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Anne Enright's Reply to James Joyce:
A Nation's Tale Told Through *The Gathering*

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

Particular to the Irish gothic, a postcolonial history seems to repeat itself in Anne Enright's *The Gathering*. The victims of an atrocious sexual crime seem to circulate this hidden secret that all tragedy revolves around, yet no one is willing to speak about it. Enright suggests that the same oppressed past of Ireland's history keeps creeping up to the surface, even in the twenty-first century.

Veronica and Liam Hegarty, Enright's main characters, demonstrate one of the main tropes of the gothic where no matter how long one might suppress a memory, it is bound to come back and reveal the truth behind the suffering. Veronica's memory loss is where she seems to be pushing past secrets deeper into her psyche everything comes back to the surface. Through the intergenerational sexual trauma that the reader witnesses in the family home, we see that silence is inherited from Veronica's mother and grandmother. Veronica's oppression can no longer be contained within the domestic interior of the family when she learns that the oppressor, Lambert Nugent is the landowner of the family's home where the sexual crime occurs. Ownership of the land is at the heart of many Irish narratives, particularly those that pursue a gothic framework.

As gothic novels depend on readers to question everything, Enright made sure we ask those questions as she creates an unreliable narrator in Veronica, whose memory keeps us questioning the doomed events that led this family to close in on itself, particularly the intergenerational sexual assault. In a way that mirrors Ireland's colonialism and the "rape" of its nation one generation after the other, history eventually lands on Veronica, pushing her to release that oppression and begin to make sense of her family history and, therefore, the nation.

When it comes to Irish literature where a reader can, almost always, read the nation in its pages, can one separate between the postcolonial and the gothic? Is it possible that in both categories, postcolonial reading imposes its presence in the texts and in return manifests itself as it starts fitting into many gothic tropes? I believe both exist simultaneously at the heart of Enright's *The Gathering*.

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Introduction

In almost everything he wrote, James Joyce warned the Irish about the dangers of an orthodox nationalism. In his masterpiece *Ulysses*, the “Cyclops” episode, he created two versions of Ireland through Leopold Bloom and The Citizen. Joyce suggests that we must put the past behind us to heal and move forward towards modernity and an Ireland united. In the “Cyclops” episode, he warns that the nation would be threatened if Ireland holds on to a romanticized past and does not reconcile its internal differences. The danger of turning on one another, as it happens with Bloom and The Citizen, is a story that always ends in violence. Joyce also created characters in *Dubliners*, specifically in “The Dead,” who personify paralysis as the nation moves forward while still holding on to a past that will never survive the postcolonial world. Joyce shows in “The Dead” what it means to romanticize a dead existence within the domestic walls of the nation. Joyce’s world foreshadowed a postcolonial Ireland full of hurt, pain, and violence. He depicts an Ireland isolated within itself, within its borders. Anne Enright replies with *The Gathering*, a novel that proves him right. Almost a century later, Enright shows that Joyce’s warnings were valid by imagining a devastating reality the Irish were not able to escape.

In his literary canon, James Joyce maps out the colonial history of the nation and warns about what would happen after colonization if the country does not accept the past and welcome change in the future in order to heal and allow Ireland to grow as a nation. As he writes his novel on the cusp of the historic change in the nation, he also predicts that a colonizer mentality will turn into an orthodox nationalist nation, one that would repeat the oppression but on a different level. On the other hand, Enright moves the nation’s paralysis into the future into the domestic interior of the home, the family.

Enright, through *The Gathering*, brings forth the contemporary Ireland that James Joyce warned about and recreates the colonized Ireland through gender hierarchy within her characters and family function (dysfunction?). Joyce personifies a nationalist, more accepting and diverse Ireland in “Cyclops,” painting an image that brings forth his views on the Ireland that Joyce designs. Joyce’s version of Ireland is open to acceptance and would not leave the country battling its demons, from violence to domestic terrorism, self-destructive behavior, domestic violence, and abuse. Similarly, Gabriel Conroy in “The Dead” is paralyzed by a romanticized life outside of the home and finds himself facing a dead past, buried yet also alive. Gary J. Poplawski suggests in his article “Stasis and Paralysis: Stephen Dedalus and Gabriel Conroy” that “Joyce was unequivocal about the negative value of paralysis, consistently equating it in ‘The Dead,’ as throughout all *Dubliners*, with death, impotence, delusion, superficiality, isolation, and frustration” (44). Joyce shows Ireland what happens when the past is repressed and buried; it threatens the nation just as it did to the fabric of Gabriel’s relationship with his wife Gretta. It is also evident that “by relying excessively on the past in his dealings with the reality of the living present, Gabriel has constructed a social façade that denies his inner spirit any true self-expression or contact with the surrounding world” (Poplawski and J. 43). Enright, on the other hand, creates multiple versions of Ireland in her novel through the characters she crafts. Each one of them represents a period of Irish history and its effect on the generation that survives it. Enright takes the paralysis Joyce creates and amplifies it through her characters. Ireland becomes a frozen nation dealing with the aftermath of a past uncovered and unhealed. The Gothic motifs in *The Gathering* map a nation for us as Enright uncovers a painful past that caused Veronica Hegarty’s brother, Liam, to end his

life. Matthew Schultz explains in his article “Gothic Inheritance and the Troubles in Contemporary Irish Fiction,” that “[t]he contemporary gothic in Ireland generally serves to shadow the progress of Irish modernity with narratives that expose the underside of postcolonial nationhood” (130). While the story develops, the buried and forgotten truth of a sexual crime comes back to reveal a history that wants to be forgotten, a history of a raped nation never given a chance to break the cyclical intergenerational trauma at its core.

Starting with *The Citizen and Bloom*, Joyce foreshadows Ireland’s tendency to ignore history, a tendency also highlighted in Enright’s depiction of the nation. Joyce and Enright narrate the story of a nation that struggles to find its identity as it tries to retell the past to make sense of the present. Enright’s representation of Veronica and Liam’s characters is what Joyce warned about in his work. They are the aftermath of the violence and destruction that Joyce did not want to happen to his homeland. As Kevin Whelan in “The Cultural Effects of the Famine,” claims, “If violence is the originating moment of the mobilization of collective identity, cultural memory then becomes a storage system of violence, wounds, scars, anger” (92). Through this, Joyce and Enright suggest that violence breeds violence and there is no escaping it. My analysis will also illustrate Ireland as represented in Enright’s other characters such as Ada, Brendan, and Mother Moreen, ending with a reading of Liam’s son Rowan. Ada is the Ireland who was subjected to the initial historical assault of the British invasion. All the pain and suffering described by Enright, the lost identity and distorted memory, were “at the individual level as well as the national level, [moving] beyond an excessive or repressed memory, which leads to repetition or melancholia” and they come together between the lines in Enright’s

extraordinary work (Whelan 92). Every character in *The Gathering* represents a period that is personified and assigned to a historical event in Ireland. They all become a piece of the nation's history with an uncertain future.

