not delve into what these cultural differences were (are), how they were depicted, and how they were used to help create a national identity. Similarly, in *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy*, Tom Garvin describes the state of the world into which Ireland was entering as an independent nation as having very few models of democracy at the time: "Of forty-eight independent states in the world during the first decade of this century, only eight, or 17 per cent, were substantially democratized" (Garvin 9). Much of the conversation about Ireland's political independence focuses on the political and economic aspects of independence, with very little connection made to the creation of the nation via literary and cultural compositions.

David Gwynn Morgan begins to bridge this gap between political and cultural debates over Ireland when he directs our attention to the fight for control in *Constitutional Law of Ireland: The Law of the Executive, Legislature, and Judicature*. In regards to the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution, Morgan asks: did the British have to allow it to happen? And if not, who gives the Constitution its authority? (Morgan 25). Also, did the Treaty with England provide space for Ireland to create its own constitution, making the Constitution an Irish (not British) act? (Morgan 27). Morgan addresses questions about political representation and where it gains its authority. He connects political theories about types of governments, whether they are constitutional monarchies or democracies, to the historical situation of Ireland at the time. Morgan interprets the formation of Ireland's government with respect to where and how it gains authority to

represent a nation. His text is foundational in any discussion about representation in postcolonial Ireland and how it was conceived amidst contentious voices in the fight for independence. Morgan's argument should be broadened to understand the entire context of the struggle, especially considering how essential literature has been in creating a national identity for an Irish nation.

To clarify some of my language choices throughout this dissertation, I want to point out Spivak's definition of "subaltern" and its relationship to Rancière's "*demos*." In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak references Antonio Gramsci's use of the term "subaltern" as a basis for her argument against Foucault's and Deleuze's discussion on power. She points out that originally, Gramsci used the term to signify the proletarian, or working class whose voice could not be heard ("Can Subaltern Speak" 283). Spivak propels the discussion of the subaltern further by differentiating between the oppressed, as Gramsci defines, and the subaltern, stating in a 1992 interview with Leon de Kock: "everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern" (De Kock 45-6). Spivak's criticism of the conversation between Foucault and Deleuze is that they cannot get away from the subaltern as a sovereign subject ("Can Subaltern Speak" 272). By Gramsci's definition, subaltern are the working class; therefore, they are sovereign in that a political (and/or capitalist) system acknowledges their existence as a class.

Based on Spivak's rendition, subaltern means "*everything* that has no access to cultural imperialism," meaning that the subaltern not only are *not* sovereign (free

citizens), but they are not even acknowledged as subjects or objects for consideration. Subaltern have no authority, and as Spivak explains later in "Righting Wrongs," subaltern are "removed from the lines of social mobility" and are outside of any acts of representation (531). Spivak's definition can point to the condition of the colonized "other," in that they do not have access to political representation nor to represent themselves aesthetically via cultural capital; instead they are portrayed from the perspective of the colonizer. Depending on the construct of the relationship between the speaker and listener, the subaltern may remain unacknowledged. They may be represented via characterization, but they are not involved in the creation or consumption of these representations. These distinctions between acknowledged and unacknowledged forces play an integral role in the long, complicated attempts at Ireland's independence from English power.

It is important to point out that the Irish subaltern are much different than the subaltern that Spivak defines in her texts. Spivak works specifically in regards to the subaltern experiences of the southern hemisphere, where power and desire are complicated by the economic development stages of Asia. In Ireland, the subaltern experience is different because the nation has developed relatively simultaneously to many other countries in western Europe. The Irish subaltern experience is still driven by economic and social differences, but the experience in Europe is drastically different than in developing countries of the southern hemisphere. Even so, Spivak's description of the subaltern's inability to participate in their own representations also pertains to the Irish colonial experience. In "'Misplaced Ideas'?: Colonialism, Location, and Dislocation in

Irish Studies," Joe Cleary addresses typical objections to considering Ireland in postcolonial studies. He locates the systematic colonization of Ireland around the time of the late-fifteenth century, roughly at the same time of American colonization and based on the foundations of early capitalism (Cleary 28). Irish people saw their sovereignty taken away by English rule as they lost the rights to land ownership, to hold public office, and to practice Catholicism. With their loss of sovereign rights, the Irish people became a subaltern, colonized other. The relationship of Ireland to England was a colonial one in that "Economic stagnation, famine and flight, industrial under-development, the superimposition of English on Gaelic culture, the spread of new pseudo-scientific racialist doctrines to legitimate empire, and notions of British superiority" defined the Irish condition under British control (41). Politics and political representation were completely determined by the dominating English authority, which controlled the realities and ideologies of how the Irish and Ireland were represented on a colonial and international scale.

In her early discussions of the subaltern in which Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot exist within aesthetic or political forms of representation (because if they are acknowledged, they are no longer subaltern), there lies an important connection to Jacques Rancière's explanation of the *demos* as an inherent part of the body politic *because* a difference has been acknowledged. Therein lies the distinction between the subaltern as defined by Spivak and Rancière's *demos*. The subaltern are not recognized whatsoever; they are neither subjects nor objects for consideration by the colonial power. The *demos*, on the other hand, are acknowledged as existing, but are powerless because

they have no political authority within a society. As explained in the Introduction, the term "*demos*" describes the people of a community that do not count and have no speech to be heard (Rancière, *Dissensus* 32). Rancière explains that the inability to count fosters a police state: individuals are subjected to the authority of the magistrates, but the right to create laws is withheld (36). The police state is the colonial state, in that a population exists that does not receive any representation or authority under the law. Where the *demos* at least are recognized as subjects, the subaltern are invisible. In a sense, this fills the hole in Spivak's argument that once the subaltern are acknowledged, they are no longer subaltern. While that may be true, the move from subaltern to *demos* provides nothing more than acknowledgement of existence. The *demos* still live in a police state until they gain authority to represent themselves.

When, in 1918 the right to vote was given to all men over 21 years old and to women over 30 in England and Ireland, a part of the *demos* finally gained recognition as part of the political body, and in Ireland, the electorate rose from 700,000 in 1910 to approximately 2 million in 1918 (Morgan 21). Voices that went unheard for so long by the British would not continue to be ignored by the home rule of this new electorate. Based on a pledge to withdraw from Westminster and establish a free Irish government, Sinn Féin won the majority of seats designated to Irish holdings in British Parliament, and they established the new state of Ireland on January 21, 1919 (21). As newly independent nations like Ireland attempted to form their own political systems, they had to address the existence of what were subaltern groups under colonial rule as the *demos* of a new political state.

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Although I will discuss Rancière's theories further in a later chapter, it is important to recognize the potential progression from Spivak's subaltern to a position as Rancière's *demos*. As Spivak explains in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), "When a line of communication is established between a member of subaltern groups and the circuits of citizenship or institutionality, the subaltern has been inserted into the long road to hegemony. Unless we want to be romantic purists or primitivists about 'preserving subalternity'—a contradiction in terms—this is absolutely to be desired" (Spivak, *A Critique* 310). In a postcolonial condition, Ireland sought a system of government that acknowledged various voices of the Irish nation to establish an equal and fair form of representation with a new constitution. To acknowledge the subaltern as part of the system was to create a *demos*; the next step was to establish that line of communication, to create a space in which the *demos* count.

In *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, E.J. Hobsbawm seeks to identify the changing concept of the "nation" through modernity. Throughout the first two chapters, Hobsbawm describes Ireland as an anomaly to the trends that define the nation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of its characteristics – size, loss of language, dependence on Britain – were working against it becoming its own nation. But, he explains, "after 1880 it increasingly did matter how ordinary common men and women felt about nationality" (Hobsbawm 45). Hobsbawm recognizes a trend that pre-industrial people at this time held attitudes favorable to the concept of nationalism. In Ireland, where the people experienced limitations on their freedoms and suppression by British laws, an anti-Anglo, pro-Irish cultural and political movement instigated an Irish

nationalist turn. Ireland, he explains, "was lost to the United Kingdom as soon as the democratization of the vote in 1884-5 demonstrated that the virtual totality of the Catholic parliamentary seats in that island would henceforth belong to an Irish (i.e. nationalist) party" (Hobsbawm 85-6). With the right to vote, the Irish people began to imagine a growing political power based on an Irish national identity.

Aesthetic representations play a critical part in building political capital for voices of the *demos*. Spivak's concept of the subaltern existed in the Irish colonial situation: the Irish were not acknowledged as sovereign beings or as makers of culture or aesthetic representation. A key component to Spivak's argument is that different types of representation – that of proxy (political) and portrait (aesthetic) – should not be misinterpreted as the same acts. For, within the colonial system, the subaltern might make an attempt at either form of self-representation, or one that falls outside the lines of norm, but the listener does not recognize this act of representation. Spivak continues to distinguish between types of representation, saying that the two forms "are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act, and know *for themselves*, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics" ("Can Subaltern Speak" 276). In the formation of an anti-colonial politic, Ireland set out to create a democratic utopia. With home rule, the creation of a new state through democratic-representational politics became a possibility.

Home rule promised that the *process* of acknowledging the *demos* could change, making space for democratic agency in self-representation. Spivak recently elucidated on her position on the representational forms of portrait and proxy, saying that the real

problem that exists for the subaltern is that both forms of representation require a collaboration between a speaker and a listener, and under colonial rule, the subaltern are neither ("Response" 520). Constituting the previously unaccounted subaltern as acknowledged citizens is the ultimate goal of the political turn by Irish rebels in late-colonial Ireland. The *demos* of a home-ruled Ireland are acknowledged (to some degree) as a part of the body politic in that their lack of access to representation has been recognized by the developing nation and its developing political system. Having gained access to the speaker/listener relationship, the *demos* could attempt to represent themselves both politically and aesthetically.

At this turning point, Irish voices were creating an identity and a nation that would be recognized by their own independent country, separate from the British Empire. The fight for Irish independence was fought on both political and aesthetic fronts. While political activists attempted an overthrow of English rule, as in the Easter Rising in 1916, poets and artists took to literature to rebel against the misrepresentations of Irishness by British imperial culture. From 1916 to 1922, vast numbers of political and literary documents relayed narratives of who the Irish were and how they see themselves. The speaker/listener relationship was no longer one-directional; instead, a collaboration of voices engaged in laying the foundations of identity for a new nation. This conversation is where I turn next, in an effort to examine how the process of representation in the political and in the aesthetic materialized for the *demos* in Ireland.

Enacting Acknowledgement Through Textual Representations

In building a national identity for Ireland, many authors sought to highlight characteristics of life, land, and belief that made Ireland distinct from the English, and everyone else for that matter. Ireland is(was) not a monolithic culture: there are significant differences within the country, and many authors of the Celtic Revival highlighted distinctly Irish cultures to develop a national identity strong enough to lay the foundation for a national cause. For instance, W.B. Yeats relies on his childhood experiences in County Sligo and the tales of ancient legends of the west throughout much of his poetic career. In "To the Rose upon the Rood of Time" (1893), Yeats opens the collection with a poem written to Ireland, his rose. It is a lyric poem where the speaker/poet sings in first person of the "ancient ways" of the land (Yeats, "To the Rose" line 2). He repeatedly pleas with the Rose (Ireland) to come near so that he can breathe its life and history and culture into his own songs. Yeats is ready to write for Ireland and wants to represent the heart of its nature through his poetry.

Where Yeats exhibits the characteristics of song in his works, Lady Gregory turns to Irish folklore and language to reveal an Irish identity that is proud and distinct from the dominating British culture. Lady Gregory grew up in a Irish-Protestant aristocratic family and married Sir William Gregory, an Irish member of the British parliament. She was a major factor in developing an Irish national theater; alongside Yeats, Lady Gregory started the Irish Literary Theatre, which later became the Irish National Theater at the Abbey. Within her own writing, Lady Gregory wrote translations of folklore and plays based on Irish history and often translated from Irish with an homage to the Kiltartan

dialect of Galway. Lady Gregory re-tells many of the folk songs and stories of western

Ireland as a reminder of the strength of the Irish culture that she feels has been suppressed

by British culture. As she explains in "West Irish Ballads:" "The ballads to be gathered

now are a very few out of the great mass of traditional poetry that was swept away during

the last century in the merciless sweeping away of the Irish tongue, and of all that was

bound up with it, by England's will, by Ireland's need, by official pedantry" (Gregory

130). This statement, early on in Lady Gregory's career, lays the foundation for her

purpose in writing and in returning to Irish folklore.

Throughout many of her works, Lady Gregory concentrates on Irish myths that

show the strength of the people against extremely intimidating forces. In "Blessed Patrick

of the Bells," Gregory tells the tale of Cascorach, a poet-in-the-making who seeks the

"true knowledge and the stories of the Fianna and their great deeds from Caoilte son of

Ronan" (Gregory 147). He learns of the Fianna's bravery and great acts and he learns

how to lament that they are all gone now. As they meet St. Patrick, Cascorach learns that

his ability to play music and tell stories are a great art "by which a man can find profit to

the last in Ireland" (148). Like many before her, Gregory elevates the art of the storyteller

as a purveyor of truth, and she leans on Ireland's savior, St. Patrick, to reinforce how

important art and storytelling are to the culture and nation. She also gives an idea of the

type of culture that is being suppressed by Britain during her time. Lady Gregory learned

Irish to be able to speak with people in the rural, western environments that surrounded

her youth. She saw the continuation of storytelling and of the folktales of the great Fenian

and Red Cycles as the only way that Irish culture persisted against the suppression of the

British. Through her translations, Lady Gregory was trying to legitimize Irish folktales and show an Irish culture that had been lost with the suppression of language that pervaded the Irish colonial experience.

Language is always a contentious subject with respect to the control a colonizer holds over the colonized. Part of the complexity of the issue in Ireland was the fact that the Irish language had fallen out of use by the majority of the country, in one part, because of the colonization of the education system that required all schools to teach in English. The turn in the Celtic Revival to the folktales of Irish history also meant a turn to the west, where the Irish language had not been completely consumed by English, and where storytelling still thrived as part of the culture. This also required the ability to translate folktales from Irish to English[13], because much of the audience in the rest of the country no longer spoke Irish. Thus, when Lady Gregory learned Irish as an adult, she could talk with the people she grew up around in County Galway and translate her versions of the stories for the nationalist cause.

Yeats and Gregory collaborated in many ways to build a national identity for Ireland as its push for independence gained ground in the late nineteenth century. Once such collaboration was their play *Kathleen ni Houlihan,* which was written and performed on opening night of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. The play, performed between Gregory's *Spreading the News* and Yeats's *On Baile's Strand*, completed a trilogy of

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[13] Regarding language, Hobsbawm states: "Before the foundation of the Gaelic League (1893), which initially had no political aims, the Irish language was not an issue in the Irish national movement." He continues, "Even serious attempts to create a uniform Irish language out of the usual complex of dialects were not made until after 1900" (Hobsbawm 106).

nationalist performances to open the theater. The play personifies Mother Ireland as Kathleen ni Houlihan who calls for young Irish men to defend her "four beautiful green fields" – the four provinces of Ireland (Gregory 306). Patrick first describes Kathleen: "Do you remember what Winny of the Cross-Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country whatever time there's war or trouble coming?" (Gregory 302). The Old Woman (Kathleen) represents the troubles that face Ireland in its state of colonization. Peter asks what troubles her, and she replies with a list of concerns: "Too many strangers in the house" and "My land was taken from me" (Gregory 306). She walks through the villages asking the young men to take care of her by protecting her and fighting to get her land back. The Old Woman sings songs of the great men who have died for her and says they will live on forever because the people will sing their names in praise (Gregory 309). *Kathleen ni Houlihan* represents an Irish nation and calls for the sacrifices of war to free her and to right the wrongs that have been done to her by the British.

W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory led a charge of Irish writers that composed a national identity based on Irish culture in the late nineteenth century. They, along with other authors, conceived of an Irishness based on connection to the land, belief in Irish legends, and a distinction from British culture that endorsed a nationalistic concept of Irish identity. These authors spoke for the Irish *demos* by providing representations of a specifically-Irish identity. Yeats, Gregory, Synge, and many other Irish authors of the time laid a foundation of Irish culture from which a nationalist movement was based. Throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, Ireland's national identity

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gained influence over political thought and helped build the resistance against continued colonization.

Five weeks after the publication of "The Unwritten Epitaph," during Easter week of 1916, Irish insurgents took control of government buildings and posted a proclamation of Irish independence. "The Provisional Government to the Citizens of Dublin on the Momentous occasion of the proclamation of a Sovereign Independent Irish State" (also known as the "Proclamation of Independence 1916") sought to address the Irish people and acknowledge that they are citizens of the Irish Republic. Signed by Patrick Pearse, the President of the Provisional Irish Government, this proclamation encompassed all "who believe in the right of their Country to be free" (Pearse n.p.). Pearse spoke to their role in the fight for independence from England, stating: "There is work for everyone: for the men in the fighting line, and for the women in the provision of food and first aid" (Pearse n.p.). This proclamation of freedom from an oppressor and freedom to construct a nation that acknowledges the *demos* propelled the conversation about Home Rule into action.

The "Proclamation of Independence" was read aloud on Easter Monday at various posts around Dublin[14]. The goal was to spread the news across Dublin and beyond the pale so that people throughout the lower 26 counties (at least) could unite and take part in the fight for freedom. This moment re-situates the speaker/listener divide, because the

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[14] After finding out about the plot for a full-scale rebellion across all of Ireland, Eion MacNeill put an ad in the paper telling Irish soldiers not to show up; the Irish Republican Brotherhood got the word out to soldiers in Dublin that the plan was to move forward on Easter Monday, but the rest of the country was delayed in this communication and joined the fight later in Easter week; thus, the specific address to Dublin.

controlling imperial powers had to acknowledge the voices (and violence) of the insurgents. Spivak discusses the importance of how insurgencies are elaborated between the sender and the receiver ("Can Subaltern Speak" 287). Spivak claims the sender points to an irretrievable consciousness that the acknowledged world can only see through text as an object of investigation (287). When the listener interprets the voices and violence described in the text, the reader is ethically required to be open "toward imagined agency of the other" ("Righting Wrongs" 526). The textual representations of the insurgency then become evidence that the other exists and that they have agency. So in proclaiming independence in a public document and speaking out for the subaltern, the insurgents force their agency to be acknowledged by both the *demos* and imperial authorities.

This point of acknowledgement can have revolutionary and potentially dangerous effects in the course of history. How the receivers respond to these elaborations sets the course for war over self-representation and agency. With respect to the Easter Rising, the British response to the insurgency strengthened the opposition against them. After one week, the Easter rebellion was quelled and the Irish Republican Brotherhood surrendered their posts. British ruling forces arrested people, both involved and not, and almost 90 were convicted and sentenced to death. Fifteen people were executed after secretive procedures that did not allow for them to stand trial. This swift reaction led to growing sympathy among Irish people for Sinn Féin, which continued to spread its message that Ireland and its people deserved the rights of an independent nation.

When, in 1918, Britain changed its voting rights concerning age restrictions, Sinn Féin saw an opportunity to engage an electorate sympathetic to its leaders as part of the

fight for independence. "The Manifesto of Sinn Féin as passed by the Dublin Castle Censor" was the party's manifesto for the 1918 general election for seats to represent Ireland in the British Parliament. In "The Manifesto," Sinn Féin promises that if they win the majority of the seats held for Ireland, they will withdraw all Irish representation from British Parliament and deny the right of the British government to legislate over Ireland (Sinn Féin). They also promise to establish a political assembly chosen by Irish constituents to act as "the supreme national authority to speak and act in the name of the Irish people, and to develop Ireland's social, political and industrial life, for the welfare of the whole people of Ireland" (Sinn Féin). Throughout "The Manifesto," the authors are adamant that they want representation for everyone. In defining the citizenry, they use phrases like "the whole people of Ireland," "equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens," and "the people of this ancient nation" (Sinn Féin). More analysis on the complications of citizenship and if the *demos* are acknowledged as such occurs in later chapters; however, the main point of Sinn Féin's text is to put into words for whom and what they are fighting. "The Manifesto" is very careful to sound inclusive for all Irish people, no matter their party or class, and including the people of Northern Ireland who are in danger of remaining subject to British rule.

"The Manifesto" also depicts the plight of the Irish as a long-standing crime of colonial subjection. At key moments throughout the text, Ireland is described as an "ancient nation" in an effort to emphasize legitimate independence as a return to the natural order of Ireland, well before its subjection by the British. Sinn Féin explains that Ireland has a claim on nationhood and the principle of self-government not based on the

post-World War I realignment of national boundaries, but on "reasserting the inalienable right of the Irish Nation to sovereign independence" (Sinn Féin). Throughout the Manifesto, the authors utilize terms like "reasserting" and "reaffirming" to argue that an Irish nation existed before British rule, and it should be reinstated. The authors also characterize the *demos* as the people of an "ancient nation" who "will be true to the old cause […] and whose demand is that the only status befitting this ancient realm is the status of a free nation" (Sinn Féin). By locating the origins of their claim to independence in the ruins of an ancient nation, the authors are building an identity of the *demos* that warrants independence and self-representation. In doing so, they resituate their power as speakers and base it on tradition: power that precedes that of the colonial, authorial voice. The audiences of "The Manifesto" are many, in that they are trying to impress upon the *demos*, the colonizers, and the world that they have an inalienable right to be acknowledged and to be authors of their own stories.

 After winning the majority of Irish seats in the 1918 election, Sinn Féin party members followed through on their promise to withdraw from England and they convened the First Dáil[15] in January, 1919, where they adopted the "Declaration of Independence of Ireland" (Morgan 21). The Declaration builds on the concepts of "The Manifesto" in naming the *demos* of Ireland as free and equal citizens of an ancient Irish nation. It gives power to representatives elected by the Irish people and through an Irish Parliament only, with no allegiances offered to any other government within or beyond

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[15] Irish Parliament

the borders of the Irish isle. "The Manifesto" and the "Declaration of Independence" depend upon shared beliefs in the rights of Irish people to be free to choose their own representatives. They also rely on a concept of an Irish nation that precluded Ireland's recent colonial history. The characterization of the *demos* through a specific national identity was extremely important in the textual battles for independence. As many cultural theorists argue, it is through texts that nations are imagined and identities are solidified. At the same time, we also must recognize the complications that arise from basing the rights of the *demos* on claims of identity and nationality. Even if the *demos* gain some power in the speaker/listener relationship and find ways to create aesthetic and political representations, what limitations to that power arise because of these representations? Are they inclusive of all of the *demos*, or do they – possibly without intent – exclude voices that do not fit in to representations of "Irishness"?

Benedict Anderson's seminal text *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, provides foundational theories about how literature and newspapers construct a nation through a shared, national identity. Anderson views the "nation" as an "imagined political community" that relies on a level of cooperation amongst a community of people to agree to the terms that define their society (Anderson 6). Such a nation-construct has certain basic traits: it is imagined because members will not know all of the other members or every geographic space that makes it up, but boundaries are shared and agreed upon (6); it is limited because it does, indeed have boundaries, which are typically recognized and partitioned by culture, ethnicity, and/or social structure (7); it is sovereign, in that its purpose is to provide organization for a

society based on freedom for all people (7); and it is a community that is supported, protected, and limited because of the agreed cooperation of its people (7). To construct such a nation requires a national consciousness: a shared sense that the free people of this place will willingly give up some individual rights to be connected to a greater, stronger community that has the best interests of the People as its aim.

Anderson argues that newspapers and literature are the driving forces behind a national consciousness, because they instigate the formation of a national identity in two specific ways. First, print capitalism provides a space in which a community builds and consumes the concept of the nation. This space links people through a precise "simultaneity," which Anderson describes as "a shared temporal dimension in which they co-exist" (Anderson 24). Simultaneity between people in a community comes from reading newspapers and reading literature, where we practice how to read boundaries that define a community. With newspapers, people read about current local events from the privacy of their own homes, but they are connected to other people who are performing the same act and reading about the same events. The individual acts freely, reading on their own, but simultaneously with a shared community or nation. The individual knows that other people take part in the same process because the newspapers are consumed publicly, which reaffirms the shared concept of the community. Novels, in particular, can also help an individual comprehend that other people share a similar understanding of life and community. Novels require readers to acknowledge the actions performed by characters in what Anderson calls "homogenous, empty time" (Anderson 25). Characters within a novel may never meet, but they are still connected within the shared community

of the novel. A reader can recognize the boundaries of the novel as the boundaries of an imagined community. Being able to take part in creating and consuming simultaneous stories gives individuals a way to communicate *how* they are alike, thus creating a shared consciousness of identity.

The second way that print capitalism articulates a national identity is in *what* stories it shares across a community. In talking about a Latin American novel from 1816, Anderson describes the novel as "nationalistic" in how "we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside" (Anderson 30). Readers recognize places, events, and people that make up the real landscapes of the community. He goes on to explain that the world described in texts (both literature and newspapers) is not the *tour du monde* but a *tour d'horizon;* that is, the world described in these texts is not an image of the world-at-large, but of the world-within-view (30). Newspapers and (nationalistic) literature describe events, people, and space that fall within the boundaries of the imagined community. They describe people with similar experiences and from the same cultures, ethnicities, or social structures. The stories that are shared are what the individuals know and they feel connected to others through them. Print capitalism thrives because it describes a shared consciousness, and through its consumption, it plays an integral part in creating a nation and a national identity.