Joyce suggests in his narrative that the Irish need to accept the past, heal from it, and move on as a nation with this new hybrid identity forced upon them. Joyce opens the reader's eyes to the danger that orthodox nationalism imposes on the Irish, which in return prevents the nation from moving forward into modernity. By doing so, the nation will alienate itself, resulting in oppression and violence, seen in *The Gathering*. That is why Joyce shows that the Irish must see themselves as global, as well as Irish citizens, to put Ireland on the map as part of the dynamic modern world. The Ireland of Joyce's fiction is, after all, a wounded land trying to become a nation.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* follows three characters in Dublin: Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom, and Stephen Dedalus. Dublin in *Ulysses* is a character all on its own. The narrative is centered around these characters and how they go about their day in the city. The entire novel's timeline happens in one day. For my claim in this paper, I will only be examining one episode of the novel, "Cyclops." This episode focuses on Leopold's encounter with an Irish nationalist named The Citizen. The two characters represent two different Irelands, which Joyce illustrates to prove division in the nation. Joyce, in this episode, warns the nation about the dangers of orthodox nationalism and what it will do to the nation if the Irish do not come together and accept the diversity that should be within Ireland. He gives this episode an unidentifiable, omniscient, and realistic first-person narrator as a way of highlighting a voice of reason behind the fictional story told.

Within the threshold of the novel, Joyce shows how anger towards modernity and progression could drive the Irish towards a self-destructive path.

Although Stephen is not in this episode, Joyce exposes another side of being Irish, as Bloom and Stephen are diverse parts of Ireland, whom the people must learn to identify with. Stephen is the artistic side of Ireland, and as we all know Joyce always turns to the arts to make sense of things. Art and language, in his eyes, is always the solution. It is the answer to create a nation ready to become modern, join the world and situate itself on the map, as it should have always been. It is never religion or politics; it is art. Stephen is that representation.

James Joyce's *Ulysses*

When Joyce was writing this episode, Ireland was in the throes of the Easter Rising and revolution. Therefore, he puts The Citizen in "Cyclops" as a warning, a prediction of some sort. Joyce shows the danger of having only one eye fixed on one identity without being able to see beyond the tunnel vision of inherited blindness. The presence of The Citizen is the Ireland Joyce rejects in *Ulysses* because of what it would mean to future generations. This is especially persuasive when Joyce has The Citizen pronounce all the birth and death announcements in the "Irish Independent founded by Parnell" at the beginning of the episode:

"Gordon, Barnfield crescent, Exeter; Redmayne of Iffley, Saint Anne's on Sea: the wife of William T Redmayne of a son. How's that, eh? Wright and Flint, Vincent and Gillett to Rotha Marion daughter of Rosa and the late George Alfred Gillett, 179 Clapham road, Stockwell, Playwood and Ridsdale at Saint Jude's, Kensington by the very reverend Dr Forrest, dean of Worcester. Eh? Deaths. Bristow, at Whitehall lane, London: Carr, Stoke Newington, of gastritis and heart disease: Cockburn, at the Moat house, Chepstow..." (285-286).

Could you include a brief follow-up here on the significance of this passage?

As for Bloom, he is what Ireland should be: a diverse body that holds with it the religious diversity Ireland needs in order to free itself from the shackles forced upon it by nationalist ideologies of what it means to be Irish. This version of Ireland relies on reason and what "can be explained by science," as Bloom explains "it's only a natural phenomenon" in his analysis of Joe Brady's erection when he was hung (Joyce 292). Of course, The Citizen's reaction to this conversation is not surprising at all. They start to

argue, and The Citizen takes the chance to say to Bloom, after he tried to explain his point, that “the friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us” (Joyce 293). The Citizen’s Ireland is not one that wants to move forward. It is one that wants to keep hanging on to the past without dealing with the trauma that leads to this aggression towards what might be a different type of Ireland, an Ireland that does not want to heal from the abuse subjected on it by the colonizers.

As Joyce paints this Citizen in the hub of Dublin, this one-eyed creature represents the imagined idea of what it is to be Ireland: the masculine, the Catholic, the pureblooded nationalist, the “broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhaired freely freckled shaggy bearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruggedfaced, swineyarmed hero,” and of course the girdle with “rude yet striking art the tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroine of antiquities” (284). That brief comment of antiquities is not small by any means. Joyce underscores that The Citizen can only behold the past, the antique by recalling,

“Cuchulin, Conn of hundred battles, Niall of nine hostages, Brian of Kincora, the ardri Malachi, Art MacMurragh, Shane O'Neill, Father John Murphy, Owen Roe, Patrick Sarsfield, Red Hugh O'Donnell, Red Jim MacDermott, Soggarth Eoghan O'Growney, Michael Dwyer, Francy Higgins, Henry Joy M'Cracken, Goliath, Horace Wheatley, Thomas Conneff, Peg Woffington, the Village Blacksmith, Captain Moonlight, Captain Boycott, Dante Alighieri”

and many more (284). Joyce takes this image a step further and mentions that at The citizen’s feet, a hostile “savage animal of the canine tribe whose stertorous gasps

announced that he was sunk in uneasy slumber,” which supports his warning of: Do Not Approach aggressive reflection and how defensive that ideology of hanging onto the past can be (285). Joyce also shows us the danger of having only one eye fixed on one identity without being able to see beyond the tunnel vision of inherited blindness. The presence of The Citizen is the Ireland Joyce rejects in Ulysses. As The Citizen emerges, looking like a Gaelic hero that many Irish want to portray as real Irish identity, Joyce shows us how toxic this kind of romanticism is.

Anne Enright: *The Gathering*

The Citizen's Ireland would rather turn on itself than face the reality of rape. This is the connection to *The Gathering* as the family in this novel is uncovering the truth behind the tragedies that led them to gather. Joyce and Enright's connection in this paper moves from nationalism in the nation in *Ulysses* as it is replaced by colonization within the home in *The Gathering*. *The Gathering* tells the story of a middle-aged woman, Veronica Hegarty, as she recalls a suppressed memory surrounding the tragic death of her older brother, Liam. Veronica grew up the middle child of nine kids in an Irish Catholic family. The mysterious circumstances which led to her brother's suicide trigger childhood memories that reveal many tragic narratives in the family including one of her mother Moreen and her uncle Brendan who died while institutionalized, starting with her grandmother and her relationship with her landowner Lambert Nugent. Nugent's role in this novel as the property owner with archaic masculine hierarchy based on property plays a significant role in the tragic event that led to Liam's death and is crucial to the reading of the Hegarty family as a national metaphor of Ireland's history. Ilaria Oddenino claims in "Personal Wounds, National Scars. Reflections on Individual and Cultural Trauma in Anne Enright's *The Gathering*" that the "person may recognize some traits of his/her personality as disturbed, but this does not mean that he/she will be able to go back to the primal cause. However, an event, or a series of events can 'unblock' this situation and make repressed memories resurface" (5). As a result, Veronica in *The Gathering* must uncover deep rooted intergenerational trauma dating back to her grandmother to make sense of the loss of her brother and to bring forth his truth. However, according to Sarah Gradam, "gaps begin to appear in her conscious psychic life as her unconscious

mind yields up repressed memories, fears, and wishes that disrupt the falsely stable subjectivity she has constructed through interaction with the ideological world” (2). This results in many suspicions regarding the reliability of her memory. Throughout her recollection of events that led Liam to take his own life, her “narrative suggests that Liam’s inability to order his experience is what ultimately destroys him” (Gradam 5). Liam’s narrative projects the life of a generation unable to take ownership over its own history.