Bringing Seamus Deane into the conversation with the aforementioned theorists may reveal some answers to the questions previously posed about representations of a national identity for Ireland, and some of its limitations during Ireland's early

postcolonial years. In *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*, Deane confronts issues about how Irish writing defined the nation against the British Empire. Deane reflects on the way in which an Irish identity was created to give voice to the *demos*, but how it ultimately created a new subaltern class. His arguments use political and literary textual representations as evidence that the concept of a national identity is troublesome for democratic representation. Deane is a literary critic, so his argument highlights the role literature plays in creating identity. He focuses his attention on the problems of Ireland and how cultural representations have always been a component of political power across the entirety of the island.

Throughout his works, Deane argues that cultural difference laid an important part of the foundation for an Irish nationalist movement and for independence from the empire. But Ireland's recent history of the nineteenth century, especially the consequences of the Potato Famine that plagued Ireland from the 1840s through the 1860s, added a complication to the Irish argument of cultural difference: the famine destroyed Irish culture by taking half of the population away through death and mass emigration. With a small population of the poor *demos* left, there was very little culture[16] to speak of. Deane argues that political activists and writers had to look further back in Irish history to build a cultural concept of Irishness that deserved distinction and recognition. Authors of the Celtic Revival overcame this complication by re-centering the claim for cultural difference onto legends, rather than history (Deane, *Strange* 51). By

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[16] That is, Irish culture distinct from the class-based cultural norms asserted by colonial control.

focusing on Irish legend rather than more recent history, Irish Revivalists could emphasize the vast differences between modern British culture of the colonizer and a traditional culture of Ireland.

Readers had to look no further than the romanticized versions of Irish legend written by Standish O'Grady in the 1890s. O'Grady wrote historical novels based on the legends of Ireland's past handed down through oral storytelling cycles, as they are called. He wrote grandiose tales about Fionn macCumhaill of the Fenian cycle, CúChulainn of the Ulster cycle, and Diarmait MacMurchada, king of Leinster. Their stories date back to a time when Ireland was divided into four kingdoms (Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, Munster), long before the Anglo-Norman invasion that first introduced Anglo rule into Ireland (Moody, Martin, & Byrne). O'Grady saw these legends as proof that the Irish were of a different stock than the English, and he sought to pronounce this difference as evidence of a rich and unique cultural heritage.

In his chapter entitled "National Character and the Character of Nations," Deane argues that a central element to the creation of a nation is a national identity built on a distinct tradition and strong moral character. Deane states: "central to the nationalist position were the claims that (a) Ireland was a culturally distinct nation; (b) it had been mutilated beyond recognition by British colonialism; and (c) it could nevertheless rediscover its lost features and thereby recognize once more its true identity" (Deane, *Strange* 53). This last point is what O'Grady and other authors of the Celtic Revival set out to do. By reinvigorating the stories of great Irish kings and warriors, O'Grady takes part in creating an Irish national identity. More recent Irish history was void of unique

stories because of the domination of the people and culture by the colonizing culture. To rebel against colonial oppression, authors and politicians alike sought to emphasize anything that was not British, that is, anything that could renew a shared consciousness and build a national identity.

Many authors joined O'Grady in trying to describe Ireland's national character through a cultural movement that champions the legends, myths, and artistic magnitude of Irish people. W.B. Yeats's early poetry is a prime example of constructing Irish culture in opposition to the cultural hegemony of the British Empire. Yeats's early works are regarded as the embodiment of pro-Ireland, cultural nationalism. He blends Irish legend and storytelling with tales of activists involved in the current national movement. In "To Ireland in the Coming Times" (1893), Yeats defends the purpose of poetry and his own author(ity) as legitimate producers of Irish national identity. The poem is written in first-person, yet the speaker- or "I"- blends poem and poet together as one entity. In the first stanza, the "I" is likened to "Ballad and story, rann and song," which implies that poetry is as lofty a form of cultural creation as forms of storytelling that are revered in Irish culture (Yeats, "To Ireland" line 4). Yeats writes that poetic meter makes "Ireland's heart begin to beat" (line 12) and that the rhymes tell more "Of things discovered in the deep" (line 21). The poem alludes to faeries and Druid songs of Irish lore in an effort, like O'Grady's, to connect the poem and poet to a longstanding tradition of an Irish nation. Yeats is speaking to the role poetry plays in building a nation. To his Irish audience, he explains that poetry fulfills the same needs as ballads and storytelling in sharing the values of the culture. To his British audience, Yeats reveals that the colonized "other" has

its own traditions, but also an ability to speak for itself. Poetry acts as a simple and shared

form of communication between speaker and listener(s).

Poetry is an elevated cultural art form, and in "To Ireland in the Coming Times,"

Yeats wants to claim his role in the current cultural movement. He compares himself to a

company of Irish poets (line 18) to show that he is no less involved in the nationalist

cause than his poetic predecessors. Yeats is in a predicament, in the sense that he was

born and raised in Ireland, but from an Anglo-Protestant family. Though he believed in

the Irish national movement, he felt mistrusted about his part in speaking for Ireland's

cause. This is why he compares himself to past Irish poets, and connects himself to the

independence movement with allusions to his love, Maud Gonne (lines 7, 33-37). Yeats

enacts what Anderson describes as the *tour d'horizon*: he writes from Ireland and to his

Irish audience through shared concepts of the world around them. With its publication

during the early stages of the independence movement, "To Ireland in the Coming

Times" makes a statement that poetry plays a vital part in the war of the imagination.

Through poetry, Ireland can imagine itself. And, as Benedict Anderson argues, the poet

fulfills an important part in creating a nation.

Yeats, O'Grady, and many of the authors of the Celtic Revival have an ulterior

motive in the legends they choose to write about. As Deane points out: "O'Grady has one

story to tell—the standard nineteenth-century story of degeneration from a heroic past to

a wretched present, a degeneration that is coincident with the decline in power of an

aristocratic, landowning class and the rise of democracy and socialism" (Deane, *Strange*

83). From O'Grady's perspective, Ireland can claim a historically heroic, even royal,

culture, to which he thought that it should return. He wanted an independent Ireland, but

he proposed an aristocratic form of control. The image he presents of Irish history

emphasizes royal bloodlines that have the characteristics of warriors, kings, and queens.

He did not champion the *demos* or the concept of democracy. In fact, many people at the

time concerned themselves with the image of an independent Ireland that they wanted

presented to the world.

For instance, when J.M. Synge's play *The Playboy of the Western World* first

debuted in Dublin in 1907, riots broke out in protest against the characterization of Irish

people in the play. Synge depicts a provincial County Mayo and its inhabitants as

dimwitted, simple farmers who believe anything they are told. The riots were a reaction

to the portrayal of the Irish *demos* as simplistic; the Irish nationalists who instigated them

did not approve an image of the *demos* as gullible and unintelligent. Yeats saw these riots

as the mistake of a mob of young men that did not have the eloquence to speak and be

heard in a form that the colonizing culture would acknowledge, and thus chose barbaric

rebellion instead (140). Like O'Grady, Yeats believed the best way forward for Ireland

was through a revival of the aristocratic systems that allowed only the elevated few to

speak for all of Ireland. As literature became an integral part of creating a national

identity, conflicts arose about who and how it should represent Irish people.

Yeats voices some of these concerns in a poignant reaction to the Easter Rising in

"Easter, 1916." Though not published until 1921, Yeats wrote this poem in the months

following the Easter Rising. At the time, much was still unknown about the fates of the

rebel leaders and the cause, which meant that Yeats had to tread carefully in criticizing

the approach of Irish activists during the Rising. He knew many of the leaders involved in the rising and did not like them very much; he thought they did not fulfill the nobility of ancient Irish culture. In the first stanza, Yeats sets out to defend his ability to speak for the situation because he knew many of the leaders involved. He describes occasions where he has met them and has exchanged "polite meaningless words" that he would later turn into "a mocking tale or gibe" to his friends (Yeats "Easter, 1916" lines 6, 10). In the second stanza he specifically refers to many of the leaders of the Easter Rising, including Constance Markievicz, Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, John McBride, and James Connolly, and illuminates their shortcomings as the heroic leaders of the cause. At the same time, Yeats seems impressed by their willingness to fight when he does not think a free Ireland is possible. He describes the fight as a "casual comedy" for control of a "stone" or rock of an island (lines 37, 56). Yeats's main question throughout the poem asks if the fight for independence is worthwhile when it does not seem possible. With concerns about what a free Ireland would look like, Yeats vocalizes the thoughts of many who are caught up in the conflict and are wary of the future.

The most repeated and most reverential line in the poem describes the situation of the Irish people at the culminating point of this conflict over independence: "A terrible beauty is born" (lines 16, 40, 80). The word choice and order reflects a chiasmus of feelings about the Easter Rising. With inverted alliteration in "terrible beauty" (*tbbt*), the sounds of these words emphasize the relationship between the horrible events that must occur in order to attempt the beauty of independence. With this strikingly paradoxical phrase, Yeats characterizes the intersections of conflict in the fight for independence. We

see the hope for what independence may bring, but we cannot forget that it will be forged

through the hands of imperfect leaders and to unsure ends. In previous poems, Yeats

relies on mythologizing Irish history and connecting it to the current struggles; yet in

"Easter, 1916" Irish myths and legends have been omitted and replaced by the recent

histories of the contemporary leaders of the rebellion. Their legitimacy is uncertain: they

are not part of the British colonizers, which is most important, but are they fit to lead?

Essentially, Yeats points to the fact that these leaders are unknown, and the Irish people

do not know what independence will look like under their authority. In this "terrible

beauty" lies the death and destruction from a war that is meant to liberate the Irish

people, yet will quite possibly create a nation in democratic chaos.

The Celtic Revival paints a picture of Irishness steeped in aristocratic claims to

rule an independent Irish nation. With the Home Rule Bill passed and the growing power

of the Sinn Féin party, an important conversation about Irish identity was taking place

through literature. If, as Benedict Anderson claims, national identity is created through a

shared idea of a community built through print capitalism, then the representations

provided by authors of the Celtic Revival were powerfully exclusive. O'Grady, Yeats,

Synge, and others defined a national character that very few people fit. They emphasize

the historic lines of Irish aristocracy and often make caricatures of the primitive, wild

west of Ireland. Even as they borrow mythic stories from the oral storytelling traditions,

they seek to legitimize them through forms of poetry that pander to the educated.

Through their acts of proximal representation, authors of the Celtic Revival do not speak

for the universal, but *to* a specifically aristocratic Irish public. As Deane explains: "it is

possible to think that all systems of representation, if they are so specific in their genesis, must be systems of mis-representation, since they are agencies of power and therefore have an interest in misrepresenting the powerless" (Deane, *Strange* 54). As a free state of Ireland became a more realistic outcome, a new struggle for authority and power arose.

Constituting an Irish Nation

The Easter Rising of 1916 brought the conflict for Irish independence to its most precarious precipice: with British control at its most volatile due to world events and with leaders of the Irish independence movement poised to take control of the nation, defining a nation and its character became paramount to Ireland's democratic future. The definitions of Irish character created by the Celtic Revival are complicated, in that they provide a much needed cultural representation of Irish people separate from British opinions, but they also create new limitations on the definition of a national identity. Seamus Deane describes this moment in Irish history, stating: "Such liberation as was achieved – and it was considerable – necessarily had its limits. It was a liberation into a specifically Irish, not a specifically human, identity" (Deane, "Introduction" 13). As the literary voices of the newly independent nation sought to provide space and acknowledgment for people that had been unaccounted for so long by British imperialism, political voices wanted international acknowledgment that their claims for providing their own government were legitimate.

Some legitimacy was attained when Britain and Ireland agreed to the Anglo-Irish Treaty that ended the Irish war for independence. The Treaty allowed for the creation of the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion with status in the "Community of

Nations known as the British Empire" (Morgan 23). This was not a clean break from British control: even though England acknowledged Ireland's parliament and the writing of a constitution moved forward, there were divisions that arose from the location of the Irish Free State within the United Kingdom. Often the focus of this discussion highlights the dissenting voices in Ireland between those that saw the Treaty as the best option for Ireland and those that wanted nothing less than a completely independent nation. For the purposes of this chapter, I want to emphasize the complexities of the authority of the political documents that proclaim rights to representation and how they attempt to acknowledge a *demos* that had been historically overlooked. The Irish gained momentum in representing themselves culturally and politically, and they now had some space to explore what type of representative system they wanted to protect the rights of the people and act on their behalf. In essence, an important question that must be asked is: what type of nation – and type of agency in representation – could result from the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution?

Another central aspect to address in regards to the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution is where its authority lies. If a constitution is meant to act as a foundational text that defines the rights of citizens of a nation, then examining how that text gains authority is crucial to giving voice to the *demos*. As David Gwynn Morgan asks in *Constitutional Law of Ireland*: was it a British or Irish act (and were both parties necessary) to allow for an Irish constitution (Morgan 23)? The passing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty by the British provided an opportunity to form an Irish state. Was this an act of acknowledging the subaltern? And is that the same thing as giving them a voice to speak

for themselves? Based on my earlier explanation of Spivak's theory of representation, a line of communication had opened for the subaltern by the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Members of the Irish political parties sought to represent the people of Ireland via proxy, and the Treaty seemingly gave them the authority to do so. This moment changes the speaker/listener divide that Spivak describes, because the British were willing to not only recognize that the subaltern exist, but that they may speak for themselves. What is more, because the Treaty provided the Irish with the authority to create laws, Ireland escaped from the police state of colonialism that Rancière describes into a political state that has the potential to represent everyone, including the *demos*.

Up to the signing of the Treaty, Ireland's claims to authority relied heavily on the consent of the British to allow them political and cultural voices. The act of writing a constitution was paramount to taking control of authority in representing the people of Ireland. As proven by the literary and political texts discussed so far, the persistence of writing against the empire and by the *demos* laid the foundation of a national identity separate from Britain. While authors set out to define Irishness through myths that preceded colonial subjection, or to legitimize contemporary Irish leaders as representatives of an Irish nation, political revolutionaries cried out for the rights of the Irish people through manifestos, political tracts, and published declarations. A nation whose identity was shaped thus far on literary and political print needed to have a constitution of its own, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty fell extremely short of that mark. As described in Gabriel Doherty's "The Treaty Negotiations, October-December 1921," Britain held a heavy hand in writing the Articles of Agreement and in pressing the Irish

delegates to sign off on commonwealth status. By the end of negotiations, "Lloyd George gave the delegates the explicit choice of signing the text or of bearing the responsibility for the immediate resumption of war" (Doherty n.p.). Though the Treaty provided some freedom to Ireland to create its own government, the Treaty itself did not invite the Irish into the role of speaker. For that, they had to move forward in writing an Irish constitution.

In the aftermath of the contentious signing of the Treaty, there was some question among the Irish provisional parliament as to whether or not Ireland needed its own constitution. Leaders of the Labour Party took the stance that the Treaty would do the job of providing a precedent for the Irish Commonwealth, seeing that many of the same leaders who signed the Treaty were the same people brought together into the "Constituent Assembly" to write the Constitution. Labour questioned their ability to write a constitution on their own when, based on the Treaty, the assembly was not free to act without British consent. The Anglo-Irish Treaty required that the Irish Free State recognize the authority of the British Crown as head of state and, though it would have its own self-governing, independent parliament (Oireachtas), members of it must declare fidelity to the British crown (Doherty n.p.). Supporters of the Treaty and members of the Constituent Assembly viewed things differently. Having fought for a united, independent, and self-governing state, which would have its own President, parliament, and judicial system, members of the provisional parliament in favor of an Irish constitution out-maneuvered dissenting voices and took on the task of representing the Irish people.

In *The Path to Freedom*, Michael Collins describes the debate over writing the Irish Free State Constitution. This text is a compilation of notes and articles written by Collins throughout 1922 between the signing of the Treaty and his assassination before the Constitution was complete. In his notes, Collins underscores the national character of Ireland. He relies on a concept of national character as defined by cultural and political documents, stating: "We were not strong enough to put out the foreign Power until the national consciousness was fully re- awakened. This was why the Gaelic Movement and Sinn Féin were necessary for our last successful effort" (Collins 4). Throughout his notes, Collins alludes to an Irish national consciousness that is culturally, morally, and politically different from that of the British Empire, founded on legends, myths, and stories from Gaelic tradition. His goal is to unite Irish people behind the Treaty and the new provisional government, and he builds this concept by depending on art and politics to define the nation. Consistently, he reminds his readers that Ireland's "*national instinct was sound*" (5), because it was based on a national ideal; that is, "the Ireland of poetic tradition, and the future Ireland which will one day be—the best of what our country was, and can be again, and the perfect freedom in which it alone can be the best" (21-2). Like the authors of the Celtic Revival, Collins depends on a shared national identity based on Gaelic traditions to unite Irish people behind the Treaty and Constitution.

Collins also identifies the role that democracy needs to play in the formation of the Irish Free State Constitution. Part of his purpose behind emphasizing democracy is to point out that Ireland has the space to forge a new government of their own; even though they had ties to Britain as a commonwealth, they were able to form a new representative

system under the Irish Free State Constitution. Collins needed to convince anti-treaty supporters that democracy was inherent to the Irish condition. As he does with the concept of national identity, Collins connects democracy to early Gaelic civilization, describing it as "This democratic social polity, with the exaltation of the things of the mind and character, are the essence of ancient Irish civilization, and must provide the keynote for the new" (101). In bringing up the ancient ideas of Irish civilization, Collins invents nostalgia for a pre-colonial time when the social contract among Irish people was built on cultural and social relationships. From a shared sense of community and bonds that unite all Irish people, Collins pushed the ideas of the Treaty and a new constitution forward: "Of all forms of government a democracy allows the greatest freedom—the greatest possibilities for the good of all," which he follows with a call for civility, "But such a government, like all governments, must be recognised and obeyed" (13). In an effort to calm the opposing forces of the Anti-Treaty party and to prevent Ireland from spiraling into another war, Collins stresses the democratic ideals that he foresees for the nation.

The condition of Ireland at this moment in time, in Rancière's terms, is one in which a nation is transitioning from the controls of a police state into a political state. That means the *demos* gain acknowledgement and are accounted for as part of the nation, and they should be represented as such in whatever governmental system is put into place. According to Collins's notes, he agrees that this is the goal of the provisional parliament and Constituent Assembly:

> Under the democratic system which was being established by the representatives of the people—the freest and most democratic system yet devised—the rights of every minority were secured, and the fullest opportunity was open for every section of opinion to express and advocate its views by appeal to reason and patriotic sentiment. (13)

As Collins describes it, Ireland's newly found independence and subsequent formation of a democracy – "*the freest and most democratic system yet devised*" – would enable all citizens of Ireland to be counted and represented (my italics). Collins understood the discontent of what he calls a minority of anti-treaty protesters, and he wants to make sure they understand that their sovereignty is not under attack by the provisional government. He addresses many types of minorities in this statement: those who disagree with the signing of the Treaty, others who are against the partition of Ulster from the Free State, and those that do not feel as if they have been heard at all. Collins promises that the Irish Free State Constitution will act on behalf of all Irish people; the question then becomes: does the 1922 Constitution live up to the ideals that he has set forth?

The text of the 1922 Constitution has many tasks to complete. First, it has to create autonomy from England that guarantees Irish independence, while somehow still maintaining fidelity to the crown as a British dominion. The writers of the Constitution turn to cultural and social models to do this, by continuing to distinguish Irish citizens from the British through cultural and historical characteristics. The Constitution must also provide representation of the Irish people and acknowledge their basic human rights. After so much devastation from rebellions and the war for independence, it was imperative that the Constitution acknowledge the Irish as free and natural citizens of their

own country. This needed to come about by recognizing unalterable human rights and Irish identities that were to be protected under the new nation's laws. Finally, the Constitution needs to *enact* the formation of identity and authority: to command the power to declare a nation and to acknowledge the *demos* as citizens of that nation. The writers of the Constitution were agents of change and, like the other authors discussed in this chapter, they were faced with decisions that defined the identity of a country and its people.

The worldview of democracy was very different in 1922 from how it is perceived today. As Tom Garvin describes in *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy*, only 17 percent of the independent states in the world during World War I were democratic; by the early 1920s after the post-War wave of European democratization, only 33 percent of independent states were democratic (Garvin 9). As the writers of the Irish Free State Constitution set out to compose the foundation of a democratic government, they had to build a sense of the nation based on inexact models for the Irish situation. Even the British government – the most familiar form of government to the Constituent Assembly and Irish people – had (has) no written or codified constitution from which the writers could rejoinder to help shape their nation's foundation (9). The writers tread a fine line between the nation they sought to create and the empire they still had to recognize. Article Two of the Constitution places all power and authority of the Irish government as "derived from the people of Ireland" and exercised through organizations established by the Constitution (Art. 2). As such, Article Two defines the state as a democracy, with authority coming from the people. However, Article Twelve describes the composition of

the government (the Oireachtas) as consisting of the King and two Houses: the Dáil

Éireann and the Seanad Éireann (Art. 12). According to British Parliament, the Irish

Constitution gains its authority because of the Irish Free State Constitution Act of 1922,

passed by British Parliament. As such, the Assembly was forced to include the status of

the British Crown in Ireland.

From the Irish perspective, however, under Irish law the Constitution gains its

authority from the Act of Dáil Éireann sitting as a constituent assembly. The Preamble

clearly proclaims the establishment of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann) and gives

authority "to the people and in the confidence that the National life and unity of Ireland

shall thus be restored" (Preamble). As such, the assembly of Irish constituents as writers

of the Constitution take full control over the authority to form a nation and its governing

bodies. They gained agency to speak for themselves and are using their authority to form

a system of representation that is more democratic than their past. Though it was

necessary to acknowledge the King's power in Ireland within the Constitution, the

Assembly surrounded his mention with ancient Irish language. The Constitution names

each component of the new government – the Oireachtas – in Article Twelve in English

and then clarifies by saying they are herein referred to as Dáil Éireann and Seanad

Éireann (Art. 12). To break free from another cultural subjection of the colonizer, the

authors name the main houses of power of the Irish government by their Gaelic names. In

his notes, Michael Collins explains why this matters:

> Gaelic civilization was quite different. The people of the whole nation were
> united, not by material forces, but by spiritual ones. Their unity was not of any

military solidarity. It came from sharing the same traditions. It came from honouring the same heroes, from inheriting the same literature, from willing obedience to the same law, the law which was their own law and reverenced by them. They never exalted a central authority. (Collins 99)

Important moves are taking place in these initial statements of authority in the Constitution. The authors adamantly locate the authority of the nation among an Irish *demos* and they distinguish their authority from those that used to be in control. Collins bases the need for integration of Irish language and Gaelic tradition into the Constitution on the need to create a sense of community among the Irish. He relies on the heroes and literature of Ireland to create that bond. The use of Gaelic language and the exaltation of the Irish people seemed a necessary step in gaining authority to speak.

Another component within the Constitution that worked toward acknowledging the *demos* and building a solid foundation for a democratic nation is the turn to human rights, especially in articles five through ten. These early articles of the Constitution set into place the rights of individuals protected under Irish law. The first of these articles prohibited titles of nobility, which meant that the people of Ireland were equal under the law and no title would elevate one citizen over another (Art. 5). In theory, Article Five bans the class stratification of citizens into those with power and those without. The ultimate purpose was to create a democratic citizenship with equal representation for all Irish people. The proceeding articles bolster the freedom of the people by acting as a Bill of Rights that protect liberty, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and the right to elementary education for all citizens (Art. 6-10). The language in these Articles works toward creating equal rights for Irish citizens. The first few articles in this Bill of Rights

refer to the "person" who is protected, allowing for all people to be represented by the law. Though the concept of citizen can be ambiguous, the use of it here provides protection to the people identified as citizens of the free Irish nation.

As discussed earlier, Rancière describes the rights of the *demos* in a political state as the ability to represent oneself and be acknowledged as a citizen of the community. Part of this ability to represent oneself comes in the form of access to vote for, and be part of, the governing system of the nation. The 1922 Irish Free State Constitution took a unique stance on voting rights at the time. Ireland was one of the first countries to acknowledge women as having the right to vote, which solidified an important component of democratic representation (Garvin 9). Article Fourteen states that "all citizens over 21 have the right to vote for members of Dáil Eireann and to take part in referenda. All citizens over 30 have the right to vote for members of Seanad Eireann" (Art. 14). The act of voting allows citizens to choose who speaks for them in regards to national concerns, and with the inclusion of the use of referenda, every citizen gains the authority to speak for themselves on issues that directly affect them. Article Forty-Seven explains that a Bill is "to be submitted by Referendum to the decision of the people if demanded" and "the decision of the people by a majority of the votes recorded on such Referendum shall be conclusive" (Art. 47). The use of referenda by the new Irish government adds an integral component to representation not only for the *demos*, but *by* the *demos*. Via referenda, the *demos* are accounted for because they represent themselves on issues that directly affect their rights. They gain deference in the speaker/listener relationship in that their voices are heard and their decisions enacted.