Ada

Undoubtedly, Enright creates a world in this novel around the Hegarty family without an obvious projection of the nation, however, bringing Cyclops, which is a nationalist narrative into conversation with the family proves the connection I attempt to draw between *Ulysses* and *The Gathering*. The Citizen is that traditional imagined Ireland that romanticizes a life that once was. Ada in the text is the embodiment of that same Ireland, half a century later. She is a very quiet yet interesting character that is the broken Gaelic Ireland represented in *The Gathering*. She is the grandmother who was the initial victim of Nugent. He is the colonizer, the abuser, and the entitled landowner as shown through the letters Veronica found left behind in chapter thirty-five: “maybe fifteen of them, each signed L. Nugent, or Lambert Nugent, and each more banal than the last. There are gaps and lapses, into which I read anger or desire” (Enright 233). The letters, at times, read like a confession of the abuse that Liam suffered at the hands of Nugent in the garage as he writes:

“Dear Mrs Spillane,

Believe me when I say that I have your best interests at heart in the matter of the back garage, which feeds anyway into the back laneway.

Yours sincerely Lambert Nugent” (Enright 233-234).

It is Ada’s Ireland, the one that “existed in a distinct way that my mother could not,” that is capable of existing beyond the conflict even for just a short time (Enright 47). No one in the family communicates of the horrible events which took place, from Ada’s rape to the assault of her children, and her grandchildren: “Ada might have been good with other people’s children, but she was manifestly terrible with her own” (Enright 86). Yet after her death, the comments of “oh she was lovely” and “oh she was terribly nice, your Granny” by neighbors depict a romanticism that once was, regardless of how or what it was (Enright 86). The Citizen hangs on to the same ideologies regarding his nation. Once the present becomes a past, citizens of an oppressed nation become attached to what once was. When Ada dies, Enright needs to address the matter of the ownership where the original assault happened, when the invader first attacked this home. This is a significant detail in the novel to address who owns property in the history of this family as “The questions of who owned the house and where the money would go, once Ada’s body was taken out of it, were a matter of complete indifference to me” (Enright 84). In her funeral we see all the generations sitting behind each other, as the succession of Ireland as a nation appears in the characters created by Enright.

The direct connection of the Citizen to Ada is that unhealed national and familial trauma that the colonizer and Nugent subject the nation and the home to endure. The Citizen preaches through the entire “Cyclops” episode of the greatness of what once was. Some experts suggest that “during these interactions, not talking about the past was

considered an effective means of building peace and showing respect for those who had lost loved ones. In which normal life could be rebuilt, despite conflicting memories of the war” (Kevers et al. 627). Oppressed nations attempt to move on from violence and injustice by silencing the past. Ada feels the need to represent, in her grandchildren’s eyes a promising past as “everybody had a beautiful grandmother” and Veronica needs to see beauty in her history (Enright 21). As a nation, Ada needs to be this beautiful past that all generations look back at to see their origin as pure. Enright and Joyce suggest that no nation in the world wants to create a past that it would not want to hold on to and the Irish are no different. David Punter and Glennis Byron in their “Postcolonial Gothic” chapter of *The Gothic* claim that, “The cultures and histories of colonized nations are shadowed by the fantasized possibility of alternative histories, the sense of what might have been if the violence of colonization had not come to eradicate or prevent the traces of ‘independent development’” (54). Veronica imagines Ada’s childhood being orphaned and motherless; forced to face “the wide world alone. I tried to imagine a father for her, but I couldn’t” (Enright 90). Enright shows a clear image of an abandoned Ireland facing the world alone without any guidance as Ada represents the transition of Ireland’s history between the old way and the initial assault. Ada lived in both worlds, stripped of her tradition, an orphan, however, then Veronica imagines a world where she and Liam are themselves orphans. Her imagined future is filled with “great adventures” (Enright 90). As Veronica and Liam’s life went down a dark path, their life would’ve been trauma free without obstruction in their upbringing, indicating that Enright imagined a better Ireland if the trauma from Ada to their mother Moreen never happened before it got to the Hegarty children.

A significant moment in the text between Ada and Veronica occurs after Ada's death, when Enright refers to the dynamic between both Irelands. As Veronica recalls while she was with Michael Weiss - the American she falls in love with in her early twenties - she made it clear that "I don't think I made it to the removal, when she died - I probably spent the evening in Belfield bar - and the questions of who owned the house and where the money would go, once Ada's body was taken out of it, were a matter of complete indifference to me" (Enright 84-85). Mentions of the money and property is a direct critique of the state of Ireland at the time after the original attack on the nation, Ada, by the British colonizers, Nugent. In this stage of the thesis, it is important to briefly recall Irish history. The Irish history has significant rises and falls. From the 600s with the Christian missionaries led by St. Patrick to the Vikings' invasion two centuries later. The year 1534 marks the beginning of the erasure of the Gaelic culture and takeover of the British monarchy. During this invasion, land was stolen from Catholic Irish and offered to Protestant British settlers. In the eighteenth century, Ireland starts to lose its official language and the Irish government ceased to exist as it was replaced by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. By 1900, civil war started which led to the "Home Rule" act in 1914, however, it did not go through because of World War I. April 24, 1916, on Easter Day, an uprising took place, but the rise resulted in the execution of its leader. This injustice brought the country together in demanding independence, hence the beginning of the Irish War of Independence lasting from 1919 to 1921. Ireland declares twenty-six southern Catholic counties the Republic of Ireland, but the six northern Protestant counties remain loyal to the British throne (abcteach 1, 2).

It is therefore unsurprising that Ireland represented through the grandchildren, Liam and Veronica, repeatedly imagines a different past where memory is unreliable, and events become fabricated. Once a perfect past is created, a painful present, and a terrifying future become easier to comprehend if all one can do is look back at what once was and work hard at regaining what was lost. If the present is tainted by death, and the future seems full of grief, what is left for any nation to hang on to? A beautiful past personified by a beautiful grandmother. “She might be an angel occupying, for a moment, the figure of a doll” is how Ada is before any of the men lay hand on her, a beautiful angelic doll (Enright 32).

Veronica

Veronica’s indifference is a deep-rooted resentment to what Ada did, or rather didn’t do; but Veronica did not remember why at the time. Enright needs to show a side of Veronica personifying the Ireland that needs to put the past behind and move on. The passage where the Hegarty girls are allowed to “take what you like” from their dead grandmother’s bedroom, depicts this most clearly. Veronica takes a few things as a way of showing how darkness plays a role in romanticizing the past, but “they seemed such useless objects in the light of day that I pushed them into a bin on the streets... I wanted out of there” (Enright 86). She states before that “the past was a bore to me,” which explains the argument of needing to put the past behind in order to move forward; a place that is not haunted by the past where this version of Ireland could have “a larger life,” one that crosses the border and leaves the past behind (Enright 87).

Veronica's analysis of the two parental figures in her life is indicative of the difference in the time periods in Ireland; Ada "fought with Charlie or flirted with him in the kitchen," while Mother couldn't, "my parents never flirted, they did not seem to be capable of it" (Enright 47). As both Irelands exist in one novel, Enright makes sure their histories enter the conversation with a clear line drawn between romanticism, nostalgia, yet preservation in a way of letting go once honored. Veronica imagines her grandfather, Charlie Spillane, not Nugent, but as some sort of white knight driving the machine that would take Ada, the beautiful Ireland, into modernity. That's how Enright first imagines the past of her grandmother and grandfather; a romanticized love story of modernity and moving forward.