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The Constitution also prescribes regulations with respect to who can take part in governance via the two houses of the Irish parliament. Article Fifteen states that "every citizen over 21 can be a member of Dáil Eireann" (Art. 15). The Dáil consists of representatives of different regions and counties of the Irish Free State, and the number of seats for a given area is based on population. As stated, the article does not restrict participation in the Dáil in any way beyond voting age. Seanad Eireann, on the other hand, is not as clear. Article Thirty states that Seanad Eireann "shall be composed of citizens who shall be proposed on the grounds that they have done honour to the Nation by reason of useful public service or that, because of special qualifications or attainments, they represent important aspects of the Nation's life" (Art. 30). What could that last statement mean? Asserting that members of Seanad must have proven their honor or value to the nation means that access to a voting seat in that house is limited. Who decides that honor has been shown? And, which version of the "Nation" and the "Nation's life" must they represent to be considered valuable members of society that can truly speak on behalf of the *demos*? These considerations hearken back to Collins's statement that the people in Ireland are united by a national identity composed of historical and cultural heroes and legends. While this works in its attempts to elevate an Irish *demos* to a citizen class that is worthy and capable of home rule, it also creates problems by limiting access to power of authority to an exclusive group.

The Constitution sets out to enact a national identity and recognize the authority of the nation's citizens to create their own rules and identity; however, it also takes part in limiting the scope of who are represented and how they can enact their rights of

agency. Previously in this chapter, I pointed to the Sinn Féin manifesto and its promise

that an assembly would speak and act in the name of the Irish people "for the welfare of

the whole people of Ireland" (my italics, Sinn Féin). The Constituent Assembly did not

fulfill this promise. By promulgating an idea of the Irish citizen as someone who fits into

the shared traditions and stories perpetuated as a national identity, the Constitution took

rights away from anyone who does not fit that identity, figuratively and literally. The

ultimate Article that gives voice to the people via the use of referendum was curtailed in

acting democratically. Following Article 47, which allows for a Bill to be submitted to

referendum by the people, Article 50 basically subdued this right and gave power to the

Oireachtas (King, Dáil, and Seanad) to amend the Constitution for the next eight years

without a vote by referendum (Art. 50). In fact, the Oireachtas kept extending the number

of years they could amend without referendum so that, by the time the 1937 Constitution

came around, there had not been a single vote by referendum. Though the 1922

Constitution laid important groundwork for the rights of all citizens of Ireland, it also

created obstacles for the agency of each and every person in Ireland. The *demos* has been

acknowledged to some degree by the national identity created culturally and politically,

which was a huge stride towards democracy; however, there clearly were limitations on

the *demos* and on the authority over individual representation in the newly independent

Irish Free State.

How Political and Literary Texts Can Act Democratically

The subtitle of the Irish Free State Constitution Act of 1922 reads: "An Act to

enact a Constitution for the Irish Free State (Saorstát Eireann) and for implementing the

treaty between Great Britain and Ireland signed at London on the 6th day of December, 1921" (Preamble). The phrase "an act to enact" is interesting, in that it is through the writing of the text of the Constitution that the nation is formed. The composition takes part in the enacting of rights and representation of the people that it embodies. To "enact" means to enter into public record, to decree, or to officially declare with authority ("Enact" n.p.). The written document acts. And it enacts. Upon exposition it becomes an object that acts politically. The political documents discussed in this chapter are just a few of the many types of texts that enact representation and that set a precedent for writing to act at all democratically. Each of the political documents discussed work towards decolonization and the independence of a people that have been under imperial control for hundreds of years.

The literary texts discussed thus far enact representation, as well. From "The Unwritten Epitaph" to poems, plays, and novels of the Celtic Revival, we gain an integral perspective to understanding an Irish *demos* that could not speak for themselves while under British control. These literary texts enact a concept of national identity based on legends, myths, traditions, and oral stories. They, too, have a narrow view of Irishness that they impose on the identity of the nation as a whole. In *Making Subject(s): Literature and the Emergence of National Identity*, Allen Carey-Webb explains that literature or literary texts "participate in the making of a national subject and thus are implicated in the politics of the nation" (Carey-Webb 7). In the case of decolonization, it is helpful and necessary to make a national subject that is acknowledged and speaks for itself. The subject takes part in the creation of authority within the nation and holds itself

accountable in accordance with the laws agreed upon democratically. Carey-Webb also explains that nationality is another form of identity – like gender, ethnicity, class, and race – that needs to be analyzed, but that it is more closely defined by the historical moments that shape the formation of the new nation (7). By examining the political and literary texts of Ireland during its fight for independence, it becomes quite clear that the national subject made great strides in democratic agency that allowed for better representation of the *demos*.

In breaking free from colonial constraints, these texts work together to create an idea of an Irish national identity: one that shows how distinct the colonized are from the colonizer, but one that ties the nation to a narrow concept of Irishness. Based on the textual evidence analyzed here, how is Ireland defined at its moment of independence? For hundreds of years, colonization shaped the entire nation. As Edward Said describes in *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, Ireland is a postcolonial site dealing with "the silencing of their voices, the renaming of places and replacement of languages by the imperial outsider, the creation of colonial maps and divisions" (Said 178). Ireland, like every postcolonial nation, reckons with how to free themselves from all of these aspects of subjection, while at the same time, "trying to provide itself with alternative histories, languages, and political self-creations" (178). Literature helps re-shape the nation by providing alternate representations of Irish life and by acknowledging the self-creations of an Irish *demos*. The texts examined in this chapter do the important work of decolonizing the nation and opening space to shape a democratic nation that recognizes

the authority of the *demos*. Even so, representation is still a problem, and it is written into the texts that enact the authority of the nation to define and govern itself.

Fortunately, these texts do not stand alone in creating a national identity. The moment of the Irish Free State's conception coincided with the modernist movement in literature that saw great rebellions against traditional form and imperial voices. The next chapter will address some of the issues of representation raised in this chapter by considering the influence of James Joyce. The publication of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1916 brought into question the developing Irish national identity. Using narrative techniques developed in the modernist literary movement, Joyce gives voice to a character that is fighting both the imperial control of cultural identity and the inadequate attempt at a new national identity. Joyce fulfills the progress and limitations of modernist narrative techniques in playing out modes of representation and agency. Like the literary texts of the Celtic Revival, his novel does not work in a vacuum, but in relation to political texts and cultural movements that reconfigure the space of Ireland into an independent nation. In the fight for democratic representation for the *demos*, Joyce reveals another weapon against imperialism.

CHAPTER III

NATION AND SELF: LOCATING THE SINGULAR VOICE IN THE
BATTLE FOR DEMOCRATIC AGENCY

In an early scene in James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,

young Stephen grapples with who he is and where he belongs in the world. Stephen

experiences displacement: The majority of his days now spent in a boarding school rather

than in the home he knows, Stephen feels lost, afraid, and unsure of his identity. Turning

to the inside cover of his Geography book, he reads what he had written there:

> *Stephen Dedalus*
> *Class of Elements*
> *Clongowes Wood College*
> *Sallins*
> *County Kildare*
> *Ireland*
> *Europe*
> *The World*
> *The Universe* (Joyce 12).

He starts with himself and moves outward to build the world around him: the classroom

where he sits, the boarding school where he now resides, the town, county, and country

that compose his world. Then, Stephen reads from the universe and back to the top: "That

was he," and he reads down the page again (13). As a young boy trying to make sense of

the world, Stephen contemplates his place in it. Each dominion that he builds outward

from himself shapes his identity, and yet he always returns to himself, his name, and his

voice. Stephen processes the concept of identity like many people do. He questions how the order that surrounds him shapes his voice and he wonders what it means to be part of the structures that make up his world. As a young person trying to create his own identity, Stephen attunes to the influences of outside forces on the development of the self.

Throughout Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen's growth into a man reveals how much the singular voice matters in understanding the world. Clearly the nation and culture influence Stephen, but it is his voice – the individual's voice – that Joyce elevates to primary importance. And this is important on so many levels. If the fight for Irish independence rests on the stance that a country should not subject people to unfair laws and unequal rights, then that fight must also rest on the belief that each person deserves the ability to represent themselves, because equal rights means that each and every individual has the right to speak and act for themselves. Joyce's novel shows the development of an individual in both personal growth and political acknowledgement from an unaccounted number to a singular voice with agency in making his own creation. Stephen's development parallels the development of the Irish nation, in that his story illuminates the reason for independence and the necessary struggles that lead to democratic agency. Joyce's novel adds perspective to the fight for independence from British control, because it provides an individual voice that speaks to the experiences that the Irish *demos* go through in order to gain authority in their own stories.

This chapter is a necessary evolution from chapter two, in that it re-centers the discussion of democratic agency on the individual. The texts of chapter one work

diligently to build an argument for a democratic Ireland, but they do so with a very narrow perspective on a national identity. The political documents and the works of the Celtic Revival of this time build a nation based on a unified vision of the Irish citizen. This vision rests on Celtic legends, traditions, and folklore that inspire a national identity of Irishness. In doing so, they lose sight of the individuals that need access to self-representation. Their fight matters, of course, as they push back against British control in both political and aesthetic representations; however, by legitimizing a particular notion of Irishness, they hinder the ability of each person to represent themselves. Amidst the fight for independence from England, Joyce's novel provides a hero for the cause of the individual. Written and published over many years leading up to 1916, *A Portrait* offers the story of the individual within the political movements of a nation. With the publication of this novel, Joyce directs the focus of the Irish postcolonial experience onto the individual. In doing so, he changes the conversation about a national identity from one that relies on a limited definition of Irishness, to one that acknowledges the self-created individual. Acting through traditional literary forms like the bildungsroman and by embracing new, modernist techniques of narration, Joyce allows for a member of the *demos* to gain democratic agency in literary representation.

To understand how Joyce accomplishes this feat of democratic agency, I investigate the choices he makes in narrative style and why they make a difference in creating agency for a voice from the *demos*. The first section of this chapter works towards an understanding of Joyce's decisions in playing with the bildungsroman form and the implications of the use and manipulation of the genre. *A Portrait* may seem to fit

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the characteristics of a novel that deals with Stephen's growth into a man, but there is much more at play here. Critics have long argued about the politicized agenda of the bildungsroman, especially in a postcolonial context, where the development of a young boy into a man is overshadowed by his development into an "Empire man." It is necessary to consider how the form is used and received traditionally and amidst the political upheavals of postcolonialism and nation building. Joyce's take on a bildungsroman iterates exactly how the individual and the world collide.

The next section considers why the changes in literary representation that we see in Joyce's novel matter to the concept of democratic agency. Through this vision of modern reality, Joyce relocates the power of agency and self-representation onto a voice from the *demos*. His novel enacts democratic representation in ways that the texts examined in chapter two could not. The modernist movement of the early twentieth century emphasizes the location of the individual as the center point of human experience, and Joyce's novel takes advantage of this perspective to feature the individual voice in the burgeoning Irish nation. Stephen may feel displaced as he sits in his classroom in his new school, and his act of writing out from himself to the universe is his first step in finding his voice in the world.

Finally, this chapter analyzes how Joyce's use of literary techniques during the modernist art movement of the early twentieth century impact how the reader sees Stephen's (and possibly Ireland's) introduction to the "democratic" world. Joyce approaches the concepts of representation discussed in this dissertation differently than the authors of the Celtic Revival in trying to present a realistic vision of the individual

experience in modern times. This requires that the vision be both introspective in the examination of how thoughts form and extroverted in considering how these thoughts perform across modern experience. Yet, the focus for Joyce always returns to the individual, and the individual's experience. Unlike Yeats, Synge, or even Pearse and Collins, Joyce does not write Stephen's story to build an imagined connection to the nation; Joyce writes the self as he is, as a singular, authoritative voice.

From Boy to (Empire?) Man: The Bildungsroman in Joyce's Hands

In his "Introduction" to the 2004 printing of Joyce's novel, Kevin Dettmar argues that *A Portrait* critiques the bildungsroman and künstlerroman forms "that perpetuated a notion of heroism wholly unsuited to the realities of life and art in the twentieth century" (Dettmar xvii). In either form, the completed work acts as a model of how to grow into one's self, but Dettmar argues this concept of the self no longer seems possible in modern times. The bildungsroman form describes the education and maturation of the main character while the künstlerroman focuses on the development of the artist. Dettmar argues that the image of the developed self or artist is nearly impossible in modern times because "much of public life consists of playing some kind of role" rather than revealing one's true self (xviii). In Stephen's story, the reader is exposed to the complicated concept of self in modern times. Stephen tries on many different masks to fit the image that he thinks he needs to convey at different points in his life. We see him struggle with each identity, wondering if he really embodies the characteristics that the mask represents. His ultimate growth comes when he realizes he can be whomever he wants. Dettmar's position resonates within conversations about *A Portrait*, in that it points to

significant concerns about whether a bildungsroman/künstlerroman novel provides a satisfactory approach to understanding self and society during the early twentieth century.

A plethora of critics have entered this discussion to argue related points. In his 2007 article "Time Drops in Decay," Andrew Gibson emphasizes the historical context surrounding Stephen's development between 1882 and 1903 in an effort to equate Stephen's formation to Ireland's formation. Gibson believes that what Joyce was saying about his own formation or *bildung* in a colonial culture could be transferred onto the nation and how its formation of independence could be understood: by looking internally. By this, Gibson means that the reader should see the development of the character Stephen as the development of the character of the country. Gibson argues that what the reader sees in personal growth – including advances and retreats – we must also see as part of the development of Ireland. This allows for mistakes to be made in the creation of the nation that come from human error, from basic human flaws. Gibson approves of the bildungsroman form as an avenue to investigate Ireland's independence and maturity.

Jed Esty agrees, to some extent, in his 2012 text *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. Esty points to similarities between Stephen's formation as a modern, civilized man and Ireland's formation as an independent, modern nation. Where Esty deviates from Gibson's point is in the halted, unfinished project that Stephen, *A Portrait*, and the country of Ireland as a whole attain. Esty does not see the novel as a model of modern bildung at all. He points out that Stephen never really "forms" into anything: his bildungsroman is halted by modernist and colonial forces (375-6). This brings up the question: to what model of maturity does

Stephen's bildung (or Ireland's bildung) seek to reach? Is "maturity" equivalent to civilization? For example, does the concept of growth for both the man and the nation require conformity to ruling forces? To Esty, Joyce's novel – written in the midst of the fight for independence and in the midst of the author's maturation – cannot yet answer these questions. The novel mirrors the unfinished project of an independent Ireland and the possible faults or potentialities cannot yet show their implications.

While Esty sees this as a shortcoming of the novel, Gregory Castle expounds upon why this makes *A Portrait* a perfect example of a modern bildungsroman. In "Coming of Age in the Age of Empire: Joyce's Modernist *Bildungsroman*," Castle argues that *A Portrait* critiques the genre while retaining its formal structure at the same time. As a result, Joyce's attempt at the form provides avenues to change the narrative and consider new norms of human development that have been marginalized or heterodox beforehand (Castle 365). In doing so, Joyce opens up the possibilities for the bildungsroman form to other narratives outside the conventions of English social and political life (363). Castle believes that Joyce has altered the form to make it more amenable to change. Castle explains that, traditionally, the bildungsroman was seen as creating an independent individual that was needed for liberty and democracy and thus, it cannot contain a colonial condition or legitimize a colonial purpose (375). In Joyce's novel, Castle recognizes an attempt to legitimate an independent voice in Stephen. He concludes that *A Portrait* targets ideologies and institutions "that posit as their goal the smooth socialization of the viable subject into the dominant class" (378). Castle opens the discussion of these critics to much larger questions about the purpose behind utilizing

traditional narrative genres to understand the development of an individual and a country during modern independence movements.

These three critical approaches to Joyce's novel and the bildungsroman lay important groundwork for understanding how Joyce's narrative may work and what weight it carries in the discussion of creating a democratic self. The first section of this chapter focuses on Joyce's manipulation of the bildungsroman: how he uses the traditional genre, how he breaks away from it, and how his work helps to perpetuate the vital role of the singular voice within the burgeoning Irish Free State. Throughout the section, theorists on Joyce, the novel, and the postcolonial experience play a fundamental role in understanding the breadth of *A Portrait* and its location among the time and texts discussed in chapter two. In narrowing the focus to the individual, I argue that the part Stephen plays during Ireland's independence movement enacts a democratic agency for an individual necessary to counterpoint the narrow national identity of Irishness and to push the democratization of a nation.

The limitations of the national Irish identity examined in chapter two give reason to refocus attention onto the individual rather than the whole nation. Joyce uses the bildungsroman form in *A Portrait* to narrow perspective onto Stephen. *A Portrait* describes Stephen's growth from a young boy first sent off to boarding school, to a young man on the brink of adulthood. *A Portrait* fits the traditional mold of the bildungsroman in many ways; for instance, the narrator describes Stephen's mental growth from childhood to young adulthood. Early in the text when Stephen is a young boy, the narrator emphasizes sensory stimulants and Stephen's perceptions of them. Within the

first few pages, Stephen's world is described by what a young boy experiences physically: the image of his father's monocle and hairy face, the warmth and subsequent chill of wetting the bed, the scent of his mother, and the shouts and cries of other children on the playground (Joyce 3-4). Attention to the sights and sounds immediate to Stephen reveal the early developmental stages where Stephen begins his journey.

In adolescence, Stephen's development takes the shape of questioning the foundations of his educational and spiritual growth. Stephen believes that "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. […] He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (141). He becomes aware of how his surroundings shape his thinking and questions what power he holds over the influences upon him. In this way, Joyce points out the possessive collectivism that Romanticized Irish nationalism became. The Irish *demos* has essentially become a mob that both Stephen and Joyce reject. Stephen wants to elude the traps of the structures that surround him so that he can figure out his true self beyond the names or identities placed upon him.

The narrator describes the gritty reality of life in the early twentieth century amidst political and economic forces that define Ireland and Europe at the time. Stephen tries to relate his experiences to those of his country: "He, too, returned to his old life at school and all his novel enterprises fell to pieces. The commonwealth fell, the loan bank closed its coffers and its books on a sensible loss, the rules of life which he had drawn about himself fell into desuetude" (86). When Stephen tries to fall back into normative structures and behaviors, like school, he does not break free of the boundaries located

there. Just as the country falls into desuetude by relying on the past to define the present, so too does Stephen when he does not take an active role in his growth. His agency diminishes when his voice is silenced by the rules of the culture that encompasses him.

A Portrait fits the traditional mold of the bildungsroman in Stephen's growth from a boy to a young man, and his experience is defined by the conditions of the ruling cultures that surround him. As the critics mentioned above demonstrate, extensive conversations exist regarding the inherent link between the bildungsroman and the ruling culture in which this genre thrives. These discussions focus on the role the bildungsroman plays in perpetuating cultural norms in the development of an individual into an upstanding representation of the dominant culture. The bildungsroman depicts the attempt at integration of a youth (Stephen) into existing systems (Ireland and the Catholic church) that require conformity. The cost is a loss of individuality and autonomy to define the self.

Earlier, I mentioned that Irish nationalism because a form of possessive collectivism that attempts to create a singular image of Irishness that Joyce rejects. Rebecca Walkowitz explains the concept of possessive collectivism in how we discuss the influence of literature on politics. In *Born Translated*, Walkowitz states that a nation is both a collection of individuals and a collective individual, and that "Literary works belong to the nation because they are the embodiment of its internal spirit or genius, and we know the nation has a spirit or genius because it has literary works to show for it" (Walkowitz 26). The concept of the nation forms around the culture and lives depicted in novels; thus, novels are considered the national culture and end up creating a very

specific view of what it is like to live in or be of a certain nation. This notion becomes an identity that literature creates, but that it also then must conform to if it wants to be part of the idea of national literature. As my analysis explains, Joyce is not interested in fulfilling this role as it had been composed by authors of the Celtic Revival. Joyce is very much involved in writing to understand what it means to be Irish, but he does so from his own, unique perspective.

What Stephen experiences through the push to conform in *A Portrait* is an act of displacement because he does not consent to follow the norms placed on him by the new Irish national identity. Stephen acknowledges the influences of family, church, and the nation on his identity, but he seeks to fulfill his own needs in relation to the world around him. When his desires do not fit the mold of Irishness, he essentially becomes subaltern: his desires are not acknowledged by the political, and thus his representation does not count within the context of the Irish nation. *A Portrait* follows the rules of the bildungsroman, but because Stephen's story takes place in the midst of political upheaval, the idea of a necessary national identity imposes on his individual identity. Ireland seeks to define what it means to be Irish so that it can differentiate itself from the Empire; but in doing so, Ireland ignores multiple voices and turns the *demos* into a mob. The bildungsroman could reinforce the mob-mentality of Irish nationalism, just like it reinforces the assimilation of a young boy into an Empire man. However, Joyce provides Stephen opportunities to explore his individuality, beyond the confines of form and nationalism.

While some point to the dangerous restrictions that the bildungsroman may place on an individual's freedom to be whomever they want, other critics see the genre as an avenue to individual agency within dominating systems. Joseph Slaughter, for instance, investigates the role of the bildungsroman in the development of the rights of every person. Throughout *Human Rights, Inc.*, he describes the bildungsroman as "the condition of possibility for human personality development" (Slaughter 96). Slaughter's focus on possibility is unique in that he directs his discussion towards the unlimited growth potential of a character that a bildungsroman represents. The character's development could take many shapes, and the possibilities depend on the contexts within the novel that influence it.

For Stephen in *A Portrait*, the physical, emotional, and mental growth in becoming a man takes all kinds of epiphanies and humiliations. During his first days at boarding school, Stephen experiences emotional upheavals in trying to locate his experiences alongside those of his classmates. He marvels when Fleming colors in the picture of the earth green with maroon clouds – the very same colors as Dante's two brushes (Joyce 12). Stephen does not understand how Fleming chose colors that are so important to him without having been told their significance. In that moment, Stephen becomes aware of how shared culture can build a connection to others in his community. Fleming expresses his view of the earth in colors significant to his upbringing and his own Irish experience, and Stephen begins to understand how the culture that he and Fleming share build a common, collective mentality.

Other times during his early years at school, Stephen feels extremely alone in his development. When Wells asks Stephen if he kisses his mother every night before bedtime, Stephen answers honestly that he does; after being ridiculed, he changes his answer, and is met with more laughter. Stephen "felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment. What was the right answer to the question?" (11). As Stephen struggles with what he understands as right and wrong in relation to what others think, he reveals an important stage of his development. Stephen tries to think logically through the right answer to Wells' question, but he has not yet developed a concept of social morality that re-categorizes his mother into a sexualized woman. Stephen does not yet understand how his mother performs different roles in different contexts or how society might define a norm of a mother-son relationship.

Slaughter acknowledges the story that a bildungsroman tells as an integral part of the human experience and considers how that drives cultural norms and societal foundations. Slaughter defines *Bildungsroman* as a word that

> denotes simultaneously image and image making, culture and cultivation, form and formation, *Bildung* names an achieved state as well as a process of humanistic socialization that cultivates a universal force of human personality (*Bildungstrieb*) that is naturally inclined to express itself through the social media of the nation-state and citizenship. (Slaughter 92-3)

What he describes here is the evolution of Stephen as well as of the evolution of life in revolutionary Ireland. For a novel to be a bildungsroman, it must show the growth of an individual, but it must also reveal the society at work in creating the individual. *A Portrait* depicts an image of Stephen by how he conforms to - or rebels against - the

family, church, and school systems in which he resides. The novel illustrates the

development of an individual and it reveals the method by which the individual is made

by conforming to or denying cultural norms. Because of the changes taking place in

Ireland during this time, Stephen is forced to withstand attacks on his individuality from

multiple forces.

Slaughter directly ties the image of the citizen to a nation-state in which the

citizen thrives. In a nation where individuals are given equal rights and agency in the

formation of laws, this may be true. However, the colonial situation in Ireland deprives a

large body of subjects of the ability to act with agency on their own behalf. If the

bildungsroman describes the education of the youth, the question must be raised: to what

role are they being developed? Are they citizens who have authority to shape their

society, or are they subjects that must obey the rules of the governing system? Edward

Said points to the education of youth in colonial schools as an example of the

insurmountable colonial condition:

> And out of that learning process millions grasped the fundamentals of modern
> life, yet remained subordinate dependents of an authority based elsewhere than in
> their lives. Since one of the purposes of colonial education was to promote the
> history of France or Britain, that same education also demoted the native history.
> There were always the Englands, Frances, Germanys, Hollands as distant
> repositories of the Word, for all the contradictions developed during the years of
> productive collaboration. Stephen Dedalus is a famous example of someone who
> discovers these facts with unusual force. (Said 75)

Said's statement points to the major flaw of Slaughter's stance: while the bildungsroman

holds the opportunity for individual agency within a nation-state, it ignores the position

of the educator as key-master in attaining such agency. Colonized education deems local history and culture as primitive and parochial; thus, they are left out of the curriculum and students learn the norms of the colonizing power, which do not always include them as part of the political.

At Clongowes Wood College, for instance, Stephen recognizes the influence of British control on his education. During math class, Father Arnall creates competition among the boys and gives each team the names York and Lancaster after the houses in the War of the Roses (Joyce 9). The young boys cheer on their sides, yelling out support for figures in a centuries-old war for the British crown. Joyce emphasizes how much British history imposes on all subjects of education in this scene, even illustrating how other forms of institutional cultivation (Catholic school) reinforce the boys' positions as subjects of something greater than their selves. Stephen counteracts this influence by engaging in his own education through the world in contact: "All the leisure which his school life left him was passed in the company of subversive writers whose gibes and violence of speech set up a ferment in his brain before they passed out of it into his crude writings" (68). Throughout his development in young adulthood, Stephen learns on his own beyond the walls of the classroom about the world and experiences that shape him.

Meanwhile, when Stephen returns home for Christmas and gets promoted to sit with the adults at Christmas dinner, he listens intently to their political conversations and notices the strangeness of opinions within his family. Joyce places a lot of focus on Irish politics throughout *A Portrait*, and he consistently pokes fun at the foundations of the characters' beliefs. For example, Stephen's dad, Mr. Casey, and Dante's discussion of the

Church's role in Charles Parnell's downfall quickly turns into name calling and clowning. Mr. Dedalus yells out "Tub of guts!" in reaction to Dante's unalterable stance with the Church, making faces and turning politics into farce (28-9). Joyce seems to act out the concerns that Said verbalizes through his use of the bildungsroman to reinforce conceptions of the civilized subject. Dante's continued support of the Catholic church, even in its involvement in the demise of Parnell, reveals her dependence on the Church to authorize what is important to her. Dante prioritizes the moral laws as laid out by the Church over possibilities for independence that Parnell represents.

If Stephen's growth is viewed as fulfillment of the "primitive" boy becoming a colonized or Irish subject, he does not reach the potential of a bildungsroman that Slaughter describes; however, progress toward individual agency is clearly made in Stephen's story. In one chapter of *Human Rights, Inc.*, Slaughter links the *bildungsroman* to the modern understanding of time and chronology in the connection of a linear plot to the development of a human being. He explains that the use of linear plot to describe human development in a novel allows for a concrete depiction of modernization that attributes coherency of meaning and importance to human experiences (Slaughter 107-8). Developing an individual along a linear plotline is the development of a historical consciousness; that is, the connection of human development to contemporaneous historical events ultimately ties the individual's growth to the nation-state in which it thrives. From the onset, Stephen grapples with his location of self, but always tries to understand who he is by his relation to the people and events around him. Even though

the school he attends may reinforce messages of conformity, Stephen acknowledges the importance of Irish history and the political climate of Ireland at the time.

The nation is a narrative construct throughout the novel; there is a layer of narration through the use of national symbols, like Dante's brush, discussions of Parnell, and recognition of Irish figures like Hamilton Rowan and Wolfe Tone. Stephen attunes to the political arguments of his time and how they shape the state of the nation. There's a clear connection between the developments of Irish independence and his growth into an independent person and artist. To that end, Slaughter explains, that "Cultivated within the constraints of the state/citizen bind [found in the *Bildungsroman*], modern historical consciousness fosters an awareness of being subject to the law—of being a subject of legal rights and responsibilities, like anyone else" (Slaughter 109). Through his growing awareness of himself and the nation, Stephen develops into an individual who questions authority and the rules of the systems at work (Church and England). That his story takes place during Ireland's building rebellion against the British crown means that Stephen's growth must cultivate a self who creates his own agency, while the Irish nation attempts to do the same.

We already begin to see Stephen's identity in the lines that open this chapter. Even when he searches for his place in his world, Stephen does not include England as an imperative part of his identity. In the inside cover of his textbook, Stephen lists Ireland as his country, and beyond that, Europe (Joyce 12). England does not make the list, and it does not factor into his attempts to locate himself. From early on, Stephen builds his agency based on a subjectivity different than the one being imposed on him, not only

within the narrative, but also as a result of the narrative form. Stephen enacts the growth of a bildungsroman narrative, but he does so as a product of a colonial, rebellious condition. At one point in the novel, Stephen states: "—This race and this country and this life produced me, he said. I shall express myself as I am;" and he continues "—My ancestors threw off their language and took another, Stephen said. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" (179). As Stephen gains agency through his growth as a person and as a writer, he resists the confines that both the empire and an independence-seeking Ireland try to place on him. He wants to be his own person, without the limitations that a connection to a nation entails. In a sense, this includes the restrictions of the bildungsroman form, as it relies so heavily on maturing into a subject-citizen.

By the end of the novel, Stephen seeks freedom from the expectations and standards set on him by family, nation, and Church, and he leaves Ireland. In his penultimate journal entry, Stephen shares that his mother supports his decision to leave and wants him to find himself away from home (Joyce 225). She wants him to be able to understand his true emotions and purpose free from any constraints. In his excitement, Stephen sees this as an opportunity "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (225). His purpose in leaving Ireland grows beyond him, with that final statement. Stephen seeks an Irishness that does not exist within the conditions of colonial Ireland or the nationalistic Ireland taking shape. He believes the most assured way to define himself as an Irishman is to leave the country and see what he is made of.

Stephen's bildungsroman is not over at the end of the novel; his development continues beyond postcoloniality and national identity in the transnational landscape beyond Ireland.

Slaughter values the bildungsroman genre for its ability to allow growth no matter the boundaries placed on the characters and their contexts. Slaughter explains his interest in the *Bildungsroman* as found in "the transformative effects of plot and in the ways in which novels attribute the agency for that narrative transformation to the persons within the novels themselves. The *Bildungsroman* is ideally designed to effect such a transfer of narratorial agency" (Slaughter 92). Within the text, Stephen possesses the agency to shape himself through a narrative devoted to his growth into an individual voice. In giving Stephen the space to learn, make mistakes, and question his surroundings, the bildungsroman provides freedom that the colonial subaltern and a collectivized *demos* cannot attain. Consider the voices of the people portrayed in some of the texts discussed in chapter two. In "The Unwritten Epitaph," Robert Emmet has no voice and goes completely unheard: an anonymous and unaccounted subject of the British Empire. Yeats's early poems personify key figures in the Irish independence movement as he sees fit, with an agenda to romanticize or ridicule their leadership. And throughout the political documents discussed, the narration of a new nation takes the liberty to define and limit the characteristics of an Irish citizen. In *A Portrait*, Joyce takes advantage of the purpose of the bildungsroman to allow for the growth of an individual free from these restrictions. Stephen's mission is "To discover the mode of life or of art whereby your

spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom" (219). Joyce's use of the bildungsroman allows Stephen to do just that.

As the criticism of the novel and the bildungsroman form reveals, *A Portrait* significantly alters the trajectory of the bildungsroman as a producer of a nation's citizenry. Joyce confronts the issue of the development of an individual amidst the dissolution of colonial power and dissenting national voices. Stephen's narrative is a bildungsroman, but the systems that are meant to shape him into an abiding citizen-subject are not steady. As a result, some critics see the novel (and therefore Stephen) as a failed attempt at a complete bildungsroman without the final image of a fully developed agency because of the lack of a national authority as a guiding structure. With the help of Slaughter's interpretation of the form, it is possible to see Stephen's bildungsroman in a different light. Because the political structures surrounding the composition of *A Portrait* are in flux, this bildungsroman is not confined to portraying the growth of a primitive boy into an Empire man. Instead, Stephen's exile is independence from cultural impositions on what his final image might be. For Stephen – and possibly Ireland – this potentially means unfettered freedom and unlimited individual agency to become something greater beyond the confines of imperialism and nationalism.

Listening from Exile, Joyce Hears a Singular Voice Speak

The timing of Joyce's composition of the novel within political revolution also coincides with a turn to acknowledge the singular voice and how authors portray the individual in relation to the world. Writing *A Portrait* while living in France, Joyce changes the perspective of the Irish experience during independence through a self-

induced exile from the political and cultural shifts shaping Ireland.[17] Even so, Joyce's

novel is as much a part of the imagined community of the developing Irish nation as the

works of the Celtic Revival. As Brian Fallon insists in *An Age of Innocence*, Joyce

seemed to hate the political turmoil between Ireland and Great Britain, but he kept in

touch by regularly reading *The Irish Times* (Fallon 63). Joyce began his work on *A

Portrait* in 1904, and it first reached readers through serial publication in *The Egoist*[18]

starting in 1914. Readers of *The Egoist* spanned across national borders, which meant

that Joyce reached audiences both within and outside of the confines of Ireland's fight for

independence. As a result, the speaker/listener relationship between the novel and its

readership allowed for discussions to arise about the colonial subject's experience in

Ireland and the representation of Stephen as an individual voice from the *demos*.

Representation of the singular voice plays an integral part in understanding the

colonial/postcolonial condition. In *A Portrait*, Joyce employs literary techniques analyzed

in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* to highlight the individual and elevate a voice from the

collective *demos* through representation without corroboration.

In the previous chapter, I discuss how Spivak's theory on the speaker/listener

relationship propels the subaltern into a position of acknowledgement, and thus into an

accounted member of the *demos*. Yet even in this state, the *demos* still have not gained

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[17] In *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), Pascale Casanova explains how Joyce's self-exile was an act of political dissent. This seminal text to the impact of Joyce in Paris provides an influential reading of Joyce's Irishness and the importance of the Irish case for showing "the entire range of literary solutions to the problem of domination" (320).
[18] *The Egoist: An Individualist Review* was a London literary magazine of the Modernist movement, published 1914-1919.

access to a speaker/listener relationship in which they speak for themselves and are heard by the political powers in control. One of the ways in which Joyce's novel enacts a representation of the *demos* is by its all-encompassing focus on the development of one individual and his desire to be free from constraints on his personhood; that is, free from religious, cultural, and political constraints that minimize his experience as mundane and unessential to the national imaginary. By locating Stephen as the center of attention and giving the entire space of the novel over to describing him, Joyce elevates his voice to one that deserves acknowledgement. In doing so, Joyce bridges the divide between the unaccounted and the counted within the political by engaging readers of *The Egoist* and *A Portrait* in a story about an Irish-Catholic boy with little agency over his own life, at least thus far.

Classical texts often describe the epic lives of people that hold power within the imagined communities of the nation, the empire, and the world.[19] The turn into the eighteenth century brought about a rise in realism within novels that sought to depict life as it really exists across class divides. Erich Auerbach studies the attempts at realism in novels and its ability to act democratically in his seminal text *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Written in exile with limited access to a full library, Auerbach turned his attention to analyzing primary texts: how they depict reality and whether or not they did so with ulterior motives (moral lessons, societal standards, validated culture norms, unifying national identity, etc.). Auerbach points out

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[19] For more on this, see Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* and Albert Guerard's *The Triumph of the Novel.*

that texts with motives in creating a unifying concept - a universal Truth, if you will - often ignore the subjects and objects that make up everyday life (Auerbach 15). Consequently, for the purpose of the universal Cause, the singular gets lost in abstraction.

I point to just such a scenario in the previous chapter's discussion of the Celtic Revival's nationalistic poetry. Yeats's early poetry, in particular, is both touted and criticized when located in the discussion of a national, cultural, and political identity for Ireland. Throughout these works, Yeats uses Irish mythology and emphasizes a provincialism of Ireland as key aspects to building a national identity. His poetry and plays overwhelm the reader with allusions to Irish mythical heroes, folklore, and symbols in an effort to influence Irish national culture. Yeats creates and/or reconstructs symbols in many of his "nationalistic" poems, including "Easter 1916," as mentioned previously, as well as in many others, like "The Rose Tree," "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory," and "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death." Yeats's intention to create a "national poetry" is clear. The poems in their context reveal how he attempts to manipulate symbols to effect change in society. This is especially relevant to postcolonial theories of subjectivity and dehumanization discussed in the previous chapter, because the singular voice is drowned out by bellows for a unifying Irishness. By turning real, singular experiences into symbols, Yeats overshadows any images of the other.

Symbolic works like Yeats's poetry depict a romanticized or nationalistic representation of human experience; however, they construe what *should* be important to human experience according to a specific agenda and they take the perspective of a higher authority. In *Mimesis*, Auerbach questions the underlying, unifying intents of such

works and asks the reader to return to the real. He turns to the *King James Bible* and *The Odyssey* as reference points on how literature approaches representation of man. As Auerbach explains in reference to the writing of "Genesis":

> What he [the Biblical narrator] produced, then, was not primarily oriented toward 'realism' […] it was oriented toward truth. Woe to the man who did not believe it! […] The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality—it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy (15).

His study of the *Bible* points to the constant confrontation in its writing between a reflection of the real to which readers can empathize and the need to supply guidance for the interpretation of Truth. Auerbach points out the space between reality and Truth that the *Bible* purports in its creation of unfathomable distance between human and God, and the authority God holds over human. The *Bible* explains that humans would not exist without God, and to try to live without Him would lead to death, destruction, and despair. In some ways, Irish-nationalist writing acts similarly, in that it sacrifices real, individual stories to make a stronger case for the idea of the nation[20].

To some extent, the idea of the Irish nation is built on two authoritative components: its distinctive culture from Britain and its supposed cohesion under the auspices of the Catholic church. *A Portrait* addresses both components in a way that much of literature of the time felt it must to consider the authoritative influences on life in Ireland. In *Catholic Fiction and Social Reality in Ireland, 1873-1922*, James Murphy

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[20] As discussed in chapter two, Yeats' and Gregory's play *Kathleen ni Houlihan* provides an example of such a message, as Michael sacrifices his life plans to fight for the Old Woman.

provides an extensive survey of Irish literature that specifically addresses the Catholic

component of Irish life. Murphy aims to use Irish Catholic fiction as a barometer of

social, class, and political change in Ireland at a pivotal time in its move towards

independence. As he argues, "it was a key period of transition for Irish society and one in

which fiction was often used in a plainly partisan or polemical way to advocate new ways

forward for society" (Murphy 1). By examining over ninety works, Murphy reveals just

how extensive the influence of the Church was on people and the nation.

Catholicism in Ireland went through many iterations before the early twentieth

century discussed in Murphy's book and the contentious relationship between Ireland,

England, and the Catholic church is far too large of a topic to divert to here[21]. However,

Murphy's text provides an important glimpse into this relationship at the time of Joyce,

the Celtic Revival, and the early nineteenth century independence movement. Murphy

briefly contextualizes that, though many Irish were Catholic, religion was not a big part

of life in the early nineteenth century: "Some estimates of Sunday mass attendance in

prefamine Ireland, for instance, put the figure at around only 40 percent of the Catholic

population" (Murphy 3). This changed over the course of the nineteenth century,

especially influenced by Ireland's first cardinal Paul Cullen (3). Under Cullen, the

number of priests in Ireland doubled, and changes were made to the role of the Church in

everyday life. As a result, a "conservative, rural, traditional Catholic Ireland" was created

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[21] For more information on this topic, see Patrick Corish's *The Irish Catholic Experience* (1985) and
Emmet Larkin's *The Historical Dimension of Irish Catholicism* (1984).

(4). Under the gaze of the Church, life and morality were defined and regulated to fit the beliefs of Catholicism.

Murphy acknowledges another theory on why Catholicism took such a strong hold on Ireland that comes from Emmet Larkin. Larkin argues that culture and language played a significant role in the rise of Catholicism in Ireland in the nineteenth century. Larkin insists "that a vigorous adherence to Catholicism became a substitute for the Irish language as a defining characteristic of national identity" (Murphy 5). Under British law, Ireland's education system had to conform to teaching English as the primary language. For each generation educated under British control, the English language superseded the use of Irish until that component of Irish identity was almost completely lost. Catholicism stepped in to language's place, filling a need to differentiate Irish culture from the colonizing power. To many, "Irish" and "Catholic" became inseparable, and the nationalist movement used religion as another reason to fight against colonial subjection.

But, in the same way that England forced its own culture and social mores onto Ireland, Catholicism also sought to claim authority over the individual and to subject Irish people to rules that constrained individual freedoms. In *A Portrait*, the reader encounters a character that does not amend to the overlying concepts of Truth, Church, or nationalism. Stephen speaks from the perspective of a child in the process of learning what the world deems to be true, and throughout his journey, he questions every guiding hand. In one scene, Stephen debates with his classmates over who writes the best lines of poetry and adamantly defends Lord Byron. His classmates ridicule him and threaten to turn him in to the teachers for promoting an immoral heretic who is a mere poet for the

uneducated (Joyce 70). Stephen stands strong. His classmates position themselves against Byron because of what they have been told by teachers, but Stephen's voice is unadulterated. Even so, in fighting with the boys over these opinions, Stephen happens upon a more urgent realization: "All the description of fierce love and hatred which he had met in books had seemed to him therefore unreal" (71). The emotions Stephen experiences during the conflict with his classmates is nothing like the portrayals of great conflict in his books. He realizes that these books romanticized real experiences, and he begins to distrust that they can reflect his actual life and his real, human experience.

Stephen's epiphany in this moment mirrors Auerbach's concerns about anti-mimetic texts like the *Bible*. Stephen's distrust of the depiction of life in his books makes him question all of the structures that surround him. Later, when Stephen contemplates joining the priesthood, he feels no connection: "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (Joyce 141). Stephen struggles with submitting to the ideas and structure of religion because he acknowledges a disconnect between his experiences and those his surrounding culture uplifts.

At one point, Stephen states: "You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (180). Ambiguity of the word "by" in this quote is rich: if taken to mean he will try to live within the constructions of nationality, language, and religion, then Stephen admits that this will take true effort on his part. However, his statement could also mean that he intends to go past ("fly by") those constructions

without getting trapped in them. Either way, conforming is not in Stephen's nature.

Stephen's view of Devin, a fervent Catholic, shows his growing issue with the Church's

control over individual thought. As Murphy explains, "heroic Ireland has become

compliant Ireland, under the influence of Catholicism. The Ireland of the wild

imagination has turned to tame conformity. For Stephen true Ireland is not to be found

amid the tame geese of Catholic Ireland" (Murphy 140). As previously discussed,

Stephen's bildungsroman occurs amid upheaval of the foundational structures around

him, which gives him a freedom to mature his conscience across the dominating forces of

colonialism, Catholicism, and the cultural unification process of Irish nationalism. As a

result, Stephen develops an individuality unique to the postcolonial experience: one that

ultimately locates Stephen among a new subaltern class that dissents from these

dominating tropes. He can see the limitations of the structures around him, including in

how the aesthetic attempts to represent the real.

The other style Auerbach examines in *Mimesis* focuses on an objective,

democratic representation of human experience in literature, as evident in *The Odyssey*.

Auerbach describes the representation of reality in *The Odyssey* as "fully externalized

description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in

the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, few elements of historical

development and of psychological perspective" (Auerbach 23). In such a style of

representation, there is evenness to all of the subjects and objects described in the text.

The narration equalizes each part of the story so that everything is accounted for and

nothing is left unheard. Auerbach describes how in one scene in *The Odyssey*, multiple

backgrounds and perspectives are given, and given in equal balance to each other. The reader does not have to search for hidden meanings or agendas because everything is apparent and in the open. Unlike the texts that sought to define a Truth, *The Odyssey* fulfills a democratic operation of literature: "to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable *in all their parts,* and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relations" (my italics, 6). Analogous to Rancière's acknowledgement of all parts in the political, Auerbach has hit upon the very foundations of literature as a democratic endeavor.

In *A Portrait*, Joyce captures the style of writing that Auerbach praises in *The Odyssey* and other works of note. The central figure holding together the observations in the novel is Stephen. From him, the reader gains a reflection of reality in 1904 Ireland. Joyce attends to details that other authors may deem mundane, such as sensory experiences the surround everyday life, or Stephen's private, emotional reactions to perceived moments of discomfort. For instance, the narrator describes Stephen during writing lessons: "he sat with his arms folded, listening to the slow scraping of the pens" (Joyce 40). Stephen's position in the classroom, his lack of activity, and the soundtrack of slow, repetitive motions of the pens, all perform together at the same level. Joyce does not explain why Stephen's arms are crossed or what the other students write. He gives due diligence to the moment in relation to a center (Stephen) and in a context that readers may recognize (a classroom). Subjects and objects alike get equal description. Stephen, too, becomes enthralled with every-day actions. When he does not return to Clongowes, he helps the dairy farmer in deliveries: "Whenever the car drew up before a house he

waited to catch a glimpse of a well scrubbed kitchen or of a softly lighted hall and to see how the servant would hold the jug and how she would close the door" (Joyce 55). Throughout Stephen's growth, and thus throughout the novel, Joyce acts democratically in his narration of life. He gives Stephen space to develop and reflect on objective experiences.

Auerbach's analysis of the texts in *Mimesis* always works towards understanding the act of representation in literature. As he describes in his thesis, he investigates the two predominating styles of literary representations of reality in European culture (Auerbach 23). Even though he limits his investigation to texts within the western literary canon, many of his findings help validate the works of fiction outside of the canon, which in turn, helps a reader to question what is (and is not) being represented in western culture. In his chapter on *The Odyssey*, for instance, Auerbach points out that readers of the epic learn about only two servants throughout the entire text: "Thus we become conscious of the fact that in the Homeric poems life is enacted only among the ruling class—others appear only in the role of servants to that class" (Auerbach 21). The lack of the "other" in *The Odyssey* illustrates how the subaltern go unrecognized within the culture. They do not gain recognition as part of the polis that makes Greek civilization. The servants' work is implied as part of life, but their personhoods do not matter. In that same sense, the lack of objective representations of the Irish *demos* within the English literary canon (and in some of the works of the Celtic Revival) reveals a similar social system that ignores the existence of an other.

For the 50th anniversary edition of *Mimesis*, Edward Said wrote an introduction in which he confronts the challenges to the scope[22] of Auerbach's original study. Said says the main methodological point for Auerbach is that "in order to be able to understand a humanistic text, one must try to do so as if one is the author of that text, living the author's reality, undergoing the kind of life experiences intrinsic to his or her life, and so forth" (Said xiii). Said speaks from the postcolonial sphere of literary criticism. His point reflects a push by postcolonial critics to help readers imagine themselves outside of their realities.[23] In each chapter of *Mimesis*, Auerbach concentrates on how the novel portrays the circumstances of life for the characters. *Mimesis* provides observations of the life and culture represented in the texts; he does not try to fit them into a western, imperial, or universal ideal of what life looks like. As Said states: "…Auerbach always comes back to the text and to the stylistic means used by the author to represent reality" (Said xxii). From that perspective, Joyce's style provides a unique perspective on the Irish colonial condition at its brink. He shapes a western form (the bildungsroman) into a democratic representation of the life of an unacknowledged other.

Auerbach's description of the democratic style of representation sheds even more light onto the Irish colonial condition and the potential for literature and aesthetics to assist in the acknowledgement of the *demos*. In the two styles of representation presented

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[22] Auerbach's *Mimesis* can be criticized for its narrow, western view; that is, speaking *for* the subaltern. Said's "Introduction" challenges that viewpoint.
[23] See: Bhabha's interstitial spaces in *The Location of Culture*; Chakrabarty's life-worlds in *Provincializing Europe;* Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*; and, Spivak's view of the humanities as the "uncoercive rearrangement of desires" from "Righting Wrongs."

in *Mimesis*, the second style beginning to gain more ground is the representation of low and high class together. For instance, in the "Fortunata" chapter, Auerbach highlights Simon Peter's integral part in the story of Christ (Auerbach 42-3). As a lowly fisherman, Simon Peter could easily go unacknowledged, yet because of his representation in the text, an other gains agency in the larger-than-life story of Christ. In this instance, the low gains access to the high and plays an integral role in the life of a most significant character. Said points to Auerbach's analysis of Dante's *Divine Comedy* as a representation of high meeting low. Said explains that "Auerbach offers the thought that for all of its investment in the eternal and immutable, the *Divine Comedy* is even more successful in representing reality as basically human" (Said xxv). Throughout *Mimesis*, Auerbach insists that the representation of reality is an active process: it is multiple voices, across class, culture, and political borders realizing and speaking for themselves.

Joyce is actively involved in this task in *A Portrait*. Stephen learns to speak for himself and decides how he wants to illustrate his thoughts and ideas in relation to the world around him. He seeks an art form that allows him to describe in words the sights and sounds of his emotions. Dante, too, actively engages in the world around her. She equally shares her beliefs with the men of the family, unwilling to take a passive stance about religion, politics, and Irish culture when she holds such strong beliefs about each. As a major influence on Stephen's life, Dante represents a voice often left out of the conversation that gains agency through what Auerbach describes as the representation of low and high on equal ground.

It is important to bring Rancière back into my discussion here, because he, too,

defends literature's ability to act democratically. Auerbach and Rancière both dissect

instances where authors break class barriers by using literature to relate stories of

ordinary people. Auerbach describes serious representations of "random individuals from

daily life" found in Stendhal and Balzac (554), while Rancière focuses on Flaubert's

"refusal to entrust literature with any message whatsoever" as evidences of democracy in

literature (*Politics* 14). As Rancière explains, literature "shifts the focus from great names

and events to the life of the anonymous" (33). Highlighting these three French authors, in

particular, is interesting because of the periods and circumstances in which they wrote.