That intersection of pain between Ada and Veronica is a powerful moment in the novel as Veronica thinks of her grandmother when she is doing the dishes, "Of course I have a dishwasher, so if I ever have to cry, it is not unto the sink, quietly like Ada. The sink was her place for this" (Enright 89). Veronica reserves that right to Ada. Towards the end of the novel, Veronica fantasized about buying Ada's family home; the home where all the abuse and pain happens. She wants to remodel the nation and flip it for profit; a way of moving Ireland forward and an attempt to erase a painful past. Nonetheless Veronica needs to preserve one space: The "Belfast sink" (Enright 90). Enright needs Veronica to recognize Ada's silent pain and torture, an entire history of erasing a nation to create another one by the hands of the colonizers, just as Joyce preached half a century earlier. They failed as Ada overlived her abuser. Veronica needs to preserve the integrity of her family's history. In return, Enright needs to preserve the integrity of a nation by preserving the sink Ada uses to cry.

Veronica's imaginary remodeling of her grandmother's house is undeniably Enright's metaphorical political statement on Irish nationalism and identity: Ada's house is homeland and Nugent is the colonizer, the rapist. Ada is old Ireland, the raped culture and the oppressed by the colonizer. Ada is beat to the ground and turned numb, unable to react to the continuant abuse that is happening to generations raised under her roof. Her despair turns her into an immobile protector, she cries in silence, unable to do anything to protect her young. Ada's trauma, although silent, leads to blaming her grandchildren for her husband's "'that's enough now.' Like it was all our fault – this embarrassment of dead flesh" (Enright 65). As Ada catches herself touching her dead husband's face, it felt as if that death was the children's fault. Angela Connolly suggests in her article "Healing the Wounds of Our Fathers: Intergenerational Trauma, Memory, Symbolization and Narrative" that,

The result of this type of massive, extreme trauma is the creation of a rupture at the heart of the psyche such that a void is produced in which any representation of the experience becomes impossible due to 'the collapse of the imaginative capacity to visualize atrocity' as Laub and Auerhahn put it (1993, p. 288). The terrifying experience of this void is expressed in images, such as 'the black hole' or the 'empty circle', 'a magnetic core of nothingness', that eclipse life and lead to a disorientation that cannot be overcome (608).

At the same time Veronica quickly remembers Nugent sitting in the corner. The succession of events, from the dead body to blaming the children, to the appearance of Nugent in the memory indicates a linear cause and effect of the nation reflected onto the children.

Nugent

A lot of post-civil war survivors hold on to the prewar culture and romanticize the past in order to be able to accept their present. Veronica spends chapter three and five of the story romanticizing Ada and Lambert Nugent's past, creating a romance that was never truly there. Whelan explains the act of creating a nationalist identity during the period of 1880 and 1920 in Ireland, which is applied in this case to Veronica "inventing" a past for her grandmother. He says, "this is a classical example of 'the invention of tradition', the summoning up of the imagined community" (Whelan 94). Veronica's hope is that the next Ireland, the generation she creates, is whole and much better than her Ireland. She lies on her daughter's bed after she blows her husband Tom "in our own kitchen. On a school day" wishing and hoping that she could "finish the job of making her, because when she is fully made, she will be strong" (Enright 152). A heartwarming yet heartbreaking moment of vulnerability from Veronica's part as she has been trying to process her memories and the loss of her brother by hoping her daughter, the one who sat on her uncle's lap naked after getting out of the shower, strong to withstand what might or might not have traumatized her as it did her and her brother. Veronica absentmindedly romanticizes those clusters by retelling the story as her need "to tell my daughters this, that each time you fall in love it is important, even at nineteen," how inherited imagined romanticism of dark history gets passed from one generation to the other (Enright 15). It is what Joyce had forewarned about in *Ulysses* when he created *The Citizen* the way he did, the romanticized Ireland.

Nugent was nothing but the medium in this union as Charlie "has changed the math of it – of his future and my past" (Enright 33). As the race scene in chapter 16

unfolds in the racetrack, Enright hints to the fact that Ada chose Charlie because “it is her sense of justice that her choose Charlie, who is pleased for her, as opposed to Nugent who is insulted by her good luck” (Enright 109). It was the right choice as he celebrated her win with her rather than wanting her defeat, as Nugent did. It is here that Enright suggests Charlie is the ally Ada needs to succeed and build a family, a future she could see herself living, while Nugent brings nothing but destruction as we learn from the story as it unfolds. The parallel between these characters and the nation show how Ireland needed that allyship to grow, rather than aligning with a force like Nugent who would not want it to succeed and is jealous over the nation’s win. According to Veronica’s account of what happened in the past and how Ada chose Charlie, “every choice is fatal. For a woman like Ada, every choice is an error, as soon as it is made” (Enright 110). The violence that led to the assault, trauma, and the overtaking of the nation, was inevitable no matter what ally Ireland might or might not have chosen. This future is interrupted by Nugent’s original desire to possess Ada, invade her and her children along with many generations to come; an Ireland that would pay the price of a lost vision. According to Keelan Harkin, “The Gathering shifts the focus of unreliability away from Veronica’s commentary on her fallible memory and onto the infrastructure of the Irish state as it shapes reliable citizenship for Irish women in terms of the family unit” (61). To her, her children, and grandchildren, the fate of the nation were preordained.

Nugent is not a bachelor. He is a married man with children whose family remains a mystery in the novel; tucked away in their world where he is invisible. Enright made sure to never include Nugent’s family in the narrative. The novel never takes the reader inside Nugent’s home, as it is irrelevant to the story. We do, however, hear how

miserable and grueling his wife and kids are. Ada and Nugent's sex scene in the kitchen, fabricated by Veronica's unreliable narrative, shows the reader a continuous relationship, no matter how dysfunctional it was between them. Nugent's ability to manipulate, to his understanding, Ada to continue to allow him into her home, rented or not it is still hers, is an indication that the victim in her is subdued to do whatever her abuser wants her to do. Her apparent paralysis as he complains about his wife while she "has not yet sympathized" to his sadness and "grief" proves that he is not oblivious to the effects of his assault on all the generation that she bred (Enright 135). Nugent is the abuser in this narrative as Enright introduces his story at the beginning of his life with Ada as a clean image where "his body has been cleansed by the workings of his soul" (Enright 20). Ada historically represents the initial assault on Ireland where she embodies the pre-war Ireland as a strong beautiful woman who fell head over heels for an unknown future. Veronica tries to romanticize this relationship between the two as it would be easier to see the history she is trying to piece together being not entirely threatening and violent. Veronica's inability to comprehend Ada's relations with Nugent reflect on her generation's ability to understand what happened to Ireland from the beginning. Veronica imagines the two of them on the kitchen floor after Ada "puts her hand out to console him, he lifts his hand to her hip," and starts to analyze that "something else happened when he entered her. But I do not know what. They were in love, suddenly. Or they were in pain. Or what?" (Enright 138 - 139). Harkin claims that,

Creating an imagined romance between Ada and Lamb allows Veronica to move beyond the anxiety attending to her own sense of unreliability. In doing so, she accesses the underlying truth of her experiences beyond the cultural need for an

exact picture of events, which in many ways is symptomatic of a society that upholds silence as conducive to reliable citizenship (61).