All three authors questioned the hierarchy of literary genres while in the midst of political

upheavals in France that interrogated the ability of the aristocracy to be able to represent

the people. Their analyses bring the discussion of literature and democracy into the

modern period, where representation dominates politics and art.

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* was monumental in the turn to democratic

representation not only because it used an elevated genre to tell the story of a common

girl, but because it placed characters among the objects that shaped their realities. Much

of the narration illuminates the scene and setting by focusing on the details of Emma's

surroundings, especially in her home in Yonville. Flaubert gives equal time to his

realistic representation of the objects of her home as he does to the thoughts of Emma and

the encounters among characters. He follows the style of democratic, realistic

representation laid out by Homer in *The Odyssey*. Similar stylistic choices are evident in

A Portrait, such as the amount of time the narrator and Stephen spend on Dante's

hairbrush. Flaubert's style catches on, as we begin to see other examples of objectified

narrative in modernist texts, like Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Eliot's "The Love Song of J.

Alfred Prufrock," and Joyce's *A Portrait*.

Rancière reflects the changes in representational theories described above through

what he calls the "aesthetic regime of the arts." Subsequent to the lapse of the poetic

regime of art, which can be summarized as Plato's concept of mimesis (with all of its

limitations),[24] the aesthetic regime of the arts "dismantled this correlation between

subject matter and mode of representation" (*Politics* 32). This is a necessary step in art

and politics in order to re-imagine the relationship between a subject and a fair

representation within an aesthetic or political system. To act democratically, literature

and politics must move beyond representation in the poetic regime (search for a supreme

Truth or Ideal) and beyond an ethical immediacy (lessons of morality handed down from

an authority) towards a more realistic representation of democratic being. Like Flaubert's

emphasis on the influence of things in daily life, Rancière highlights the "sensible mode

of being" that makes up the human experience in contemporary society (Rancière *Politics*

22). The sensible mode of being relies on the senses (sensory perception); for instance, in

distinguishing what can and cannot be seen, heard, or felt. As soon as

authors/characters/readers acknowledge what can be perceived via the senses, they also

automatically acknowledge the existence of the inverse: the unheard, the unaccounted,

the subaltern.

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[24] In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato rejects mimetic art because it moves the audience further from the real object, and even further away from the "pure idea" (827).

Joyce imagines the sensible mode of being throughout *A Portrait* and throughout

Stephen's development into an individual with agency. The prioritization of the real

experience through sensory perceptions, keen observations, and admission into Stephen's

instinctual reactions allows Stephen's story to be told without restriction. Stephen's

bildungsroman signifies an entrance into western literary culture where, previously,

voices from the *demos* were not permitted. Auerbach's *Mimesis* explains how realist

novels can contribute to a more inclusive worldview. Positioned within a revolutionary

moment, *A Portrait* does not conform to a specific mode or rule of life in the political.

Stephen acknowledges the foundational norms in his life, but he does not submit to them.

He seeks freedom to choose his own path and, as an artist, to represent himself. Joyce

also takes a progressive step towards democratic agency in this novel by allowing equal

representation of Stephen's thoughts, emotions, and perceptions of the things around him.

As is revealed through this lens of inquiry, Stephen's growing agency is the beginning of

a strong representation of the singular voice and, perhaps, a democratic turn in Irish

literature at the time.

Modernism and Possessing the First-Person Pronoun: Stephen's Voice Gains Authority

Joyce manipulates the bildungsroman form in an effort to represent the undefined

space of a colonial subject coming of age at a time of political upheaval and a major push

for independence. At the same time, authors began experimenting with their writing

styles to account for life in the modern era. The Modernist art movement of the early

twentieth century turned its gaze onto the individual experience and the position of the

singular voice within the cacophony of sights and sounds of modernity. In literature, this took shape through great experimentation and antagonization of traditional literary forms. Poets ignored rules of rhyme and meter and sought out alternative methods to depict life in the modern era; confessional poetry like that of Robert Lowell and imagist poetry by William Carlos Williams fulfilled similar conceptions of writing the real to those discussed in this chapter. Lowell and Williams turned their gaze onto emotions and objects and reflected what they saw, without bias towards cultural norms. In novels, authors situated a singular voice at the center of the narrative and tried to expose modern life as experienced across the strata of self, society, culture, and politics. With variation in form came variation in perspective. In describing the early twentieth-century writing of his own time, Auerbach notes that modernist era writers "find a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness" (Auerbach 551). In their deliberate approach to representing real experiences of singular voices, Modernist writers create a profusion of voices that add new perceptions to life and culture.

The era of the modernist art movement includes the early years of the twentieth century, through World War I and the 1920s. Art during this time reacted to and reflected defining moments in world history and a broadening understanding of differences in the pace and structures of life. In her chapter, "'Goodbye Ireland I'm going to Gort,'" Marjorie Howes describes what imperialism looked like in Ireland's case during Joyce's development. Howes discusses how England often saw Ireland as the ideal space for experiments in modernism; for example, Ireland had a national school system before England, commercially advanced agriculture, and a dense railway system (Howes 61-2).

Modernism took hold in Ireland with impressive marks of progress (though mostly for the benefit of the Crown), and while the Irish people were still colonized subjects, they experienced modern life in a way that many other colonized subjects did not. Howes believes that these circumstances directly influenced the modern Irish nationalist movement. As Howes explains: "cultural nationalism sought less to return to or recreate this version of the West than to unify the Irish people around the idea of its worth" (65). This describes the foundation for the cultural nationalism propagated by authors of the Celtic Revival and political leaders that helped shape the push for independence. They did not want to regress to a time before modern advances, but they still needed to unify their call for independence around a distinctly Irish culture. They elevated symbols often associated with rural western Ireland because they stand apart from all forms of progress brought to the country through the hands of the British colonizers.

In his chapter "Modernism and Imperialism," Fredric Jameson sees Ireland as the ideal place to examine modern space and to re-classify the other. He argues that Ireland provides the perfect location and historical circumstance to test the thesis that modernist style can make space for the missing (the colonized). As he and Howes argue, Ireland's only exceptional quality compared to other modern western nations is that it is colonized (Jameson 60). If that is the case, Ireland provides a unique space in which an investigation of modernity's turn to the individual can be tested for its inclusion of unacknowledged, singular voices, or, the colonized subject. Jameson describes what this may look like in Irish modernism:

a form which on the one hand unites Forster's sense of the providential yet seemingly accidental encounters of characters with Woolf's aesthetic closure, but which on the other hand projects those onto a radically different kind of space, a space no longer central, as in English life, but marked as marginal and eccentric after the fashion of the colonized areas of the imperial system. (Jameson 60-1)

James Joyce's novels (especially those that develop Stephen Dedalus's universe) address much of what Jameson lays out in this point. In *A Portrait*, Stephen's world begins to take shape and the influences of the people around him play a significant role in developing his character. Stephen broods over comments that relatives, friends, and teacher make to him, wondering what they mean and how they communicate their feelings. Stephen's development (across *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait,* and *Ulysses*) also reveals the influence of his closely drawn community. Joyce's Dublin embodies the unique situation of Ireland within England and Europe's reach, as well as the old Ireland of Wolfe Tone and Charles Parnell and the young Ireland of Patrick Pearse and Michael Collins. *A Portrait* exemplifies the modernist text of the colonial that Jameson calls for in his chapter.

This final section focuses on some of the narrative changes that Joyce employs in *A Portrait*. Like his modernist counterparts, Joyce experiments with various narrative techniques intending to provide a different, perhaps more realistic, view of the modern Irish experience. These decisions take on added significance when we realize how much is at stake in Ireland at the time, especially in relation to individual agency as it has been shaped by the colonial condition, as well as how it could change through Irish independence and democratic representation. Joyce employs interior monologue and free-

indirect speech throughout *A Portrait* to strengthen Stephen's agency in his own

narrative. Consequentially, Stephen's thoughts gain acknowledgement and are validated

as the thoughts of an independent being. These narrative choices help build the case that

A Portrait fulfills a need for aesthetic representation of the *demos*, and it does so through

Joyce's decisions in narration.

Interior monologue serves a purpose in *A Portrait*, important overall in the

postcolonial project, to give voice to the *demos*: it allows Stephen's innermost voice to be

heard without the need for corroboration from an authoritative source. Through interior

monologue, Stephen's thoughts are central. He defines his own voice and shares his

thoughts without fear of their difference from religious, cultural, or political norms. Just

after moving to Dublin on account of his father's troubles, Stephen's internal thoughts on

his life take shape: "The causes of his embitterment were many, remote and near. He was

angry with himself for being young and the prey of restless foolish impulses, angry also

with the change of fortune which was reshaping the world about him into a vision of

squalor and insincerity" (Joyce 58). Stephen confronts the emotions he feels over

uncontrollable changes in his life. His experiences are not unique, but they are personal,

and interior monologue allows Stephen to admit to feelings that oftentimes get minimized

by others. Stephen does not worry about how his emotions get interpreted by others,

which gives him space to grow as an empathetic human. He does not submit to the

judgement of listeners, which lets him develop his own ideas beyond the accepted views

of culture.

Throughout *A Portrait*, Joyce plays with style to move narration at certain points to Stephen's internal thoughts. In "Mr. Bloom, Inside and Out: Some Topologies of the 'Initial Style' of *Ulysses*," Tony Thwaites focuses on stylistic choices in *Ulysses* but comments on how they got their start in *Portrait*. These include three elements:

> dialogue, interior monologue, and, enveloping both of these, the third-person narration. Each has its own distinctive tonality: the careful demotic speech of the dialogue, the elliptical and fragmentary nature of the interior monologues, and the frequent bareness and distantiation of the narration that may well put us in mind of the famous nail-paring artist of *A Portrait*. (363)

Instances of interior monologue in *A Portrait* depict the elliptical and fragmentary nature that Thwaites highlights, which helps depict Stephen's location in modern life. Those moments when Stephen starts thinking about an object like Dante's brush, then moves on to what its colors mean, then to what the political parties mean to his family, and back to what the brush means to him – those moments reveal the circular trail of thought and the influence of all parts on each other. Circular movements and fragmentary glimpses into his thoughts mimic life in modern times, and Stephen's development provides an interior glimpse of this.

Joyce also employs a method of dialogue called free-indirect speech to give Stephen more agency in his own storytelling. Free-indirect speech is a style of third-person narration that melds first- and third- person in communication of dialogue. Certain instances of dialogue may include qualifying statements of who is speaking, like "he said" or "he thought," which are provided by third-person narration; other times, Stephen interjects dialogue or ideas without the classification of such by the narrator. Stephen

takes over the narration and essentially blurts out his thoughts without corroboration of a narrative voice. This helps reveal Stephen's struggles with his own agency from a young age. For example, after going to confession, Stephen is shaken by what just happened:

> He closed the door and, walking swiftly to the bed, knelt beside it and covered his face with his hands. His hands were cold and damp and his limbs ached with chill. Bodily unrest and chill and weariness beset him, routing his thoughts. Why was he kneeling there like a child saying his evening prayers? To be alone with his soul, to examine, his conscience, to meet his sins face to face… (Joyce 119)

Initially, the narrator controls this scene, describing Stephen's actions and physical reactions to the act of confessing. But then Stephen's voice takes over, and he questions why he has responded to this very personal experience by kneeling like a child at night-time prayers. In that moment, the reader hears Stephen's unaltered thoughts and intense self-scrutiny. Through Stephen's voice, the reader hears how unsure he is of himself and his actions.

Joyce incorporates free-indirect speech throughout *A Portrait* to create a realistic and honest sense of Stephen's development. Through free-indirect speech, the reader gains insight into Stephen as he grows into an individual with agency in choices. In the previous scene mentioned, Stephen's insecurities overwhelm him and he questions every move and decision he makes. As a young man at college, Stephen starts to tackle these insecurities and thrive in questioning himself and his art: "He drew forth a phrase from his treasure and spoke it softly to himself: –A day of dappled seaborne clouds. The phrase and the day and the scene harmonized in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue" (Joyce 146). In this example of free-

indirect speech, Stephen allows his curiosities to take shape. He speaks a line of poetry he remembers from his readings, and he interrogates its ability to describe what he sees. He trusts his ability to think through the poetic expression and understand how it works. In the first example of free-indirect speech given here, Stephen questions himself; in this second example, Stephen trusts himself and questions how the world around him works.

Joyce employs free-indirect speech subtly throughout *A Portrait*, and some of his other works as well. Moments when narration switches from third-person narration to first-person, free-indirect speech are not always obvious. In the first example above, it could be the narrator or Stephen questioning his purpose for kneeling there like a child. But the next sentence clarifies that we are in Stephen's thoughts and he alone can answer that question. The second example reveals another exchange in narration, where Stephen takes over to share the line of poetry in his mind. Both instances are so subtle that the reader may not notice an exchange as occurred. Even so, Stephen gains control and takes agency in his narration. This shows both his development into an adult and his growth as an independent thinker who wants the agency to speak for himself. Stephen's singular voice gains authority when Joyce acknowledges his agency to speak freely through narration.

Without the use of interior monologue and free-indirect speech, Joyce would not be able to complete a depiction of an individual's growth into, and acceptance of, self-agency. Third-person narration allows the reader access into a broader, more reliable vision of Stephen's story; however, watching Stephen take control of his own story via first-person interjections throughout his development allows for a better understanding of

his individual experiences. Stephen is very aware of the modern world around him and the way it shapes his life: "He had emerged from a two years' spell of reverie to find himself in the midst of a new scene, every event and figure of which affected him intimately, disheartened him or allured and, whether alluring or disheartening, filled him always…" (68). The modernist era as portrayed in *A Portrait* brought about great change in the relationship between the individual and the world, and Stephen feels the great impact of all of this on his own self and agency.

Narrative techniques helped depict the new reality. Auerbach already sees the result of this in the early 1940s as he describes in his chapter on Virginia Woolf. Noticing the loss of authority of the author in *To the Lighthouse*, Auerbach states: "The writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatis personae" (Auerbach 534). Auerbach compares this to earlier authors like Goethe, Dickens, or Zola who wrote with a "certain knowledge what their characters did, what they felt and thought while doing it, and how their actions and thoughts were to be interpreted" (535). As evidenced in Joyce's novel, the third-person, "objective" narrator no longer signifies *the* authoritative voice. Joyce's *A Portrait* provides one of many examples of modernist texts that shift authority, allowing characters to shape their stories as they are experienced. In doing so, *A Portrait* depicts moments of individual agency necessary to the break from control of thought and development of the colonized subject into an individual with agency. The narrative techniques described here afford authors new avenues of representation that demonstrate a possible path of individual, democratic agency.

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The Voice of One Among the Many: Stephen Speaks as an Irishman

Joyce's modernist novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* takes great strides in giving voice to the individual and in breaking down barriers in the representation of a single character who warrants acknowledgement. Joyce manipulates traditional narrative techniques to great end in developing a modern view of the human experience. He uses the bildungsroman as a tool to develop a free individual. He depicts the forces at work in the culture that try to shape Stephen into an Irish man, and then he discounts their power by allowing Stephen to question the worlds around him and assign importance based on his own thoughts on life. He pushes Stephen beyond the influence of the nation, leaving him to seek his identity beyond the confines of Ireland. Joyce opens the novel form to a more democratic view of the world. The novel no longer compels an idea of Truth for Ireland; instead, it reveals many truths about life from many different perspectives. Through this objective lens, images of the other carry just as much value as characterizations of the nation. Stephen's story in *A Portrait* conveys an Irish story as important as Cuchulain or Fionn Mac Cumhaill, or Robert Emmet or Michael Collins. Stephen may not fit into the national imaginary in the same way as these Celtic legends, but his unique Irish voice provides an exception to Irishness that is just as valid and that is even more important to the democratizing of Ireland.

In *A Portrait*, like other works from the modernist movement, a shift has occurred that places the individual experience at the center of life. Literary style must adapt accordingly, and Joyce takes part in experimenting on how to find the best way to

represent an individual voice. His focus on the sensible, on the sensory perceptions of a colonized boy, signifies a move to the "sensible mode of being" (Rancière) and a real, objective representation of the other. Auerbach and Rancière give us the vocabulary to define the change that Joyce makes, but it is his novel that provides space for the agency of the individual. In chapter two, I plot the attempts at agency in Ireland's push for independence in the early twentieth century. I reveal the progress and limitations made under the purview of a national, Irish identity. While imperative moves are made to free Ireland from colonial subjection, incidents of independent, democratic representation are wanting. Joyce wrote *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* during the same political movements and aesthetic representations discussed in chapter two. His perspective works in contrast to the nation-building trope that it describes, and both are necessary to the active cause of revolution for a democratic Ireland.

Throughout Ireland's fight for independence, the nation sought to create its own space free from the Empire, more indicative of modern reality, and with acknowledgement of the agency of individuals to represent themselves. Through a collaboration of authors, Irish literature represents a new reality for the self and for the nation. In tandem, these two representations demonstrate the complicated work of creating individual agency within and across the boundaries of a burgeoning nation. The work does not end with Irish independence or the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution. After civil war and continued British interference in Ireland's affairs, attempts at a democratic Irish republic remained out of reach. The next chapter looks ahead to 1937, when Irish political leaders composed a second Constitution to completely break from

England and to create the Republic of Ireland. Of course, an interesting piece of literature written at the same time reveals the true nature of political agency, and a glimpse at the absurdities of un-democratic representation.

CHAPTER IV

"ALL THINGS STAND APART FROM EACH OTHER:" BUILDING
A DEMOCRATIC NATION OF AUTHORITATIVE SELVES

For just over a decade, Ireland maintained commonwealth status within the

British Empire, which provided freedom to create an Irish state with its own government

yet left Ireland beholden to the British crown. For many, this was not enough. The Irish

government tried to represent the citizens of the 26 counties of the south through the

articles of the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution, but it often fell short of truly democratic

representation. For instance, Article 47 of the Irish Free State Constitution called for

referenda to be an integral part of agency for Irish citizens. As chapter one explains,

inclusion of the act of Referendum provides a decisive position for each citizen to enact

their opinion on the laws that govern the nation; however, with the passing of Article 50,

the power of referendum was curtailed by the Oireachtas, which delayed the enactment

and use of referenda to shape law. Until 1937, not a single bill was proposed for vote by

referendum in Ireland.

In trying to build authority in the work of an Irish government separate from the

constraints of British control, Irish politicians realized that an act of referendum could

help. As David Gwynn Morgan describes in *Constitutional Law of Ireland*, Éamonn de

Valera led the campaign to remove all ties to England within the documents that define

the Irish government and nation. Because of the ties between the 1922 Irish Free State

Constitution and the Anglo-Irish Treaty, de Valera decided that a new Constitution could not be put forward as an amendment but needed to completely break from the previous document (Morgan 27). He turned to the act of referendum – an act of the people – to claim legitimacy for a new Constitution and independent Republic of Ireland. On the same day as the general election, the Dáil put forward the 1937 Bunreacht na hÉireann for vote by the people to act as the Constitution for the democratic Republic of Ireland. The results of the July 1, 1937 votes on the new Constitution read:

> 38.6% (685,105) voted in favor of the Bunreacht
> 29.6% (526, 945) voted against the Bunreacht
> 31.8% abstained or spoiled their vote (Morgan 29).

Ireland's Bunreacht became the first ever Constitution adopted by referendum (Keogh 37). By consensus of the majority of votes cast, Ireland became a Republic and the 1937 Bunreacht na hÉireann became law. But, with a mere difference of just over 150,000 votes between for and against, and an almost equal number of citizens choosing to abstain from voting altogether, what did this referendum reveal about people's opinions of a democratic, Irish nation?

As described in the previous chapters, postcolonial Ireland's development follows the trajectory of many new nations seeking independence and agency for its people. The "othering" of colonialism required a unified response in the shape of a strong national identity. The rallying images provided by the Celtic Revival relied on myths unique to Celtic legend that could stand in for all of Ireland as a centering point distinct from the imperial culture that had superimposed itself on Ireland for over 200 years. From the

foundations of a strong Irish identity, political and cultural texts could then turn to the modern Irish individual. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* elicits acknowledgement of a man who can grow into his true self, free from the confines of social and political customs. What happens next builds from these two positions: the vision of a nation and the image of the self-made man in a democratic context. The Irish people spoke through the 1937 Referendum (including those who remained silent) and voiced opinions that both conceded to and dissented from a unified version of Ireland. With a political move towards democracy, people could test the foundations of the new politic in an effort to gain individual authority.

This chapter attends to the growth and changes to the Republic of Ireland around 1937, a significant year that saw a call for Referendum by the people to accept the Bunreacht na hÉireann Constitution, the increasing calls for a democratic Republic of Ireland, and the emergence of dissenting voices that tested democratic agency. While de Valera and his committee of political writers collaborated on the Bunreacht, Flann O'Brien and his writer-friends at University College Dublin also experimented with collaboration to reconsider the act of authorship and agency across boundaries. O'Brien viewed literature as manufactural: rather than starting anew for each piece, O'Brien merged already-existing pieces and melded old material with new. In this way, *At Swim-Two-Birds* stands apart from much of the cultural production in Ireland at the time, in that the novel sought to represent the amalgam of parts that made up 1937 Ireland. O'Brien detours from the Irishness trope to point out that representation does not start on a clean slate from a single, exclusive perspective. He places varying voices - from different times

and spaces - in conversation with each other to show the reality and absurdity of trying to tie all of Ireland's people and ideas into one simple image.

The epigraph to *At Swim* translates from Latin to mean "All things stand apart from each other" (O'Brien). This epigraph perfectly fits *At Swim* and it also describes the intentions of this chapter. Essentially, the quote acknowledges the existence of individual things, but in obvious relation to each other. Whether they are characters in a novel, personae of history, or people of a nation, each one exists of its own self (like Stephen Dedalus) and in relation to the characters, personae, and people that encompass it. To gain agency to act on one's own behalf, and to gain the authority to speak for one's self, the individual must gain acknowledgement as a speaker and listener within and across the cultural and political contexts that define his/her position. As Ireland grappled with concepts of agency and authority for the individual, questions had to be raised about how people are in relation to each other, and how they can represent the self in collaboration with the nation. In 1937, Ireland voted for a change in representation, seeking to write democratic agency into the creation of a Republic. At the same time, Flann O'Brien sought alternative forms of representation in literature, recognizing that authority of multiple voices leads to democratic agency and dissent. *At Swim-Two-Birds* enacts democratic authorship in a way that reveals the opportunities as well as the complications of the politic.

Defining Authors and Acknowledging Voices

Concepts of authority and authorship in political and literary contexts have pervaded critical inquiry and philosophy for ages. Earlier chapters examine classical

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concepts of authority and how they can be read by contemporary theorists to delve into the origins of democratic agency, and the role literature plays in developing concepts of individuality and nationality. To add to this conversation, it may be helpful to consider how the transition from a commonwealth to an independent sovereign nation may have been affected by concepts of individual authority and national consensus. Anthony Kronman provides an interesting and helpful perspective in "The Concept of an Author and the Unity of the Commonwealth in Hobbes's *Leviathan*." Written during the English Civil War in the seventeenth century, *Leviathan* examines the social structures and forms of government that Hobbes deems legitimate. Ultimately, Hobbes argues that the commonwealth is best instituted when absolute consensus exists regarding the sovereignty of a government. Unimpressed by the attempted break from absolute monarchy, Hobbes believes an undivided government can and should overrule dissenting voices.

Kronman writes specifically on Chapter 16 of *Leviathan*, "Of Persons, Authors, and Things Personated," and his discussion brings up two considerations important to my discussion of democratic agency and authority: the first concerns the definitions of a person and an author. The second concerns the unity of political associations and what distinguishes them from a "mere aggregation of men" (Kronman 159). In Part I, Kronman describes Hobbes's definition of a person as one whose words or actions can be considered his own or as representing another's (160). Putting Hobbes's definition into discussion with Spivak's theories previously discussed, only those who are acknowledged in a speaker/listener relationship would be considered a person. Those that

cannot represent themselves (subaltern) are not considered people. Kronman continues

with Hobbes's definition of an "actor" as someone who represents another person's

words or actions (161). This is important to my discussion because, as Kronman states

"By defining the terms 'actor' and 'author' as he does, Hobbes means to draw our

attention to the obvious fact that some representations are authorized and others are not"

(161). Key to also keep in mind here is Hobbes' overall belief in the monarchy: his

argument in Chapter 16 is not to acknowledge all people as authors; rather, he wants to

distinguish those who have the authority to speak and to speak on behalf of someone else,

from those who do not (the subaltern and the *demos*).

According to Hobbes, a commonwealth is established to create political

association between men through coordinated authorization. A person incapable of

authorship "cannot play an active and independent role in the establishment of a civil

state" (Kronman 161). Everyone participating in the formation of the commonwealth

must therefore be an author in the Hobbesian sense. This stance allowed Hobbes to

render voices speaking against the monarchy as illegitimate, in that those voices did not

have the right to speak. Similar stances have upheld monarchies, tyrannies, and many

forms of government that relied on complete control to operate. Hobbes silences any

voices of dissent by questioning the rights of the individual to speak at all. As Kronman

explains "To be either an author or an actor in the Hobbesian sense one must understand

the idea of a right and *be able to use it in ways that others recognize as meaningful and*

appropriate" (my italics, 162). Within a monarchy, then, an author or actor is an educated

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man from a wealthy family or state that authorizes him to speak. For someone in a postcolonial condition, what does this look like?