Veronica's pondering suggests that Ireland is trying to make sense of the assault that happened to Ada's Ireland.

As a "colonizer" and a landowner, Nugent's family is, well, away. If we are to look at his character as the oppressor of this Irish narrative, his family, who in this case would be British and away from all the violence and conflict, might not even approve of his compliance. In this case of Irish colonization, many enforcers' families were not supporters to the crown's cruelty but stayed quiet and turned resentful. Enright makes sure that Nugent's family sees him as "a ghost in his own house, looking at his wife, who drives him up the wall, and his four children, who rob each breath as it comes out of his mouth" as she leaves his family in the dark, out of the plot, while he goes through terrorizing Ada's family, one generation after the next (136). Enright situates Veronica in that narrative of the kitchen, as she has been the entire story, a character with an unreliable memory. The story goes from a hypothetical moment between Ada and Nugent from an uncomfortable exchange to a sex scene on the kitchen floor; right next to the sink Ada uses as a crying station. As Veronica imagines her grandmother "simply prone, neither pushed, nor helped, nor asked, and the thing already done, with Lamp Nugent spilled somewhere, outside or inside of Ada Merriman" indicated that this kind of violent act might have given birth to a poisoned generation inside Ada's Ireland (Enright 137).

The Mother: Origin of Trauma

Ada presents classic symptoms of PTSD in this novel even through a hypothetical

past Veronica creates in her mind. Many in the field suggest that “PTSD involves the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events and is characterized by four symptom clusters, that is, re-experiencing, avoidance, negative cognitions and mood, and arousal” (Kevers et al. 624). Veronica continues the story by pointing out that they both continue as if nothing ever happened between them. As for Nugent’s imagined destiny with his sister, this is a tale the world has always known about the monarchy and the effect of inbreeding. As he sits at her bedside while she dies, Enright’s clear incestuous implication mirrors what is seen in Nugent, a perverted descendant of a home that needs gratification from a woman/land outside his own as he “holds his penis in the night-time, it feels like her skin; always damp, never sweating because, in those days, people used to be mixed up together in the most disgusting ways” (Enright 35). His penis seems to always be an extension of some perverted relation in the novel. As we have seen in many tales of incestuous monarchy before (one being *The Fall of the House of Usher*) the house is bound to collapse on itself. As Punter and Byron put it, “It would have to deal with the impossibility of escape from history, with the recurrent sense in Gothic fiction that the past can never be left behind, that it will reappear and exact a necessary price” (55). Nothing stays buried as it is bound to come back up and affect everyone around.

Veronica in this text is the Ireland that wants to move on from the past, the one who wishes forgetfulness but can’t seem to walk away from it although she wants to make sense of it. As her brother’s death triggers memories she long forgot or believes happened, she revisits her past and memories with a new lens. But before analyzing Veronica, Mother Moreen must be addressed first for she is the most significant link

between Veronica and Ada. Veronica and her mother have a very complex relationship. Harkin believes that “at the core of the novel rests Veronica’s challenge to her own mother for her inability to protect her children from the molester Lamb. Motherhood, in other words, exemplifies the way that ‘Enright critiques the inability of modern Irish women to reconstitute an identity amidst an unreliable, silent, and patriarchal past’” (62). Although Veronica claims to not remember anything that happened to her and Liam, she somehow feels that her mother is to blame for “what she has done” (Enright 5). The Mother represents Ireland that witnessed the aftermath of the colonized Ireland. The one who endured the repercussions of the newly formed Republic. Damaged, abused, so traumatized that she turns herself invisible to reflect on her self-worthlessness.

The effect to what might have happened to mother and possibly Veronica, even though she does not remember, strikes both characters in ways that neither one of them can comprehend. Kevers et al. suggest that “by strongly focusing on how traumatic events affect the individual’s functioning, the PTSD discourse risks to disregard how collective violence also pervasively affects social and cultural ways of life” (622). As everyone involved with this family has suffered a form of violence, no one knows how to deal with each other; that goes for Veronica and the rest of her siblings as well. As a collective, Ireland being the metaphor here, countrymen are unable to recognize each other’s violent behavior. Not even her own daughter can see her. Mother’s deteriorating mental capacity represents the skipped generation that sparks interest in my research; the generation growing up in the aftermath of a war. Veronica makes it clear that her mother has checked out of reality long before old age hit her. Whatever had happened to her mother was a mystery to the children and to the readers as well. Veronica wonders “what

she was like before we had to go away, or if I knew what was lost when we returned each time-if some 'mama' who danced with the weeping brush and kissed the baby's tummy was replaced by this piece of benign meat, sitting in a room" (Enright 47). As it is the case in many post war generations: it is usually a skipped one. Veronica points out that "there is a gap in my mother's reproducing around then, and I think of these as the dead children years," mirroring the generation that came from the one after the initial assault on the nation (Enright 46). Even if the mother knows that those children had no chance of surviving, it is her duty to procreate as "Patriarchal visions of the ideal family structure ensure that reliable citizenship for Irish women, as the definition of fidelity to the nation and state, pertains specifically to motherhood and the home" (Harkin 59). The surviving generation is the one that is left to fend for itself while the older one is unable to fix it or even admits to the damage inflicted on it, a forgotten and an unnoticed generation, almost pitied. Veronica "would pass her in the street if she ever bought a different coat. If my mother commits a crime there will be no witnesses – she is forgetfulness itself" and this is how Veronica's Ireland sees Mother's; invisible, unwilling to understand the absent mindedness to the point where she can't remember her daughter's name (Enright 3).

As Veronica starts to tell the story of her family, she makes sure that she sets the tone of who her mother is; an invisible woman, an "agitation behind us, a kind of collective guilt" (Enright 3). Which gives the reader a sense of a childhood with the mother being more absent than not, it is something that carried guilt and resentment with it. She recalls that her "mother had twelve children and – as she told me one hard day – seven miscarriages. The holes in her head are not her fault. Even so, I have never forgiven her any of it. I just can't." This shows how mothers are victimized by the system

twice (Enright 7). Margot Gayle Backus suggests in her book *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*, that

Central and prior to the prediction and interpellation of children, however is the oppression of women. The societal mechanism that pushes women into marriage and motherhood in both the six counties of the North and in the Republic date from changes in the law and social structure that originated or worsened with onset of the British colonial rule. If Irish children continue to symbolically sacrifice to the needs of a neocolonial order, women are sacrificed twice: once as children, and once as producers of children (217).

Backus takes a step back from the children's subjected abuse to proclaim that the victimization starts and ends with the mothers as they suffer twice over. Following this logic proves the pain Ireland carries as a Motherland. Though Veronica's resentment and anger surpasses herself to include "I don't forgive her those dead children either" (Enright 8). Here, Enright is clearly criticizing the way the Irish system neglects dead babies and left no record of who they are and their deaths. Article forty-one of the Irish constitution of 1937 "The Family" section one and two clearly states that women belong in the home:

1. In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
2. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home (35).