Within the Irish Commonwealth, personhood is still under interrogation. An Irish citizen's authority comes at the legitimation of an Irish government that pledges allegiance to the British crown. Action is not necessarily taken for all people in Ireland, because citizens still do not have full authority over their own lives. As Irish Parliament within the Commonwealth worked to attain authority, they had to decide how Irish citizens would come together as a republic separate from the power of any other nation. Part two of Kronman's essay focuses on Hobbes's discussion of how unity exists within a multitude of men and can only create a strong politic when they are in full agreement. According to Hobbes, via Kronman, each person of the multitude "must authorize another to act on his behalf; and the person each member authorizes to be his representative must be the same person. If these two conditions are not satisfied, a multitude of men will lack unity, no matter how well organized it may appear to be in other respects" (Kronman 166). Each author, therefore, must give up some agency to submit to the greater good of the commonwealth. In Ireland, de Valera sought authority through a referendum, so that each citizen could authorize the 1937 Bunreacht as a binding contract for an independent nation. Even with the vote of everyone counted, the circumstances reveal the complications in a unified agreement of one form of representation.

Hobbes believed that absolute consensus (among acknowledged citizens) on the right and power of the government to represent was essential. He wanted every citizen-

author to choose the same actor to represent the country as a whole, and he argued for the king to be the true representative of the nation. At the same time, he also believed that every member of an association (or nation) must be an independent author: that they can speak and act for themselves, but ultimately, that they all choose the same person for representation. The only way this could possibly work is to silence any voices of dissent. How else can so many individual authors agree on the same actor for representation? This is the question that Ireland faced during its years as a part of the British commonwealth, and it is the same question that literature faces when it addresses cultural and political situations like postcolonialism and representation. From 1922 to 1937, there are significant attempts to answer this question within and through Irish politics and literature.

Hobbes provides yet another influential perspective on the power of the government versus the power of the individual. As previous chapters point out, it is the concept of representation that identifies who is included and acknowledged as an individual with rights within a political system. What Hobbes describes as the ideal form of government, Rancière describes as a police state in *Dissensus*. In his ten theses on politics, Rancière defines the *demos* and the regimes of power that attempt control. He argues that most existing regimes are not political because they do not make room for difference. A political body configures a shared space in which all parts, including those that may not (yet) be known, are acknowledged. This often takes the shape of a government that creates laws that acknowledge both present and potential individuals that may share space.

Rancière defines the regimes in which only "real parts" are counted as police

states (Rancière *Dissensus* 35). Hobbes' ideal in *Leviathan* for instance, is a police state

because he only wants to count those who understand the need for an absolute monarchy.

In some ways, the Ireland created by the Celtic Revival also exemplifies Rancière's

police state in that it does not acknowledge an idea of a person (like Stephen Dedalus)

that falls outside of identities authenticated as "Irish." As the first chapter shows, the Irish

Free State Constitution limited the power of citizenship and the power of the government

to those individuals that met the agreed upon specifications of Irishness. These

individuals were forced to acknowledge the power of the British crown over Ireland and

its people. Literary works of the Celtic Revival shaped what counted as real. In an effort

to count individuals that were not included in the British regime, the Celtic Revival

painted an aesthetic Irish history tied to people and places previously ignored. In doing

so, works of the Revival gave sensibility to a specific mode of being Irish: one that had

not been previously acknowledged as legitimate by the British. This certainly marks a

step in a positive direction towards acknowledging the *demos* and spreading access to

power and authority; however, this version of Irishness does not leave space for

individuals who do not fit that specific mode of identity.

To have a legitimate political body, Rancière argues, requires space for

difference. In a police state, society adheres to specific modes of doing and being that can

be sensed. A true political state not only includes what can be sensed (and acknowledged)

in a social structure, but it also holds the ability to count real parts as well as those

without part (35). In Ireland's context, both the Irish Free State Constitution and the

Bunreacht na hÉireann define the "nation" as a "community of persons not constituting a state but bound by common descent, language, religion, and history" (Doolan 7). They both rely on this definition of a nation to allow space for the counties of Northern Ireland that do not count as separate from England, but could eventually join the southern counties in an independent republican state of Ireland (9). The population of Northern Ireland's counties is almost evenly split between those loyal to the British crown and those wanting Irish independence. By recognizing the citizens of Northern Ireland's counties as those without part, the two Irish constitutions allow space to exist that was not yet defined or identified by terms of the state. The nation's identity could be a little more adaptable in such a condition to allow for what might someday be acknowledged as another part of the politic.

As this example shows, politics and police oppose each other in the basic recognition of what *is* seen or heard versus what *could be* seen or heard (Rancière *Dissensus* 37). Rather than building full consent among the acknowledged, Rancière argues that the strength of a political body is in "dissensus." This does not merely mean a space for disagreement among people and ideas; Rancière explains that dissensus is "the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself" (38). It took the act of naming the *demos* as such to acknowledge their existence within the realm of the politic in Plato's *Laws*. In that moment, the *demos* achieve the ability to be sensed and thus gain recognition as a political being. For a truly democratic political regime, the voices of the seen and unseen must be allowed to exist with equal ability to shape nation and culture. Such a feat requires immense empathy and insight in the representatives shaping the

country's constitution, much of which could be learned and practiced through the aesthetic act of representing what may not be real. Rancière later engages this discussion in his *Politics of Aesthetics*, but the concepts laid out above regarding authors, actors, and representing the (un)real provide a path for my discussion on democratic literature.

O'Brien's Literary Techniques in Context

Literature can accomplish much of what Rancière asks of a political regime, especially when it applies a style of representation that acknowledges the "other" across boundaries of the text. The previous chapters pointed out literary texts involved in acts of representation and in the enactment of individual voices. The texts of the Celtic Revival and Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* all work towards representations that are more democratic, in that they seek to represent voices of those marginalized or ignored in the Ireland's situation. These previously discussed literary texts enact representations of the Irish as they developed their independence as a nation and culture. The Celtic Revival sought consensus on Irish history and experience. It built a nation based on legends that Irish people could take pride in, but that also did not fully represent the heteronomy of the nation as it existed in the early twentieth century. Joyce's novel pared down perspective by focusing on a single individual to emphasize how individual agency builds the foundation of society, and it begins to widen the focus to consider the larger implications of individual voice within national and transnational frames.

Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* builds on Joyce's progress and achieves a democratic representation that allows for our understanding of the political[25] to expand and to appreciate the discordance of dissensus. Written over several years and published March 13, 1939, *At Swim-Two-Birds* shares a cultural and historical context with Ireland's second constitution, the Bunreacht na hÉireann. At the time of writing the novel, Flann O'Brien acted as student editor of *Blather*, completed his master's degree, and took the civil service exam (Clissmann 76). His life experiences play their part in the composition of this novel, and based on biographical notes,[26] it seems that *At Swim* was composed at a time of great personal, as well as national, change. O'Nolan began working in the civil service in 1935 at the Custom House in Dublin. That summer, he was forced to sign the Official Secrets Act, "The Use of Influence by Civil Servants" and the "Civil Servant and Politics" documents (Cronin 74). These documents limited O'Nolan's freedoms outside of work because he was a servant of the state. To keep his job under the dictates of Éamonn de Valera's Irish Free State government, O'Nolan had to stay within the arbitrary boundaries forced on him.

June 1935 is also the first mention of O'Brien's work on *At Swim* by Niall Sheridan (82). Undoubtedly, there is a connection between his experiences under rigid regulations on personal conduct in his government position, and his revolt against regulations in his novel. In her critical reading of O'Brien, Anne Clissmann explains that

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[25] Again, the count of both seen and unseen parts (Rancière, *Dissensus* 35).
[26] For detailed biography of Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien, see Anthony Cronin's *No Laughing Matter* (1989), Anne Clissmann's *Flann O'Brien* (1975), Carol Taaffe's *Ireland Through the Looking Glass* (2008), and Rüdiger Imhof's *Alive-Alive O!* (1985).

the novel's conclusion provides opportunity: "It is a resolution which asserts that the function of literature is a transfiguring and consolatory one which looks at the most difficult questions about man's place in the universe, and that imaginative forms, if they can find a place in the modern world, are the most flexible forms to use" (Clissmann 149). O'Brien sought out imaginative forms through which he could reimagine the shared space of the new nation. Though not overtly political, he took issue with the way the Irish Free State government mis-represented the people. O'Brien addresses these issues in *At Swim* through an experiment in structure and style.

Around this same time, O'Nolan also began publishing articles under various pseudonyms in *The Irish Times*, a daily newspaper read mostly by the Protestant minority who, for the most part, had been left out and unaccounted for by the Irish cultural movement and free state government (Cronin 111). The editor wanted to attract a more liberal and intellectual crowd, and so he hired O'Nolan to write a weekly article entitled "Cruiskeen Lawn" (116). Under the name Myles na gCopaleen, he took on political mandates and the cultural divide in Ireland at the time. This series of articles often "expresses contempt for the 'corduroys,' O'Brien's name for the elite which thinks it has the right to evaluate and police culture; while the Plain People of Ireland (from whom all authority derives) is often the butt of his jokes, it is never subjected to the same withering scorn that he reserves for the 'corduroys'" (Hughes 119-20). Like *At Swim*, "Cruiskeen Lawn" articles do not take a specific political stance; instead, they expose the absurdities of the government's attempts to regulate society and to act for the good of the "Irish," while often failing to acknowledge the existence of others. Having lived through the fight

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for independence and a civil war, O'Nolan uses his talents as an author to highlight the ills of the new Irish "Free State" government.

Though many critics have remarked on O'Brien's political stance as purely critical of all politics, *At Swim* performs stylistically in ways that engage authorship, representation, and acknowledgement of an "other" that cannot be minimized in the discussion of literature's power to instigate the political. Many of the biographies and critical readings of Brian O'Nolan/Flann O'Brien highlight his critical aim at politics in general, but they mostly focus on his message, rather than his style. As Bernard Benstock explains in "The Three Faces of Brian Nolan," "There is little chance of discerning where O'Nolan stands in regard to the Church or to Ireland or to the social conditions in which his characters find themselves" (Benstock 61). O'Nolan takes aim at the absurdity of the Irish situation without prejudice. He watched Irish leaders trumpet the greatness of Irishness and their inherent right to govern Ireland, while they created a system not all that different from its previous imperial form.

Carol Taaffe expands on this, as she explores the life and times of O'Nolan in *Ireland through the Looking Glass*. Taaffe describes O'Nolan as "a representative figure of a disillusioned, post-independent generation – a subversive satirist who was wholly frustrated by the dour monotony of the Irish Free State" (Taaffe 34). O'Nolan and his generation are the first to be educated and enter the workforce of the Irish Free State, and what they see is not that appealing. They focus on the absurdity of the Irish situation that has resulted in so much bureaucracy without much progress. Niall Sheridan, a close friend of O'Nolan's from college, describes their approach to politics in "Brian, Flann

and Myles." Sheridan suggested writing an "All Purpose Opening Speech" – one sentence, grammatically correct, that says nothing and could be used for anything – that is: the perfect political speech. O'Nolan loved the idea and wrote: "If nation could speak fluently to nation, without any risk of communicating anything, international tension would decline" (Sheridan 72). This sentence speaks volumes in describing O'Nolan's views on politics. By beginning the sentence with a very telling "If," he questions the nation's ability to speak at all on behalf of its citizens. At the same time, he points to the lack of actual communication by the nation as an unintentional consequence: nations are better off not speaking for citizens and not attempting to communicate anything at all! Such an exercise points to the groups frustration with the new administration. They understand the political condition and find ways to react and respond built on sarcasm and satire.

Where Benstock finds O'Nolan's stance muddled and unclear in regards to Irishness and the Church, other authors see his written responses as an attack on the power that these two entities hold. Maebh Long examines O'Nolan and his personae in *Assembling Flann O'Brien*. Long sees the assembly of all of O'Nolan's pseudonyms as his struggle to find an identity in the Ireland of his times. Long uses a term coined by na gCopaleen (O'Nolan) in a "Cruiskeen Lawn" article: "Keltanschauung," that is, a concocted outlook of Irishness based on "myth, invention and prejudice proffered by the Gaelic Revivalists, the government and, although rarely directly targeted by O'Nolan, the Church" (Long 2). Long argues that O'Nolan's identities all worked from various perspectives against Keltanschauung, because it exemplified a Celtic philosophy or view

of life that excluded too much of reality. Seamus Deane agrees, to some extent, with

Long's view. In *Strange Country*, Deane labels O'Brien's writing as Free State writing: a

style that goes against the "fantasized, modernist monomania (Yeats, Joyce) of a single

person doing the representing. Instead, O'Brien turns to the 'Plain People of Ireland'

(PPI) and an anti-modernist, bureaucratic democracy of representations" (Deane 162). As

this discussion reveals, though O'Brien's writing does not take a political stance based on

the fight for power in the Irish Free State, he very much interjects his opinions on the

(in)abilities of the government to represent the people.

  As Deane's comment above also points out, O'Brien's works gain attention for

straddling the characteristics of late modernism, early post-modernism, and

postcolonialism. Many of the techniques O'Brien uses can be identified within specific

artistic and cultural movements. For instance, Joseph Brooker argues that O'Brien plays

an important role in the cultural and political changes in Ireland in the days of late

modernism, especially in *At Swim* and as editor of *Blather*, with his application of ready-

made techniques that intertwine texts and characters (Brooker 10). Though it could be

argued that ready-mades are more specifically avant-garde[27] than characteristic of a

general modernist movement, Brooker's point is that *At Swim* is decisively located within

the modernist era - the same era of Joyce, to whom O'Brien is often compared. In

Assembling Flann O'Brien, Maebh Long also locates *At Swim* in the modernist

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[27] The avant-garde movement includes artists who experiment with art forms in order to radicalize thoughts on art, culture, and society. Ready-mades, which are works of art made from previously manufacture objects, typically fall into the avant-garde category.

movement, comparing it to Eliot's *The Waste Land* in how both texts assemble various narrators and voices into a single text (Long 10). She explains that, where Eliot's poem reassembles pieces of London society at its time, O'Brien's novel presents fragments that had not previously been assembled together. O'Brien's use of fragmentation, ready-mades, and other techniques likened to Joyce's modernism are evidence of his location within the modernist movement.

Even so, many critics point to other techniques that unequivocally place O'Brien within the parameters of postmodernist style. Kim McMullen calls *At Swim* a pioneering postmodern, postcolonial work in "Culture as Colloquy," for its four levels of narration that violate conventions of frame tales, and for its intertextual "discourses of various ranks and professions, shaped by multiple ideologies, and spanning pre-, post-, and colonial Irish history. None of these discourses is privileged; none has the last word" (McMullen 62). Fulfilling the postmodern attack on grand narratives, *At Swim* seems to integrate techniques characteristic of postmodernism through texts in conversation with modernist counterparts, like Joyce's *A Portrait*. McMullen argues that *At Swim* subverts *A Portrait* modernist desire to elevate art and the artist as a grand narrative, by demonstrating that the work of the artist/author/protagonist is already written, as it is in *At Swim* (McMullen 77-8). McMullen makes a strong case that O'Brien's text uses postmodern techniques like metafiction and intertextuality; however, the cultural and political contexts of the timing of O'Brien's authorship must be considered as more significant.

Rónán McDonald and Julian Murphet's compilation *Flann O'Brien and Modernism* locates O'Brien's modernist style within the social, cultural, and political contexts in which he wrote. They point out factors that shape O'Brien's era: the socially conservative Irish Free State, the romantic nationalism of the independence movement still favored as the unofficial history of the nation, and the disappointment in the short-comings of the postcolonial situation (McDonald and Murphet 1-2). *At Swim* must be placed into the various cultural contexts that surround its composition. Eamonn Hughes does this in his article, "Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." He explains that "much that is assumed to be meta-fictional and (post-)modernist about the text takes on a distinctly anti-authoritarian politics relevant to both the supposedly isolated and puritanical Ireland of the 1930s and equally to the crisis-ridden Europe on the brink of war of the same time" (Hughes 117). What McDonald, Murphet, and Hughes accomplish with their analyses is the re-centering of focus on a historical reading of O'Brien in relation to the cultural and political movements of the time.

O'Brien's output of fictional works peaked in the late 1930's. His innovative use of literary techniques like metafiction and intertextuality are key to enacting a democratic literature that acknowledges the shortcomings of the political regime and offers alternative perspectives from which to consider the political body. As a metafictional work, *At Swim* acknowledges the presence of author(s) and readers, while highlighting that it is, indeed, a fictional text. He employs intertextuality to broaden the scope of the text by insisting that novels and the worlds they imagine do not exist in vacuums, but that

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characters, authors, and texts function in relation to each other, both in fictional and non-fictional settings. Finally, O'Brien's use of satire in *At Swim* (and many, many other works) asserts that a text, state, or nation ignores the existence of the other to its own detriment. Using these literary techniques, O'Brien's text is political. He comments on and interrogates the form of the political regime in Ireland at the exact moment of its second attempt at a democratic constitution.

Literary Modes of Production

The term "metafiction" describes a type of self-referential fiction that acknowledges itself and consistently alludes to itself to point out that it is both real (as a thing) and fiction (within the thing). In doing so, metafiction acts democratically in that it fulfills the intention of the democratic regime as Rancière describes it. As explained earlier, Rancière argues that a truly democratic regime exists when the voices of the seen and unseen are acknowledged in existence. Metafiction acknowledges the real and unreal on many levels. Foremost, metafiction admits that it is, in and of itself, a text, and more specifically in this case, a novel. The text can do this in various ways, including pointing out the author/reader relationship as such, providing cues within the text of self-consciousness, and through purposefully playing with conventions of novels or narrative techniques to notify the reader of its own self-awareness. At the same time, metafictional novels also point to the unreal components that make the text fictional. It acknowledges fictional characters as such, but also as real because they exist as part of a text that exists in the real world.

O'Brien uses these metafictional techniques throughout *At Swim* and creates a novel that is both aware of its self and its context within the real and unreal worlds. The opening lines set the novel as a piece of metafiction aware of its self and its readers. The narrator tells the reader from the onset "One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with" (O'Brien 1). He continues, explaining that good books have multiple beginning and endings based on the whim of the author. What follows are three distinct beginnings that introduce un-related (as of yet) characters and their plots. From the onset, O'Brien clearly engages the reader in the novel-form and the novel-story to develop a relationship that will grow across narrative and reading boundaries.

O'Brien plays with the relationship between author and reader throughout *At Swim*. As Williams Gass describes in the "Introduction:" "The *metafictional* form of *At Swim-Two-Birds* (and how O'Brien would have loathed the term) permits its author, and the narrator he invents, and all the other writers created by the book's neophyte novelist, to be born again, to enjoy another life, to cross logical boundaries as if carried by a breeze" (Gass vii). Authors abound in this novel; from O'Brien, to the narrator, to Trellis and his characters that take over the story-telling on multiple occasions, all the writers in this novel get the opportunity to move across the real and unreal boundaries of the text.

Throughout *At Swim*, O'Brien creates a structure in which segments are labelled by the role they play within the narrator's storyline. They could be extracts from other texts, synopses of what came before, descriptions of the nature of characters, persons, and things, or interjections of one level of narration into the narrative flow of another. For instance, O'Brien weaves together a "*Relevant excerpt from the Press*" (57) with a

"*Biographical reminiscence, part the fifth*" (58), followed by a "*Synopsis, being a summary of what has gone before, FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW READERS*" (59). Each label performs a task, allowing the narrator to speak directly to the reader in a way that acknowledges the author/reader relationship. However, the label also acts within the novel to create distinction between storylines, plots, and characters. Because they all exist within the greater boundary of the novel, these segments intersect and collaborate, creating a bond between the real (the text) and the unreal (the characters within it).

Both Spivak and Rancière prioritize the speaker/listener - or author/reader - relationship as the basis on which the subaltern and *demos* gain acknowledgment, because the self and the other must recognize the existence of each other as real. Where fiction often hides this relationship between author/reader, metafiction addresses this relationship in full view. It not only admits that such a relationship exists, but it calls attention to the relationship to emphasize that the real and "unreal" are constantly in relation with each other. This very point is dramatized within *At Swim* by the hijacking of narration from Trellis by the characters he creates. Within the microcosm of Trellis's novel, the author (Trellis) has no choice but to acknowledge his characters as real when they take over the narration and torture him for the lives he made them live. His "unreal" characters become actors and agents of their own stories. However, their fate changes when the maid burns all of Trellis's papers in the fire. The agency they had in writing their stories disintegrates when the pages are burned and a reader can no longer engage with their text. The author/reader relationship is gone for these characters in their author-roles, which returns to Trellis and the first narrator. Even so, the fact that *At Swim* plays

out the relationship between character, author, and reader in such dramatic fashion shows that the relationship is real and is extremely important to those involved. It provides a democratic agency to the fictionalized characters that the reader of *At Swim* cannot overlook.

In her critical reading of O'Brien, Anne Clissmann argues that "All these authorial intrusions [in *At Swim*] are intended to emphasise the point that this is not a coherent narrative but a deliberate fabrication which constantly says 'Look how I did it'" (Clissmann 95-6). Clissmann's point highlights a metafictional awareness of the text; that it is, indeed, a created thing. O'Brien exposes the novel as a novel; it is something made by the mind and hands; it is a manufactured thing that works as a created world within the real world. The production of the text plays as big a role on the text as the story within it. O'Brien began experimenting with production before *At Swim*, including the concept of shared authorship within a text. As "Brother Barnabas," he published a short story called "Scenes in a Novel" in which the narrator loses control over the main character, Carruthers McDaid, who takes authority over his own narrative. He also experimented with the concept of shared authorship in the creation of a text. With his writer-friends at University College Dublin, O'Brien attempted to construct the great Irish novel, to be titled *Children of Destiny,* through a shared-authorship technique like collage, though it was never completed (Taaffe 35). As a discussion between the first narrator/author and Brinsley reveals: "it was explained that a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity"

(O'Brien 19). By emphasizing the production of the novel as a manufactured product, the

reader has an easier time accepting the novel as a novel.

At the same time, O'Brien erases the line between author and reader and forces

the reader to acknowledge the characters as real. In this move, we see the influence of

playwrights like Luigi Pirandello and Bertolt Brecht in breaking the fourth wall between

the actors and the audience, or in O'Brien's case, between the authors, characters, and

readers. In *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Pirandello Pirandello's plays with the

premise that art can stimulate action. It begins as a realistic play in which six characters

move beyond the boundaries of their original story to find an author to complete their

tales. These characters not only break free from the types prescribed to them by their

original author, but they question the representations placed upon them by various writers

that try to help, as well as by the audience members and their reactions.

The connection here to O'Brien's novel is evident, but *At Swim* was not O'Brien's

first attempt at emulating Pirandello's style. While a student at University College

Dublin, O'Brien collaborated with literary friends to write a story entitled "Six Authors in

Search of a Character" for the student magazine. In this story, O'Brien and friends begin

to experiment with collaborative authorship and metafictional techniques that blur the

boundaries between authors, characters, and audience. O'Brien sees the characters of

Pirandello's play are not just subjects of a literary text; they are meant to incite a response

from the audience as to what passes on stage as a reflection of their own lives. When

Pirandello's characters doubt their representations, audience members too, experience a

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crisis of self-perception and are motivated to question how they are represented in the

structures that encapsulate them.

Brecht went further in his plays to incite the audience to action by involving them

in the story and representations on stage. Brecht popularized epic, or dialectical, theatre

as a form to redistribute responsibility onto the audience in making meaning and thinking

critically about the world represented on stage. Audiences could no longer suspend

themselves while watching a play, but they had to become actively engaged in it, as it is

just as important to their lives as anything else. Brecht and Pirandello saw their plays as

performances that awakened audiences to social responsibility by demonstrating real

human behavior rather than an imitation of reality. The discomfort felt by the audience

members watching their plays is meant to invoke social change by forcing introspection

and consideration of whose voice matters. Brecht and Pirandello devised their works as

catalysts of action and reaction between the authors, characters, and audience. The

metafictional techniques they develop are clearly influential on O'Brien and his friends

and how they believe literature can engage reality.

Another component that makes a work aware of the duality of its existence as

both real and unreal is how it purposefully plays with convention. In *Postmodernist

Fiction*, McHale describes the multiple beginnings and endings of *At Swim* happening on

both real and unreal levels: the beginnings and endings "are interrelated *not* 'only in the

prescience of the author,' but in the mind of the character-narrator" (McHale 109).

Essentially, they occur both on the level of *At Swim* as a real novel, and on the level of

the experience of the narrator within the novel. The *At Swim* reader gets introduced to

three potential storylines within the first few pages and is told directly by the narrator that he does not believe a novel should be limited to a single beginning and end. As Bernard Benstock explains, "His narrator offers the reader three possible openings (about the Pooka, Finn, and Furriskey), each of which contains its own level of unreality (folklore, historic legend, and literary fiction) and its own style of language (colloquial narrative, bardic rendering, and contemporary form of prose)" (Benstock 68). From the onset, the reader must acknowledge that this novel will break from convention and attempt to tell three storylines within one novel. And the reader quickly learns that it will beg, borrow, and steal plots and characters to do so.

O'Brien's discussion of "aestho-autogamy" within *At Swim* provides yet another glaring example of the novel as text for the reader. The narrator writes a "*Note on Constructional or Argumentative Difficulty*" about the birth of Mr. Trellis's son, Orlick, a task he found "fraught with obstacles and difficulties of a technical, constructional, or literary character" (O'Brien 156). Based on the title of the section, the reader learns that the narrator wants to explain the difficult nature of a component of fictional composition: the birth of an adult character. The concept of aestho-autogamy acknowledges the predicament in literature of introducing a new character without going through the natural process of conception and birth. Trellis creates Orlick fully-formed, eliminating the time needed for natural human development. "It is a very familiar phenomenon in literature," Trellis explains to the narrator, pointing out the author's ability to create human life beyond the constraints of biology (O'Brien 37). This is normal practice within literature, as all characters are created at the age and time they are needed by the author. But, as

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Brian McHale points out, "The only difference is that it is not normally laid bare as it is in *At Swim-Two-Birds*" (McHale 211). In revealing the strategy he uses to create his characters, Trellis (and O'Brien) point to the novel as a manufactured material.

At Swim works across the boundaries of the real and the unreal by acknowledging itself and declaring its operation as a manufactured piece of literature. Rather than writing a realist novel, in which the fictional aspect of the story gets hidden to make the story seem likely, O'Brien turns his attention to notifying his reader that everything about the novel is not real. In doing so, he offers an alternative view of the relationship between the real and unreal that brings into question the prioritizing of one over the other. It is absurd to legitimate the authority of Trellis, for instance, over the authority of his characters because they all exist in relation to each other in both real (the novel) and unreal (the story within the novel) planes. In a similar way, O'Brien places *At Swim* in context of both real and unreal planes of being. The novel interacts with the cultural context in Ireland and Europe at the time in how it addresses real cultural movements and reactions to life. It also interacts on another level, within the text, by developing intertextual relationships that show the complicated nature of the individual in relation to the societal. Through his use of intertextuality, O'Brien pushes past the individual self to consider how surroundings play an integral role in shaping democratic authority.

As noted earlier, many of the segments of text in *At Swim* are extracts from other texts. Likewise, within some segments, O'Brien infuses characters, plotlines, and poems from other texts to develop an interconnectedness inherent to modern life and necessary to a democratic politic. When the narrator first introduces the character Paul Shanahan,

he explains that Shanahan "had appeared in many of the well-known tales of Mr. Tracy" (O'Brien 51). Shanahan then becomes the storyteller in *At Swim*, describing some of his adventures that cross the boundaries of a single story to interact with others. Shanahan believes he has been called by Tracy to play a role in another novel, but then finds out it is a hoax and that he was lured by another "fly-be-night with a fine story" (52). As Shanahan describes, a man by the name of Henderson was writing another book and stole the setting and scene from Tracy to make his own (52). Throughout Shanahan's re-telling of the events, readers realize they are but one audience to this story, and parenthetical interjections relate the reactions of Shanahan's other audience. In this one scene, O'Brien involves three authors (himself, Tracy, Henderson), an exchange of narration to Shanahan, and multiple audiences, all of which are now involved in all of the stories at intertextual play.

Intertextuality plays an integral role in enacting democratic literature through the novel. O'Brien shapes his novel and its meanings through relationships with other texts, and he does so in a way that reveals how democratic voices cross boundaries of art, belief, and nation. *At Swim* blends parodies of medieval Irish lit, Joycean modernism, and contemporary pop fiction (Taaffe 34). It also allows characters to take part in creating intertextual literature, emphasizing how much characters within the same world rely on a shared imagined community to build society. As Stephen Knight explains, "The premise [of *At Swim*] is that characters in a novel are as 'real' as other people in every way: literature is a part of life, subject to the same conditions as 'real' life" (Knight 87). From Knight's perspective, the characters in the novel represent a form of reality in which

identity is a shared construct built on past and present concepts of the self as viewed through culture. Literature shapes this concept and is shaped by the concepts surrounding it. In this way, *At Swim* suggests a dynamism to literature that allows it to continuously change and grow depending on the interactions between authors, characters, and readers.

The literature discussed thus far in this dissertation shows two opposing concepts of identity and individuality. Where the romantic version of Ireland in the Celtic Revival depends on a shared respect for the legends and mythology of ancient Ireland, the modern version of Ireland relies on the uniqueness in thought and feeling of the everyday Irishman, like Stephen Dedalus. Flann O'Brien's novel considers these two constructs in relation to each other, as he weaves them together throughout his novel. The inclusion of Finn MacCool as storyteller in *At Swim* provides many of the legendary fragments of the novel. Finn recites stories from the Fenian Cycle and the Red Cycle to his own liking. Though he attempts to tell tales without interruption, it seems impossible for Finn to complete a cycle without some interjection by his audience. At one point, Shanahan stops Finn, complaining that his poems are too high-brow for most Irishmen. To appeal to the "Plain People of Ireland," Shanahan writes a verse that intertwines Finn's poem with one of Jem Casey: "When stags appear on the mountain high, with flanks the colour of bran, when a badger bold can say good-bye, A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN!" (O'Brien 83). Casey's lyric from "Working Man's Lunch" consistently paints an image of modern Irish life for the hard-worker that ends with the same message. Shanahan intersects the images of the wilds of unconquered Ireland (the stags, the badger) from Finn's tales with

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the reward of hard-work in the modern-day plight described by Casey's poem. Both are relevant to the modern Irish experience.

Orlick also attempts to bridge the ancient and modern gap in Irish identity through his tale about his father, Trellis. In the hands of Orlick, Trellis becomes Mad Sweeny. Orlick writes Trellis's story exactly like the story of Sweeny we previously heard Finn tell. He borrows the plot and replaces Sweeny with Trellis (O'Brien 187). Ironically, Shanahan and Lamont have the same reaction to Orlick's telling as they did Finn's: they are unimpressed with the mythological aspects of the tale and want to interject their own versions that involve their modern-day experiences (187). They introduce the Pooka to their version, using him to inflict violence on Trellis that surpasses the pains that Sweeny endured. When Orlick returns to take over authorship of the story, he continues to borrow pieces of Sweeny's legend to inflict upon Trellis; however, he has learned to engage his contemporaries in the story as well. He writes Shanahan, Lamont, and Furriskey into Trellis's tale, in order to regain control. Orlick understands that the texts are very much intertwined, and he takes advantage of that point for his own gain.

In *Assembling Flann O'Brien*, Maebh Long investigates the textual history from which O'Brien pulls many of the fragments in *At Swim*. She notices that "There was no stable whole from which modern Ireland had come, and the past(s) it was drawing upon to create an identity were – arguably – diverse fictions" (Long 10). O'Brien had extensive knowledge in Irish folklore and contemporary literature from his literary studies in Irish and English. He was well-versed in the Irish language and the tales of the cycles. For instance, "Writing to Longmans in 1938, O'Brien explained that the Sweeny section of *At*

Swim was his own translation of the medieval Irish romance, *Buile Shuibhne*" (Clissmann 128). O'Brien spoke Irish exclusively until he turned nine years old and entered Jesuit school. His father shared his interest in Irish mythology and storytelling with his children. But O'Brien also studied Anglophone literatures beyond Ireland and developed a modernist's approach to the use of genre. As Long explains, in O'Brien's novel, "We step between Bildungsroman, Western, courtroom drama, mythological sage, fairy tale, modernism, naturalism and realism, in a text comprising extracts, quotations, myths, dialogues, high and low artistic forms" (Long 13). From his prior knowledge and his modernist interest in experimentation, O'Brien combines old texts with new.

To add to this, O'Brien also includes textual voices from outside of Ireland to reveal a broader, transnational perspective to the modern Irish experience. Anne Clissmann provides an in-depth analysis of the role of the American cowboys, their myths in connection to Irish myths, and how they replace Irish legend with pop culture legend in *At Swim* (Clissmann 133-7). Clissmann points to the shared concept of the wild west in both Ireland and America and the role of the cowboy in maintaining a way of life that signifies a unique identity. Kim McMullen develops Clissmann's point a bit further, in her discussion of the pulp western stories in Trellis's novel, told by his characters while he sleeps. Shanahan, a character with plenty of range and experience from his roles in other novels, shares an Americanized tale based on the Irish epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. McMullen argues that "his discourse reinvigorates the old tale with a folk energy drained from the early Irish cycles by their status as 'high art' during the Celtic Revival, even as his lively creole reminds us of mass emigrations across the Western Sea and the creative

potential of Irish-American cross-fertilization" (McMullen 71). The Potato Famine of the mid-nineteenth century forced a quarter of the Irish population to emigrate, many of whom chose to go to America. As the Irish Free State tried to build its foundation, O'Brien saw the influence of Irish people in America as much a part of the modern Irish identity as the legends of centuries before.

The cowboys, the legends of Irish mythology, the faeries, the strong republican and Catholic Uncle, the young cynical students: throughout *At Swim* Flann O'Brien hints at transnational identities. Though the Irish Free State Constitution limits its definition of Irish national identity to a very exclusive few, O'Brien builds a citizenship that connects many characteristics and many versions of history through the commingling of texts within his novel. Brian McHale claims that the ability to interchange characters between texts, as the author(s) in/of *At Swim* do is an annexation of intertextual space: one that allows characters to have a "transworld identity" (McHale 58). Such an identity frees characters from having to fulfill an idea of self based on nationality (or other social constructs, potentially). *At Swim's* narrator argues for this very idea: "Characters should be interchangeable as between one book and another. The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet" (O'Brien 19-20). From such a foundation, the entirety of literature becomes available to everyone, and each text, character, or author takes part in shaping a democratic political and cultural regime.

Thus far I have painted O'Brien's technical decisions as progressive decisions that democratize the textual and cultural creation of Ireland. But at the same time, I must point out that he was also writing in reaction to the state of the nation in its attempts to be wholly independent. Many of the moments of intertextual convergence just described delve into satire. They provide humor by pointing out the absurdity of life in both high and low-brow art and against the backdrop of a "new and independent" nation. When Sweeny and Jem Casey meet along the way to the Red Swann Inn, their interaction shows how brutal life can be, no matter where they come from: "Jem Casey was kneeling at the pock-haunched form of the king pouring questions into the cup of his dead ear and picking small thorns from his gnashed chest with absent thoughtless fingers, poet on poet, a bard unthorning a fellow-bard" (O'Brien 135). Having just been found kneeling in the bushes, working on his own craft, Casey turns to the legend Sweeny and helps him survive the banalities of life. Both poets exist on the same plane when their texts mingle; one is not high and the other is not low within the context of O'Brien's novel, yet both are in pretty bad shape.

This seems to be O'Brien's approach to the clash between morality and society, as well. Dermot Trellis sets out to write a novel about the moral ineptitude of the country and the vast emptiness of literature that addresses moral correctness. He intends to write a novel that shows the most horrible sins so that readers can learn what not to do from his novel. But Trellis is impaired by his limited literary range, because he only reads books in green covers: "All colours except green he regarded as symbols of evil and he confined his reading to books attired in green covers" (O'Brien 104). Thus, Trellis lacks

knowledge in many fields, including having never read the *Bible*: a humorous point for someone writing a morality tale. While this most likely satirizes the inability of the government to regulate morality via censorship laws at the time, it also makes fun of the reach of the Church, and the sheep-like behavior of what O'Brien calls the "Plain People of Ireland." O'Brien does not discriminate against anyone he feels deserves criticism.

M. Keith Booker discusses how O'Brien's works participate in Irish comic tradition as well as the tradition of Menippean satire in *Flann O'Brien, Bakhtin, and Menippean Satire*. Bakhtin uses the metaphor of the carnival, where societal rules typically do not apply, to highlight some of the characteristics of Menippean satire. Booker explains that "The first and most fundamental characteristic of the carnival (and therefore of Menippean satire) is its ambivalence—different points of view, different worlds, may be mutually and simultaneously present without any privileging of one over the other, so that the different worlds can comment on each other in a dialogic way" (Booker 2). In this sense, too, O'Brien's novel acts democratically in its satirical, critical approach. Certain types or status of people or institutions are not pardoned from O'Brien's satirizing: each absurd viewpoint gets its chance to be ridiculed through this novel. Satire is meant to call out inconsistencies and absurdities, and as soon as it holds back –in reverence to class or power – it loses its ability to affect reflection and potential change.

The literary techniques applied by O'Brien in *At Swim* create tensions and opportunities indicative of the Irish condition in the 1930s. Up to this point, the Irish Free State government wrestled with power struggles among so many clashing opinions that it

often fell back on rules and regulations based on fear of the uninhibited. With the convergence of republican ideals, the Church, and the anarchy of the modernist art movement, authors took fresh ideas and space to experiment in representations of modern life. O'Brien utilizes some of these techniques to both comment on the absurd condition of Irish politics and to enact a more democratic perspective on the Irish experience. Metafiction acknowledges the presence of the author, the reader, the real, and the unreal. It exposes the production of the novel to point out that the author/reader relationship is manufactured, and it can change in order to reveal the other. Sometimes, the other is revealed by borrowing texts and building an intertextual world to recognize the influences of each other on the self. Characters, plotlines, and excerpts borrowed from other texts reveal that the novel exists in relation to other novels, to other ideas, to others. O'Brien also relies on satire to expose the narrowness of the reflection of the world thus far. *At Swim* demolishes the idea that the self exists alone and that there is only one author to write the story of Ireland.

The Rise of Democratic Authorship

The previous literary techniques described above show how Flann O'Brien worked towards a more democratic ideal in *At Swim* because they each, in different ways, level the field and acknowledge parts of the text (characters, plots, narrators) in relation to each other and in relation to the outside "real" world. But there is another aspect of *At Swim* that makes significant strides in enacting democratic authority and acknowledging the *demos*: as an example of Rancière's aesthetic regime of the arts, *At Swim* enacts shared authorship and develops democratic authority. As mentioned earlier, O'Brien

composed *At Swim* at the same time that de Valera and his assembly composed the

Bunreacht na hÉireann, Ireland's second Constitution that frees the nation from any

control by England, but also places new regulations on the nation. Both texts reveal the

influences of culture and politics on the nature of citizenship and recognizing the *demos*.

Where O'Brien experiments with style and structure to illuminate the problems of strict

regulation, the Bunreacht relies on structure and regulation to define the nation. Though

the novel and the Constitution must work in different realms of agency, both take part in

writing the nation into its existence as a democratic Republic of Ireland. By putting them

into conversation, it becomes clear that the ability to enact democracy is both challenging

and necessary.

The Bunreacht na hÉireann was written by a committee of men led by Éamonn de

Valera and including statesmen Hearn, Moynihan, and Catholic priest, John Charles

McQuaid. Readers may recall that McQuaid taught at Blackrock College, where both

Flann O'Brien and Vivion de Valera attended. McQuaid was a neighbor and friend to the

de Valera's and he had great influence on the family (Keogh 121). Though evidence of

his notes on the Constitution call for the document to "be guided and delimited by the

teachings of Catholic philosophy and theology" (108), the drafting team wanted a

Constitution for all citizens that represented a "wider nationalist tradition" (121). What

they composed and presented to the Irish people for referendum is a call for

independence, a definition of citizenship, and a protection of rights based on a republican

nation state, clearly influenced by Catholic social teachings. The Bunreacht na hÉireann

provides the right to the Irish people to choose its own form of government and "to

develop its life, political, economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions" (Bunreacht 4). As a text, the Bunreacht shares its purpose of acknowledging the rights of citizens with O'Brien's *At Swim*, though they go about this intention in quite opposite ways.

Rancière would argue with the writers of the Bunreacht that society maintains its foundation by a strict adherence to established laws, rules, and traditions. Rancière points to these foundations as characteristics of many current political regimes that are not democratic. Laws and regulations are inherently in opposition to equality, democracy, and politics, as they often place people or groups into socially constructed hierarchies (race, class, wealth, etc.). In *At Swim*, Trellis attempts to rule his narrative through similar restrictions. Trellis creates his characters, and then he forces them to live in the same hotel as him so that he can keep an eye on them. Todd Comer likens Trellis's position to that of a warden watching over his prisoners: "At several points, Trellis's eyes are described as 'sentries in red watchtowers' that collect 'intelligence'" (Comer 108). Trellis is a tyrant. He wants to control every action of his characters to fit into the narrative he designs for them. Even the novel that Trellis writes attempts to control the behavior of others: "His didactic novel-in-progress on societal sins both affirms the political order and discursively writes Irish subjectivity" (Comer 105). Luckily, Trellis's inability to control his own self leads to his prisoners' escape from the tyranny of his pen.

This is not to equate the political regime under the Bunreacht with tyranny. The point of emphasizing Trellis's level of control as the author of that narrative is to

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recognize the absurdity of attempts to govern morality[28] and the attempts to keep power away from the people[29]. Much of the point of *At Swim* is that no one author seems to have any control. They all concede their authority at some point or another to someone else. Trellis gives way to his characters, Finn concedes to Shanahan, Furriskey, and Lamont, who then hand over authorship to Orlick. The first narrator hands over editorial control to his friend, Brinsley (just like O'Brien hands over control to Sheridan) as he tries to provide clear connection between each layer of the text. In this way, O'Brien enacts democratic world-creation by showing the equality of the authors in each layer of the text and watching them readjust the sensible to what they want. Each character/author tells a story of his own and, as Long describes it "as a manifestation of the 'work in progress', this writing creates not just words on a page but 'living' characters' and 'real' events that are materialized in the act of writing" (Long 14). Through the continuous production of narrative, characters become real authors and there is an equality in the space they access to develop their stories within the novel.

Such a space does not exist within the Bunreacht. Where the novel is dynamic in its ability to change based on authors and readers, the Bunreacht remains relatively static. Once votes were cast to accept the Bunreacht as the Constitution of Ireland, its has not easily changed. Acts of referendum provide some opportunity, but they also require a consensus of votes cast to reconfigure the nation as the Constitution defines it, and that

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[28] Like Article 41 of the Bunreacht that made divorce illegal or Article 44 that gives special dispensation to the Catholic Church.
[29] The Bunreacht does not pull power from the people; in fact it relies on Referenda (Article 47) to enact laws based on the will of the people.

does not happen easily. Each act of referendum stabilizes the concept of the nation according to the majority vote, which reinforces the singular narrative of the nation per the Constitutional definition. O'Brien's novel, on the other hand seems to continuously revolt against a single understanding or definition of the story. It is always changing based on the author-reader relationship and also evolving as the texts with which it interacts change too.

With his focus on the production of narrative and the role of the author, O'Brien takes part in Rancière's "aesthetic regime of the arts." In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière describes three regimes of identification in art, all of which relate to creating the political. The "ethical regime of images," places all truth-content and purpose into the image itself, so that the object is neatly represented by the image (Rancière, *Politics* 20). In the "poetic/representative regime of the arts," particular forms of art produce imitations of the real (21). Mimesis, as described in the previous chapter, exemplifies the poetic regime in that the imitation follows a form or type. In Joyce's case, mimetic representation of Dedalus's life in novel-form elevates the individual to speak for himself. The "aesthetic regime of the arts" contrasts with the poetic regime in that the identification of art as an artistic production moves beyond imitation and, by focusing on its existence as art, heightens the sensible mode to the production of it. I would argue that *At Swim* is in the aesthetic regime because of the literary techniques previously discussed: the use of metafiction, intertextuality, and satire force the reader to sense the novel on both the narrative and structural levels. The production of narrative becomes an

equalizing force within the novel and through the literary techniques used to compose the novel.

Characters in *At Swim* are not bound by the limitations of their stories and can intermingle across narrative planes. In doing so, they change the trajectory of all of their narratives and ultimately the power of the master-author to regain control. When Furriskey realizes his love for Peggy is virtuous, he "hatched a plot for putting sleeping-draughts in Trellis's porter by slipping a few bob to the grocer's curate. This meant that Trellis was nearly always asleep and awoke only at predeterminable hours, when everything would be temporarily in order" (O'Brien 106). Furriskey, like all of the characters, wants to act as an individual with agency in creating meaning for himself. Later, Shanahan and Lamont realize that Orlick has literary talent, and "they suggest that he utilize his gift to turn the tables (as it were) and compose a story on the subject of Trellis, a fitting punishment indeed for the usage he has given others" (178). O'Brien's novel erodes traditional approaches to authority in making meaning within a text by sharing narration and writing between characters on various planes of composition. Each story within the novel represents a different plane of existence, yet characters work together to intertwine their stories and create new worlds with new possibilities for themselves.

Changes within artistic style or form lead to changes in the inherent social paradigm within which it occurs. Art re-presents and reconfigures society by changing what we sense (Rancière, *Politics* 45). For instance, when we read fragments, we treat them with a democratic openness that they each exist alone and in equal collaboration

with the others. *At Swim* begins with the narrator taking on a role of author many times over, as he not only narrates his own story in first-person, but writes the openings of three books, each with their own narrators. As the novel progresses, fragments of personal musings intertwine with excerpts from other texts, poems recited by Finn and Shanahan, and observations on events and characters. Each fragment is read as an equal part of the story. This is the same way we should read characters, as the narrator in *At Swim* explains: "It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad or poor or rich. Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living" (O'Brien 19). In other words, art can represent what society is, could be, or what it may become.

Seamus Deane sees the possibilities of O'Brien's novel to demonstrate democratic authority. In *Strange Country*, Deane describes *At Swim* as "a 'novel' constructed on the principles of proportional representation rather than on the single transferable vote system that is the political equivalent of the representing narrator in realist fiction" (Deane 157-8). Deane's description of the ability of each character to speak/act for themselves reveals the democratic composition of authorship in the text. Like the referendum[30], each character chooses how to write their own story and does not have to suffice with being represented by a single, authorial voice. During a social evening among all of the characters in Trellis's novel, Furriskey proclaims: "The voice was the

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[30] As in the vote to approve the Bunreacht, a referendum is based on the votes cast; each citizen first chooses whether to cast a vote and then chooses how they want to vote. They have the authority to make decisions on including their voice and on what they say.

first. […] The human voice. The voice was Number One. Anything that came after was only an imitation of the voice" (O'Brien 162). Furriskey's statement heightens the voice of the human above that of the Church, the state, or anything else that tries to claim authority over it. Furriskey's statement is followed by a rousing conversation among all of the guests of the Red Swann Inn. Everyone talks, covering various topics.

At another point in the novel, as the characters continue to speak and act with verve on their own behalf, the reader gains insight into how so many voices can work together. The crew of travelers on their way to the Inn all constantly talk: "They did not cease, either walking or eating, from the delights of colloquy and harmonized talk contrapuntal in character nor did Sweeny desist for long from stave-music or from the recital of his misery in verse" (O'Brien 140). Voices, poems, songs are all inter-mingling, all of equal value. When they get tired of talk, they join in singing together, including "old cowboy airs," "old come-all-ye's," Cuban love-songs, Italian and German operas, and all kinds of sacred music (O'Brien 140-1). Their repertoire consists of songs from other cultures, but that they all know and feel. This precedes a "Biographical reminiscence" by the narrator of a committee meeting between his uncle and friends about throwing a Ceilidh (dance). The committee argue that there is no space or need for the waltz, or any other international music, at a Ceilidh because "we have plenty of our own dances without crossing the road to borrow what we can't wear" (O'Brien 143). The committee argues that the Gaelic League and the clergy are opposed to the waltz, or really anything that is not Irish, whereas the characters within the narrator's novel have no such qualms. They act democratically in their acknowledgment of others.

There are counter-arguments to the point made here that each voice can act democratically in relation to the other voices around it. Deane continues his discussion of *At Swim*, stating, "O'Brien's novel, in effect, indicates that the best representation can do is to produce an unhappy coalition of interlocking discourses that remain in uneasy alliance with one another, rather than elect a one-party strong government that will be able to represent the whole *mélange* of history, language, community, and narratives…" (Deane 158). While O'Brien's novel and the authors within it point to the singular voice as a truly democratic action, Deane reminds us that the equality that exists between singular voices often results in a cacophony of voices that cannot agree on anything. Following Furriskey's defense of the human voice, Brinsley provides the narrator with feedback on the length and breadth of the excerpt. Brinsley expresses "his inability to distinguish between Furriskey, Lamont, and Shanahan, bewailed what he termed their spiritual and physical identity, stated that true dialogue is dependent on the conflict rather than the confluence of minds" (O'Brien 174). Both Deane and Brinsley caution against the multitude of voices that can end in disagreement or become indistinguishable amidst the roar of the many.