An entire scandal arose over children's bodies left unidentified in the mother/baby

institutes. It is obvious Enright is bringing to her reader's attention the voiceless cries of the victims of institutionalized mothers and the kidnapping of their babies by the church and the state. Terri Harrison testifies in "Testimony" that "we are faceless, nameless, and voiceless. But not anymore." By doing so, Enright is creating a juxtaposition between the children of Ireland and the children of Il. "I want to call for an end of procreation with a sandwich board and a megaphone – not that there are many children, I now noticed, on the playground... England, the land of the fully grown" (Enright 79). What we see here is a plea from one oppressed generation in Ireland to an oppressor generation to stop growing and raising hate. More so the key element here is England's loss of innocence as Enright points out it is "the land of the fully grown," signifying that the heart is stone cold and to learn that empathy is impossible. In juxtaposition to that, Veronica's reflection on what her daughter needs to be "truly lovely, some day" speaks volumes on the recognition that if things change and her generation fixes what seems to be imperfection, her kids' generation may be hopeful in not carrying the generational trauma that has been passed down from one generation to the other as they are a "different breed," especially that she recognizes that "their parents wear them out" (Enright 68). Here Enright hints that Veronica's generation still carries the burden of the last and in return it is not able to completely cut the traumatic cycle and they do wear their next generation out but not break them like what happened to Liam. According to Connolly, "the physical and psychic sufferings are forever on the borders of endurance; the victims are constant witnesses of torture" from one generation to the other (608).

As Veronica positions herself in history, she addresses the fact that "all our parents were mad, in those days. There was something about just the smell of us growing

up that drove them completely insane,” which reflects the unspoken resentment the older generation holds against the current one for having the life they couldn’t have, and that she is trying to break (Enright 96). The traits that have been given to her daughters do not have to define them. Some might read this as a horrible thing for a mother to say about her children as most parents are wired to only see perfection in children, but Enright here is hiding the true meaning of this passage behind motherhood’s doors. An Ireland that sees what needs to be done for the nation to be lovely someday, especially that she compared them to “plants” that rejuvenate once cut, insinuating that even if they crack, they will survive and be ok, as opposed to “meat” which is the ultimate death (Enright 69).

As the mother’s description continues, Veronica remembers through her subconscious that her mother not only is invisible, she also “can’t even see herself,” which suggests that she got triggered by something that would cause gaps in her memory (Enright 4). Veronica gets frustrated with her mother inviting her into her own home where she “was inside it, as it grew; as the dining room was knocked into the kitchen, as the kitchen swallowed the back garden.” This felt like a foreshadowing of the memory she had blocked all those years (Enright 4). “The house is all extension” mirrors the image described by Veronica when she saw Nugent sexually assaulting her brother (Enright 4). The resentment towards her mother turns to blame as she is “saying that, the year you sent us away, your dead son was interfered with when you were not there to comfort him or protect him, and that interference was enough to send him on a path that ends in the box downstairs” (Enright 213).

It is melancholic that Veronica's Ireland still wants to be part of that Mother Ireland's space where everything shifted and collapsed in itself "as the dining room was knocked into the kitchen, as the kitchen swallowed the back garden" (Enright 4). She does not consider herself a separate Ireland; she still wants to be connected to new beginning and feels she is "not a visitor. This is my house too. I was inside it, as it grew."

Sydora brought forth a valid argument stating that "situating her protagonist Veronica Hegarty in 'new Ireland,' Enright critiques the inability of modern Irish women to reconstitute their identity amidst an unreliable, silent, patriarchal past" (239). Looking at this statement validates the claim that Veronica is unable to move past the history of violence in her family and with her mother. To take it a step further, while symbolically considering Veronica a version of Ireland in this book, I can't help but see the effect of that past on the new Ireland after the colonizers are gone. The aftermath effect goes beyond leaving the land. Veronica's entire future is paved by a single moment when "Nugent saw me, a small girl in school uniform holding the knob of the door" (Enright 146). Her memory gets clouded, and reality may or may not have been a creation of her mind as she "assume that is what I did if I were eight years old" (Enright 146). Connolly suggests that "children of survivors show characteristic deficits such as a failure of metaphorization with subsequent difficulties in distinguishing between reality and fantasy, and a disturbance of temporality, all of which lead to the typical disturbances of memory and of identity" (610). Violence incubates in a society divided and one that turned on itself, long after wars and oppression. Inbred violence within the threshold of a nation is far more dangerous than one that is inflicted through exterior factors. In this case, Veronica's Ireland has an unreliable narrative from the first sentence in the novel,

presenting an unreliable narrator who states “I am not sure if it really did happen;” a blurred line between what is felt and what is seen, much like history (Enright 1). All that is left is violence and trauma.

Postcolonial Trauma

Veronica’s Ireland is the seemingly healed Ireland on the outside with her big house and car, the appliances with all brand names, signifying her wealth and independence. Harkin insists her Ireland instigates that “whatever supposed liberation brought about by the emergence of Ireland as a global economic player, commonly referred to as the Celtic Tiger can scarcely be viewed in Veronica’s circumstances” (61). This is what it looks like on the outside and not without Liam’s resentment towards his sister’s ability to move on and create a life for herself. Veronica knew that,

“He blamed me for my nice house, with the nice white paint on the walls, and the nice daughters in their bedrooms of nice lilac and nicer pink. He blamed me for my golf-loving husband, though God knows it is many years since Tom had the free time for a round of golf. He treated me like I was selling out on something, though on what I do not know—because Liam did not allow dreams either”

(Enright 168).

It isn’t until she starts remembering and examining her past that the unhealed Ireland resurfaces and shows that nothing has moved past the troubling history of the interior of her childhood home. Ireland seems to move forward with just enough traumas to maintain the oppressed history of the violence within the home. The traumatization is no longer by the colonizer; it is through the violence that occurs domestically as a result of

that initial violence. The aftermath of violence is always violence. Following this logic, and applying it on a more national scale, one can understand that Veronica blocks what may or may not have happened to her, the same way a lot of generations have done before. Veronica herself seems haunted by that. This generation enters a state of paralysis, reminiscent of Joyce's Dublin. Laura Sydora suggests in her article "Everyone Wants a Bit of Me': Historicizing Motherhood in Anne Enright's *The Gathering*" that:

The rhetoric of 'new Ireland' suggested that the country had suddenly blossomed into a newly evolved state, forfeiting the ideology of the past in order to successively transition into modernity when, in actuality, the prosperity of the Celtic Tiger coincided with the liberalization of Irish society, catching Ireland in a contradiction between an oppressive, traumatic past and an aspiring, modernizing present (240).

Although in this claim Sydora aims at an economic angle, it also applies to the history itself. Ireland in Enright's narrative is indeed stuck between national narrative all within Veronica's character, hence the unreliable memory. In cases of civil war, civil unrest, generations of being raised with violence as a backdrop of their lives, the outcome differs. For Liam and Veronica's case, one grew up blocking the abuse in hopes of ending the line of intergenerational trauma with her; one lives with it until it destroys him. The fact that Enright created these two characters almost overlapping at birth "we came out of her on each other's tail; one after the other, as fast as a gang-bang, as fast as an infidelity. Sometimes I think we overlapped in there, he just left early, to wait outside" signifies that not all who live through the same past would grow up to be the same person (Enright 11). Or in their case,

The traumatized subject's incapability to consciously and productively react to the psychological consequences of the harm he/she has undergone; the intricate mechanisms that traumatic events such as sexual abuse can set in motion in the mind of the victim, especially when he/she is just a child, include the actual impossibility for the subject to remember what has happened to him/her. In this case, memory is somehow paralyzed, be it for the creation of an actual blank space, or for the person's more or less conscious will or necessity to leave out information which is too painful to process. This is clearly a means of defense, an inhibitory process, which does not prevent the appearance of different sorts of intrusive phenomena in the victim's personality, which can be broadly referred to as post-traumatic stress disorders (Oddenino 365).

Following this logic, and applying it on a more national scale, it can be understood that Veronica blocked what may or may have not happened to her the same way a lot of generations have done before. Veronica herself seems haunted by that. This generation enters a state of paralysis, and it creates an unhealthy sexual development. Veronica remembers a few incidents where the Hegarty children found sanctuary in the church. Perhaps Enright is suggesting that generation of Irish creating a religious illusion of peace where "not even a bus conductor in his uniform couldn't get to you here" later to find out Kitty, Veronica's sister, is left with bruises from a man of God (Enright 50). With the same breath, Veronica recalls the assault she endured from a man who followed her with "his erection in his hand" and found herself in another church to later realize that religion is not the sanctuary of peace she thought it was because "it isn't real;" her

memory is once again playing tricks on her (Enright 51). Sign of an unhealthy sexual maturity as she sits on the train next to a man who has “a hard-on beside you on a train - even if you are recently bereaved” (Enright 52). More importantly, he hides his erected penis with the newspaper. I believe here Enright is insinuating how the media and the source of news is what are hiding all the sexual indiscretion that is happening at the time but uses Veronica as she “‘never would have made that shift on my own’, Veronica’s statement ‘if I hadn’t been listening to the radio, reading the paper, and hearing about what went on in schools and churches and in people’s homes’” is a direct claim by Enright to expose the corruption (172-173).

Veronica was never able to develop a healthy sex life with anyone as she believes “the thing in a man’s trouser – this is what it does when he is angry; it grows into the shape of a miserable child,” an imagery that is painfully poetic to paint what childhood trauma and abuse can do to a child (Enright 146). Tom, her husband, had expectations of her in a more traditional role in the home. According to Harkin,

Tom wishes to reinforce the role of motherhood and domestic duty onto Veronica’s experience, just as Veronica’s father had done to her mother. By drawing connections between her present circumstances with Tom and her life growing up in a restrictive and silent household, Veronica establishes a causal relation between her fallible memory and the structures of Irish society and the state (60).

That link between the recurring motherly role between her grandmother and her mother seems to highlight the dysfunction of motherhood in the novel just as, Ireland failed to lead by example in that role. A second parallel is between Tom and her father as they too

repeat a pattern in the nation where “patriarchal structures in Veronica’s life create the conditions of reliability and, as such, unreliability, which in turn explains why Tom’s behaviour mimics that of Veronica’s father” (Harkin 62). It is known that trauma victims tend to repeat patterns experienced during childhood when those traumatic experiences occurred.

Veronica’s sex life with Tom consists of “this is how I live my life... So, my husband is waiting for me to sleep with him again, and I am waiting for something else. I am waiting for things to become clear;” a foreshadowing of some unhealed trauma; a recovered memory (Enright 37). Her confession that she “lay there with one leg on either side of his dancing, country-boy hips and I did not feel alive,” is an indication of her broken body and her inability to maintain a healthy relationship even after she remembers what happened to her brother and probably her (Enright 40). How could she have had a healthy sex life after she witnessed her brother’s assault and her reaction to that is to close the door after and “ran to the toilet upstairs, with an urge to pee and look at the pee coming out; to poke or scratch or rub when I was finished and smell my fingers afterwards” (Enright 146). Even though she is an unreliable narrator because of her distorted memory, her relationships and her body tell a reliable narration of what happened to them in Ada’s house that summer. Veronica lost the ability to experience a healthy sex life. It can be believed that this effect is brought to the reader’s attention to highlight the fact that the generation coming from Veronica is bred through resentment, not love. It is a non-ending cycle of generations born through anything but love and peace. As Veronica remembers what happened to Liam in Ada’s house when he was nine, she reflects on how the event she witnesses affects her sex life. Again, as an

unreliable narrator, the reader questions reality around her, but that does not take away the projection of what she is going through. Her resurfaced memory of her husband making,

“Weird sarcastic remarks at dinner with friends about coming, or me not coming, though you know I do come – at least I think I do – realizing then, later that what he wants, what my husband has always wanted, and the thing I will never give him, is my annihilation. This is how his desire runs. It runs close to hatred. It is sometimes the same thing”

proves how dysfunctional her sex life is with her Tom, which concludes that the fruits of this union are themselves the product of those feelings; a manifestation of desire and hate (Enright 145). Veronica, however, makes a comment right after these confessions regarding her Irish husband regarding the American she dated, Michael Weiss that he is not like Tom. Enright suggests that the only healthy kind of love for an Irish Veronica is a love that exists West of the borders even though Veronica admits that she has “met them, it is just that I could never love one, even if I tried. I love the ones who suffer, and they love me” (145). Michael Weiss’ existence in this novel at that time is not a coincidence. Enright makes the love interest an American, suggesting that Veronica’s Ireland looked to the West to seek freedom; a place not to be owned and released from captivity of the painful abusive past. The fact that Veronica did not stay with him, and that Liam later dies, proves that the ones who stayed within that oppressive state have no hope in their future or no future at all and they end up dead at the bottom of the sea of their oppressive land. “That makes me think I love Michael Weiss from Brooklyn, now,

seventeen years too late. It is the way he refused to own me, no matter how much I tried to be owned,” an Ireland that finds freedom looking at America (Enright 82).

This analysis pairs well with Joyce’s prediction of such union with Molly and Bloom. Carefully plotted, Joyce gives the nuclear union between them a marriage with no ability to reproduce a male heir to carry on the family name and continue the bloodline after the loss of his only son, Rudy. Molly and Bloom cannot even have sex after his death whereas Tom and Veronica develop unhealthy habits in their sex life. Yet both couples stay together. This proves the ability to still produce a home for themselves, but not procreate after Rudy's demise in *Ulysses*, and continue to find a way to raise their daughters together in *The Gathering*. Now, clearly, this arrangement is not perfect as we all know about Molly’s extracurricular activities on the side: her marital affair. Nonetheless, we can't dismiss Bloom’s cheating either. Bloom's external relationship is also unable to reproduce, but it is language-centered, and we know that Joyce’s main literary strength is his manipulation of language. As for Veronica, her strength is still language but through confessional storytelling. If I am to read the nation in both marriages, Joyce and Enright both suggest leaving behind the painful past that caused trauma in both marriages and find a way to coexist in the same household. Through the letters, through the art of language, the relationship goes on in the healthiest way it could be in both stories.