Early on in *Dissensus*, Rancière marks a trait of the police state as one that hinders the opportunity for democratic representation. One of the main distinctions he makes is that in a police state, individuals are subject to laws written for them that they must follow, leaving them without the opportunity to take part in creating and defining the laws to be obeyed (Rancière, *Dissensus* 27). This places the power of deciding everything into the hands of the very few; for it is the creation of laws that protects an

individual as an autonomous being. Rancière recognizes the power of authorship: "If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as the bearer of signs of policity, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse" (38). Rancière describes what it means to steal an individual's ability to make meaning. Communication relies upon a shared understanding of meaning, and that requires the acknowledgement that another individual is involved in making meaning. In the police state, the other is ignored and meaning is forced upon it. But in a state of politics, meaning-making relies on a shared sphere of experience, which allows for the voices of all to be heard. Again, literature provides a model of how shared authorship can transpire. Literature involves "a partition of the sensible, of the visible and the sayable, […] which allows or does not allow some specific subjects to designate them and speak about them. It is a specific intertwining of ways of being, ways of doing and ways of speaking" (152). *At Swim* enacts a variety of ways to share authorship. It champions the multitude of dissonant voices as represented by the array of characters in the novel. *At Swim* enacts democratic authority across all modes of narrative production, within and beyond the boundaries of the novel.

Two significant compositions are simultaneously produced, and both attempt to enact democratic representation of the people of Ireland. From the Bunreacht, Irish people gain complete independence from the British crown and assurances that "Ireland is a sovereign, independent, democratic state" (Article 5), in which "All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law" (Article 40). Under this same document, they also relinquish certain individual rights to choose personal values and beliefs, and

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instead must adhere to the values of the nation to receive protection under the law. There are regulations on power and clarifications on rights that, based on the majority of votes cast, become the legally binding laws of the nation. Each citizen controls their voice through referenda that shape the government. They achieve individual autonomy and an Irish national identity.

From Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Irish people gain images of revolution, of anarchy, of independence and freedom, and of dissensus. O'Brien utilizes narrative techniques like metafiction, intertextuality, and satire to reconfigure the space of the Irish literary scene. He asks how literature can represent a person (or a people) within a text and beyond the text. He pushes concepts of authority beyond the pale, allowing havoc to ensue to demonstrate how each person, no matter how they start, can be their own author. O'Brien introduces his readers to a democratic regime and makes space for the subaltern, the *demos,* and the transnational world to be reflected within and across the nation. As a result, readers achieve an understanding of what democracy can be, for better or worse.

In the midst of great change, these two texts reveal opportunity for postcolonial nations to become democratic. They produce concepts of the political that should be considered in relation to each other and valued for their roles in defending the individual. Literature enacts democratic representation that shapes the nationalizing experience in Ireland. Though much has changed since then, the role literature plays within a newly independent nation cannot be overlooked or minimized in its importance. What we have to consider is: how does literature affect the democratic potential for new nations, and is

that the best option for fair representation of an individual? Though national identity may not hold the power it used to in defining a citizen, acts of individual representation must be considered in relation to the world(s) around them. This is where my conclusions on the Irish literary and postcolonial situation lead.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the original manuscript for *At Swim-Two-Birds*, on the verso side of one of the

manuscript pages, Flann O'Brien mused:

> Life is a conflict.
> All movement due to conflict between good and evil.
> Therefore God without devil is absurd.
> Like a backyard without a house. (qtd. in Baines 149)

Life is conflict, and attempting to make it otherwise is absurd. Flann O'Brien and Jacques

Rancière would agree with this sentiment. O'Brien's novel epitomizes life's conflicts and

celebrates the dissonance that such conflicts produce. And as Rancière explains, without

such dissensus, the political could not exist. O'Brien's analogy speaks on many levels to

the state of democracy and its location with respect to the concept of the nation. O'Brien

says it is absurd to imagine any form of life without a conflict between good and evil,

equating such an imaginary to a backyard without a house. How does good or evil exist

without the other to provide context? Both depend on each other, and it is their difference

from each other – in relation to each other – that defines what they are. As I hope my

discussion has revealed, the same analogy holds true about the concept of the democratic

nation and the people that make it a political body. A democratic nation exists only

through its ability to allow conflict and dissent. It becomes absurd when it ignores voices

of dissent or denies the rights of those that do dissent. Nations struggle to provide free space inclusive of all voices. For true democracy, everyone requires agency, and everyone can speak for themselves.

As the previous chapters illustrate, literature participates in meaning-making that can define an individual's agency and a nation's politic. With each new instance of aesthetic representation comes an opportunity to include another voice and affect the creation of an individual's agency and their role in the nation. *Who* gets represented helps shape the concept of the nation by developing ideas of the individual parts that make up the nation. *How* they choose to represent themselves also shapes the nation, as experimentation in form may reveal parts that had not been seen before. Literature enacts ideas of the political by naming people that get counted and by illustrating different ways to name and count.

Throughout the last years of Irish colonialism, aesthetic representations of the *demos* enacted an all-out war against colonialism, which helped Ireland to become a free state. But this freedom was limited and the democracy of voices within Ireland were unable to fulfill their individual agencies fully. Under the auspices of the British Commonwealth, Irish leaders developed an Irish national identity that acknowledged a certain type of Irishness, one that emphasized ties to ancient culture, language, and religion over the possibilities of diverse contemporary voices. The Irish government valued an idea of Irishness that denied agency to anyone that did not fit into this concept. Fortunately, cultural representations pushed back.

Each chapter of my dissertation examines how literature acts democratically to acknowledge voices from below. Chapter two scrutinizes how literature helps to build an identity separate from the colonizer, through which people can begin to see themselves represented in defiance of oppression. Chapter three turns to the ignored individual and elevates a person of the *demos* to the central focus of a literary work, proving that each individual's story has value and that individual agency is a defiant next-step for the *demos*. Finally, chapter four reveals a turning point in which literature can act democratically through form and content to revolutionize the status quo. Throughout my analysis, I consider the following questions: what does literature do to open up space for the *demos*? And, how does literature act democratically? This final chapter solidifies my responses to these questions and goes further to address how this information can shape our concept of democracy, democratic agency, and literature's role in transforming the nature of both.

Like a Nation Without its People

The texts analyzed in chapter two show how literature and political texts begin this turn towards democratic action as they take part in the decolonization process. Authors in colonial Ireland tried to reconcile what it means to be colonized and how to make space for voices that deserve acknowledgement. The anti-English sentiment among Irish nationalists depended on the creation of an Irish identity that unified the subaltern under one banner. As political tracts fought and gained ground for the acknowledgment of Irish people, literature of the Celtic Revivalists created an identity for the Irish *demos* based on a cultural heritage shared for centuries through storytelling. Nationalists relied

on these traditions and legends to develop the collective concept of Irishness: a concept that included tales of heroism and spirituality. And while great strides were made in the efforts to democratize Irish agency, new limitations restricted that agency because of the narrow vision of what "Irishness" meant. The national identity imagined by the texts and tracts of Ireland during this period left out anyone that did not share these traits. Ireland's independence relied on the strength of a unified national identity.

Anti-colonial themes overwhelm the literature of the Celtic Revival. The authors discussed in chapter two all work together to formulate an idea of Ireland that had nothing to do with British control. In essence, these works defy the concept of Ireland projected on it from the outside and turn the art of representation over to people who had a stake in an Irish nation. Many of these texts further the concept of democracy and democratic agency. For instance, the anonymous poem about Robert Emmet calls for his epitaph to only be written when a democratic voice exists that can represent him. The poet takes on that charge, and writes Emmet's epitaph as a form of rebellion. The poet is fighting for his own and Emmet's agency through aesthetic representation.

Literature provides an integral part of the anti-colonial rebellion in Ireland. Authors turn to poetry and prose to attempt self-representation that has otherwise been denied. Lady Gregory, for instance, believes the national cause is strengthened by identifying characteristics of Irish life that separate Irish history from British history. Throughout her poems, translations, and plays, Lady Gregory depicts the strength of Irish heritage through stories of folklore. Like Gregory, Yeats and Synge also advance an idea of traditional Irish culture in opposition to the representations of the Irish projected on

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them. Yeats's poetry and plays blend heroic tales of the past with the revolutionary struggles of his contemporaries. He likens his poetry to the ballads and songs of the past, proving that the Irish have always held the talent and ability to represent themselves. Yeats's early works make a solid case for a specifically Irish literary tradition. By elevating the myths of Irish culture through his poetry, Yeats proves how a concept of national identity uplifts a subjected culture.

As chapter two also reveals, national identity conceived through cultural production plays a significant role in creating a case for national independence. Literary representations shaped ideas of Ireland's national identity, and leaders of the political revolution depended on them to strengthen the case for Irish independence. Michael Collins, Patrick Pearse, Douglas Hyde, and the many authors of political tracts that wrote the Irish Revolution championed the image of Irishness created and developed by the Celtic Revivalists. In each stage of the revolution – from the "Proclamation of Independence" on Easter 1916 to the Irish Free State Constitution in 1922 – political authors used cultural representations to support their claims for independence and to build a concept of national identity. The "Proclamation" set into motion a re-configuration of the speaker/listener relationship by forcing the English to acknowledge the voices of the Irish. Later, through the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Irish people gained agency to create their own constitution. Each text examined in chapter two makes an important contribution in writing authority into an Irish identity that acknowledges the Irish *demos* and sets in motion the decolonization of the Irish nation.

However, amidst the progress made in creating agency for the *demos* of Ireland, new limitations were also placed on the people. The works of the Celtic Revival and the political texts that shaped Ireland's resistance all took part in developing the concept of a specifically Irish nation. This concept of Irishness elevated certain aspects of Irish life, including Catholicism, cultural traditions in language and stories of legends of the Red and Fenian cycles. While supportive of the claims of a distinct Irish national heritage, this move mis-represented the relationships of the past to fit the needs of Ireland's present condition. It rewrote history to imagine a bond where one did not necessarily exist. With each representation of a national identity, Irishness became a more inclusive concept. Seamus Deane exposes the dangers and implications of inclusivity, as it creates a new class of Irish subaltern that do not fit into the vision of Irishness that the nation has embraced as its only identity. Through each rendition of an Irish national identity portrayed through literary or political texts, a shift occurs in who gets to be represented. The Irish make great strides towards acknowledgement as a *demos* in the final days of colonization; however, the concept of national identity produced through cultural representation has an perilous effect on who gets to be counted and who gets left out of the new national identity.

The People Without a Nation

The rise of the national imaginary for Ireland occurred while much of western Europe's cultural production turned to the theme of the individual and the individual's place in modernity. This too, provides an avenue of agency for voices from the Irish *demos*. The modernist art movement often questions the dichotomy of the self and an

"other," depicting the self as the central focal point and the "other" in orbital relation to that singular point-of-view. For a burgeoning nation of voices previously overlooked, locating a voice from the Irish *demos* as the focal point around which the world revolves gives immense authority to an individual that previously had gone unacknowledged. James Joyce's young Stephen Dedalus from *A Portrait* provides an individual voice within the critical moment of independence for the Irish *demos*. Joyce elevates Stephen's voice and his story expresses the experiences of a colonized boy growing up in a changing national structure.

Chapter three examines how the turn to the individual in James Joyce's *A Portrait* elevates a voice from the *demos* and how the individual defines himself within and beyond cultural and national narratives. Joyce's use of the bildungsroman and the narrative styles of the modernist art movement support the work of creating democratic agency and individual representation. Critics often designate the bildungsroman as a narrative tool through which normative structures and ideals are propagated. They argue that the bildungsroman depicts the development of a young boy into an "Empire man" who fits the cultural traditions and expectations of those in authority. Yet Stephen's bildungsroman denies all authorities that try to make him conform. Ireland's quest for independence coinciding with Stephen's development frees him from having to conform to the Empire, but he also must overcome new boundaries set upon his agency by the developing nation and national identity. As someone who does not accept the cultural definition of Irishness as his own definition, Stephen becomes a voice for a new subaltern class in Ireland.

Joyce employs narrative techniques that aid in creating democratic agency for his main character. Stephen's development is shared from his point-of-view, allowing the reader to see how he shapes his own life against the various authoritative systems that surround him. Stephen interrogates cultural norms and he questions every systematic structure in his life: family, the Church, school, and the nation. Readers are privy to Stephen's innermost thoughts through interior monologue that does not rely on an outside authority to validate its authenticity. Stephen's perspective is the only important one. Through free-indirect speech and the depiction of subjects and objects in equal relation to each other, Joyce provides an alternate and, potentially, democratic view of the experience of a boy growing up in Ireland at the time. That Stephen converses in this form of dialogue reveals his potential as a democratic agent, in that he speaks with and listens to the people in his life from an equal perspective.

Through Stephen's elevation to a main subject, Joyce also takes part in what Erich Auerbach describes in *Mimesis* as a re-orientation of the subject within the novel. Stephen's story, like that of every person, gains purpose in revealing the values of his society and his relation to them. By elevating Stephen's story to one that warrants an entire novel, Joyce takes part in equalizing the strata of society. Stephen is a voice from below, because he does not count as part of the new Irish nation, but his voice gains authority through the narrative techniques Joyce employs to enact Stephen's agency. The new reality for Ireland that Joyce depicts illustrates another democratic turn from the collective nationalism to re-configuring how we account for other voices from the *demos*.

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Like the literature examined in chapter two, Joyce's novel makes great strides in enacting a democratic representation of a voice from the Irish *demos*. As is the case with many of the works of the modernist art movement, *A Portrait* focuses on the solitary experience of the individual. Stephen's story is important because it describes the individual experience from the perspective of a voice from the *demos*. Joyce connects Stephen's human development to a historical consciousness of the development of the Irish nation-state. Clearly, Stephen is affected by the national plot that surrounds him as much as he is influenced by his family and the Church. His place on earth shapes him. By the end of the novel, Stephen is his own agent who speaks for himself and represents himself, and he chooses to question the structural boundaries placed on his agency through political normativity. Stephen takes himself out of the "Irish" narratives of Church and nation, and he goes into exile so that he has complete authority over his own voice and what he chooses to represent. From exile, Stephen can figure out for himself what it means to be Irish in relation to the world and universe around him.

Life Is a Conflict

Twenty years after the Easter Rising and the publication of many of the works discussed thus far, the state of the Irish nation was still in turmoil over its place within and beyond the boundaries of the British Empire. In 1937, the British commonwealth of Ireland turned its focus, again, on re-defining the nation and completing its quest for independence from any and all British control. Leaders used the act of referendum – a consensus of democratic voices – to enact a new Constitution that authorized Ireland as a democratic republic. While Ireland's political leaders relied on a consensus of votes cast

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to legitimize the nation, Flann O'Brien depicted the state of the nation through dissensus, revolution, and even a little anarchy. *At Swim-Two-Birds* builds from the foundational texts of the Celtic Revival and Joyce's *A Portrait* to enact a new consideration of democracy: one that acknowledges the agency of the individual *in relation to* the national. O'Brien's novel acknowledges the capabilities of everyone to be an author and reveals how agency depends upon relationships within and outside novel and national boundaries.

O'Brien exposes the many gaps in the representations of Irish experience, fulfilling Rancière's call for a re-distribution of the sensible. Through my discussion of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, it becomes clear that attempts to form a nation based on consensus is a contrived attempt to limit power to the few. Hobbes sought to silence voices of dissent by questioning their authority to speak. He believed the only way to preserve a healthy nation was by giving full consent to the small few that were fit to lead. Rancière disagreed. Rancière sees democracy, not as a political regime, but as a part of the political body that denotes those who have no right or power to speak. To make a nation a true political state in which each member has a stake, there must be a re-distribution of power and an acknowledgement of the *demos* as part of the body-politic. Rancière argues that the best way to learn how to re-configure what has been silenced (the *demos*) is by figuring out how to represent what is not there. The aesthetic regime of the arts provides a model, as it takes part in representing the fictive, and can enact democracy through inclusive spaces for many voices.

Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* enacts a redistribution of the sensible and challenges the status quo of the Irish politic on various levels. Stylistically, *At Swim* performs in ways that previous texts discussed do not. O'Brien engages the use of metafiction, intertextuality, and satire to illuminate the relationships that occur through literature. Metafiction reshapes the conversation within and beyond the boundaries of the novel by acknowledging the structure of the text across the real/unreal divide. By acknowledging that both the real and unreal exist as part of the very nature of the novel-form, *At Swim* considers the interaction of the authors and readers in relation to the agency of the characters. No boundaries exist between planes of existence within the novel, just as there are not finite boundaries between the reader and the characters within the novel. Each contributes to the other: where the novel informs the reader on the experiences of the other, the reader informs the novel by their personal experiences and contexts it brings to the reading. In doing so, metafiction acts in reconfiguring space to allow voices of speakers, listeners, authors, readers, and even characters, to have their say and be heard.

A consistent trope developed by reading O'Brien's novel is how individual perceptions are in constant relation to others. Metafiction prescribes to the notion that speakers and listeners alike can acknowledge each other's existence and account for the relationship between them as essential and positive. Intertextuality takes this further by admitting to the influences always at work on each other. *At Swim* includes characters, plots, allusions, and fragments of other texts that shape the context of the world in which the novel exists. O'Brien blends identities from Celtic legend with individuals from

modern times, but does so to consider them in conversation with each other. In addition, O'Brien introduces voices from beyond Ireland by weaving in texts that include transnational voices, like the American cowboy and his adventure that sounds strikingly similar to the Irish *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. This frees the characters from having to fulfill a concept of national identity isolated from the rest of the world. Characters in *At Swim* represent their own experiences without having to stand in for a national ideal, and yet their stories intersect and show the constant relation of self to others.

Chapter four's title reveals a lot about the state of democracy at the time that O'Brien was writing this novel. "All things stand apart from each other" accounts for both the individual and the nation in relation to each other. O'Brien's novel gives voice to "all things" through shared authorship and democratic agency for all of the parties involved. Characters take control of their own narratives, narrators share authorship, and readers engage with the novel through an open discourse of experiences. They are all in relation to each other, and yet, they all are considered as separate entities with agency. The key word in O'Brien's epigraph is "from." All components engaged in the experience of the novel are not *with* each other or the *same* as each other, but they are considered apart *from* each other. They do not create a consensus; they relate through dissensus. O'Brien's novel points out the absurdities of trying to create consensus. Consensus is not realistic, and consensus silences unique voices (like Stephen Dedalus's). In *At Swim*, readers engage in the discordant cacophony of voices that make up the democracy. Each voice has agency to represent the self, and each agent can speak in relation to others. Trying to regulate individual agency or the relationship between

democratic voices is a fool's errand. Trellis learns this when he gets tortured by his characters, and his characters learn it, too, when their revenge gets destroyed in the fireplace, denying them retribution. O'Brien's novel takes a giant step forward from its predecessors in a literary text acting democratically by engaging individual agency in meaning-making.

Therefore Politics Without Democracy Is Absurd

Early on in *Dissensus*, Rancière marks a trait of the police state as one that hinders the opportunity for democratic representation. One of the main distinctions he makes is that in a police state, individuals are subject to laws written for them that they must follow, denying them the opportunity to take part in creating and defining the laws to be obeyed (Rancière, *Dissensus* 27). This places the power of deciding everything into the hands of the very few; for it is the creation of laws that protects an individual as an autonomous being. Rancière recognizes the power of authorship: "If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as the bearer of signs of policity, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse" (38). Essentially, Rancière describes what it means to steal an individual's ability to make meaning. In the police (colonial) state, the other is ignored and meaning is forced upon it. But in a state of politics, meaning-making relies on a shared experience that allows all voices to be heard.

For Alain Badiou, art and literature provide a forum through which all voices have agency and the relationship between place, master, and truth can be manipulated and changed for the better. In *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, Badiou explains that

modernity's narrative reveals the progression of the democratic process through the relation of place, master, and truth (48). Badiou explains that the only option for a society that seeks democratic agency for all is to split truth from master, because there is no master when everyone holds individual agency. He also explains that some necessary themes to consider to rethink truth are that "*The* truth does not exist, only truths—the plural is crucial," and "Each truth is a process, and not a judgment or a state of affairs" (Badiou 55). Consequently, that also means that every individual can share their truths and no one truth takes precedence over another. Like Rancière's concept of the political, Badiou sees the need to break away from a master to allow other voices to be seen and heard. He also recognizes that this means the concept of truth must also be always-evolving.

Literature is one of many arts that exposes society to the potential of disconnecting place, master and truth. Badiou argues that naming becomes harder when place, master, and truth are disconnected, because meaning withdraws without context. As a result, literature reveals not one truth, but a multiplicity of truths. If naming becomes harder, so too, does creating an identity built on what people are or are not. By naming what it means to be Irish, the Celtic Revivalists exclude anyone who does not fit that meaning. But if the ability to name Irishness becomes harder, then multiple notions of Irishness get included in the national imaginary, perhaps even transnational notions like Stephen's. Joyce uses Stephen's growth as a way to interrogate what Stephen can become within the identities available in Ireland: will he choose the identity of an Irishman, a Catholic priest, an artist? By the end of the novel Stephen has not decided on any of these

identities yet. He has chosen not to name himself, and instead, he goes abroad to try out other potential ways of being. He chooses not to be named, and so reconfigures what Irishness means. Finally, O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* loses all concept of mastery, as each character, narrator, author, and reader takes part in the creation of truths and fictions. *At Swim* illustrates a nation without any specific national identity, but one that is equally open to those that take part.

Badiou comes from the tradition that more important than interpretation is to change things; it is not what the work of art means, but what the work does. Art is a form of action and how it operates and moves can ultimately move us. When literature acts democratically, it provides equal representation without boundaries. It works to re-distribute how we sense the other and how we acknowledge the other's agency. In *Aesthetic Democracy*, Docherty declares both culture and democracy extraordinary in how they produce a concept of the individual in relation to the political. Democracy, Docherty explains, "names those moments in which the possibility of an ethical respect for selfhood, a selfhood that is marked by cultural change, discovers or reveals itself to be conditioned by alterity, or by our condition of being-with-otherness" (Docherty xiii). Docherty describes democracy as an experience that discovers, reveals, and changes the cultural context in which we exist. Literature acts democratically by showing how being-with-otherness occurs. It produces an instance of otherness for readers by pushing them outside their realm of understanding. It re-arranges the readers' desires to take into account their selves in relation to a central other. Like Spivak's call for the humanities to

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enact an "uncoercive rearrangement of desires,"[31] Docherty argues that literature produces a democratic mode of being. Thus, literature acts democratically across various planes of existence.

As this dissertation proves, literature provides a model of how shared authorship transforms individual, democratic agency. It involves "a specific intertwining of ways of being, ways of doing and ways of speaking" (Rancière, *Dissensus* 152). The authors and literature examined in this study reveal various ways of intertwining people within texts and contexts. They reveal diverse ways of being, doing, and speaking through their rebellious forms and subjects. As each of these authors takes part in meaning-making, they work to acknowledge democracy, democratic agency, and the voices of the political. The literature included here provide spaces in which concepts of the political were changing from colonialism to independence. Representations of this transformation reveal the complications that arise when colonized subjects attempt to gain democratic agency. This begs the question: what do we learn about democracy from the literature of Ireland at its moment of conception? And how does it transform our understanding of the political today?

In an interview published in *Democracy in What State?*, Eric Hazan asks Rancière if democracy is attainable. Rancière responds: "What I am trying to convey is that democracy, in the sense of the power of the people, the power of those who have no special entitlement to exercise power, is the very basis of what makes politics thinkable"

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[31] See Spivak's "Righting Wrongs 2002: Accessing Democracy among the Aboriginals".

(Rancière, "Democracies Against" 78-9). Politics is only thinkable through democracy. Like a backyard without a house, politics – the connection of people in support of each other – exists only in relation to *all* of the people that create it. The literature discussed in this dissertation reveals the many ways that people can connect to each other to build the political. Each work accomplishes the task of enacting democratic agency to some extent for the Irish *demos*. In the end, as Flann O'Brien's chaotic novel reveals, a democratic politic might be at its most realistic when it embraces a cacophony of dissenting voices, each with the agency to share their own story. Belonging, in O'Brien's novel, becomes an act of referendum, with each character, narrator, author, and reader choosing whether to belong to the politic or not and having the ability to exercise the individual, democratic agency to do so.

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The Modern age in literature is grounded in achievement, amazing in their potential both for emancipation and destruction: atomic energy, space exploration, genetic and biomedical engineering and telecommunications. Technological advances in these areas can either save mankind and the universe or destroy it. There is a breakdown of communication between people. Meanings of words and language are being constantly questioned. The characters of the poem are together and yet they are separate which conveys the modernist theme of urban alienation. Sean O'Casey showcases the Unionism and nationalism that was his enduring theme in The Shadow of a Gunman (1923). He also writes a play glorifying socialism, The Star Turns Red (1940). 1.2. Modernity and Modernism. The first seeds to modernist literature were implanted with the emergence of modernity. Modernity is a post traditional or post-medieval historical period that characterized a radical shift away from traditions. Modern literature is a literature that flourished in the new capitalist art market during a period of time where writers were no longer pointed when it comes to what they write neither by the church nor by monarchies. They also no longer had to answer to the old system of artistic patronage; to the contrary, they signified their allegiance to all what is new. The Irish Question is a phrase used to describe Irish nationalism and the calls for Irish independence. What is the Difference Between Modernism and Postmodernism in Literature? Modernism is a movement in literature that was predominant in the 20th century, characterized by a strong and deliberate break from the traditional styles of prose and poetry. In contrast, postmodernism was a response against modernism and was marked by its reliance on narrative techniques such as unreliable narrator, fragmentation, parody, etc.