Liam: Gothic Ireland Revisited

There is no room in this novel to direct this toward the British, the colonizers, except through what happened to Liam, mainly because in *The Gathering*, Enright is

shifting the narrative and transferring colonization to a domestic nationalism narrative within the threshold of the domestic interior. In return, Enright circles back to colonization rhetoric by projecting its effect into the nuclear families presented in the novel. Liam's case becomes the symptom of such hierarchal toxicity, and his death is the repercussion. As the story unfolds, Liam's Ireland becomes the postcolonial trauma the nation suffers through domestically after gaining independence from the British and the declaration of the Republic. Liam become what Joyce warns about in "Cyclops;" a nation that moves from colonization to nationalism where the family represents the dysfunctional trauma because of colonialism. Enright creates a family in her novel that reproduces the nation and at the heart of this nation, a character that brings the gothic in Ireland to the surface where nothing stays buried. As Matthew Schultz in *Haunted Histographies* puts it, "the Irish Gothic works to think through and to critique Irish historical unrest as much as it works to represent it" (135). Chapter eleven starts with a very haunting and gothic undertone with Veronica as she "saw my reflection in the window. It disappeared" (Enright 68). This can be observed as a reflection on the way this version of Ireland sees itself. A forgotten generation that has no reflection through a vehicle of progress; a machine that moves us where we need to go. Yet with Veronica, the reflection vanishes. The gothic is at play here as it shows a self that is hidden in the reflection of the light. There is no escaping through this imagery Freud's theory that shows the "Uncanny is what one calls everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open" (132). No matter how much Veronica tried to forget and keep a secret to what happened to her brother, the truth is relentlessly trying to come out.

Apparition and the supernatural seem to give Veronica answers at times in the novel since she was little and after Liam's death. She knows that "there is a slumberous menace about his ghost that makes me realize how indifferent he was when he finally walked away from us all into the sea. I can feel his gaze on the skin of my cheek as he turns to look at me, uncanny and dead. I know what it is saying. The truth. The dead want nothing else" (Enright 155-156). Liam's apparition brings eerie feelings that his ghost haunts his sister. Schultz explains that

Derrida writes of ghosts, 'no one can be sure if by returning [the ghost] testifies to a living past or to a living future... A ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back. This is precisely the specter that haunts Ireland: an ever-present historical narrative that, like a palimpsest, is not erased, but written over; the past becomes a deferred threat of violence waiting to reappear (134).

His tragedy is a ghost that Veronica will not be able to cast off. His pain is a bleeding nation that no amount of recognition could heal. During Liam's wake, Veronica feels "Tom's hand is warm on the base of my spine. At least I think it is him, but when I crook my head around, he is not there. Who has touched me? I straighten up and look at them all who has touched me?" (Enright 198.) There is never an explanation of who or what touches Veronica in that scene. It is however not the first apparition that happens to her. Liam has always made an appearance to his sister to comfort her when the situation gets tight. Only she can feel him because "starting from the homely and the domestic, there is a further development towards the notion of something removed from the eyes of strangers, hidden, secret" (Freud 133). Liam chooses to show himself only to his sister throughout the novel because everyone else is external to his story; only she knows him

and what happened to him. Her journey to bring him back home is not a lonely road to her as he was with her every step of the way. That little boy, who no one ever comforted when he was pained, tries to comfort his sister at her most vulnerable of times.

Veronica and Liam present postcolonial Ireland, raised by a broken “raped” mother in the shadows of violence and despair. Liam commits suicide after a long life of struggle. As for their uncle Brendan, who has a mysterious plot in the story, he loses his mind and ends up a permanent resident of St. Ita’s hospital “which isn’t quite a hospital and eventually dying and buried in the massive gravesite behind the institute” (Enright 115). Brendan’s story is hidden between the lines of everyone’s story. His is Ada, Mother, and Liam combined. When Veronica lands back in Ireland after flying to England so she can bring Liam’s body back home, she visits the hospital where her uncle is buried. Enright ties in Liam’s story through Veronica’s realization that her uncle is another victim of Nugent. It is remarkable how, with an unreliable memory, Veronica remembers everything about that place where she used to go with her grandmother even though, as Joseph Valente and Margot Gayle Backus suggest in their book *The Child Sex Scandal and Modern IRISH Literature: Writing the Unspeakable*, “her memory of everything surrounding Liam’s cause remains uncertain, undependable, compromised, riveted, even hallucinatory. Her memory of St Ita’s, by contrast, is extraordinarily sharp, detailed, even crystalline” (233). Ireland’s memory of its oppressed victimized population is documented and well preserved, the ones it buried with unmarked graves. Yet it is unreliable when it comes to the victims who made trouble; the ones who rebelled and rejected compromise. The ones Ireland would like to ignore and pretend they’re irrelevant to its history.

Liam here becomes Brendan's doppelgänger; he becomes one with his uncle. Freud suggests that "[i]t may be that the uncanny is something familiar that has been repressed and then reappears" (152). No matter how much the family tries to bury Brendan in St. Ida, he comes back through Liam. Brendan's body and story are buried under "one cross" somewhere where "there are no markers, no separate graves" (Enright 160). Veronica's suspicion "they are burning mental patients in there, just to keep the hospital radiators hot" hints that Enright could be pointing a finger at the fact that Ireland willingly ignored the trauma the nation went through in the past (159). It buried its victimized past generations and utilized its pain in order to keep the system running. It is the ultimate Gothic tale of a nation. Chris Baldick in *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* states clearly "A Gothic tale will invoke the tyranny of the past (a family curse, the survival of archaic forms of despotism and of superstition) with such weight as to stifle the hopes for the present" (xix). It is exactly what happens to the Hegartys mirroring Ireland as it sacrificed its children's sanity to maintain its romanticized image. Ireland buried its damaged past under unmarked graves. Will the dead stay dead? Or will it all resurrect just as Liam's ghost is haunting Veronica's mind as wildly as the jacket he purposely wore when he jumped that bridge? In juxtaposition to Liam's being Brendan's doppelgänger, Veronica takes on that role at the end of the novel as she plays a scenario in her head that "on the other side of me is the welcoming darkness of Lambert Nugent. I am facing into that darkness and falling. I am holding his old penis in my hand" (Enright 221), the same way she felt "He is back in my head like an expanding smell – a space that clears to allow him look out of my eyes" (Enright 76).

There is no way of overlooking the drastic event that led to Liam's suicide. Liam is the other Ireland representing the same generation as Veronica. As her memory seems unreliable, there was no evidence his was too. Revers et al. suggest that,

Memories are thus shaped by the conceptual structures and processes of groups one belongs to, be it family, peers, or the larger social fabric of society. Within current scholarship in social memory studies, this interest has been further elaborated through an inter-subjectivist approach, emphasizing that, while it is always an individual who remembers, his or her memory is shaped by the relations to other people (626).

To elaborate on that, it is evident that Veronica's memory seems distorted even when she thinks it is not. Even when she finally remembers what happens to her brother, she is still questioning whether it is he or she in that position with Nugent. As there are clearly repercussions of what happens to him in Ada's house.

Liam has been trying to erase his mother and his past since he was younger as all the "scars" and evidence were left in the kitchen as Enright creates this scenario where Liam "threw a knife at our mother, and everyone laughed and shouted at him. It is there among the other anonymous dents and marks" (6). Veronica wishes she can "level it and start over;" a way for Veronica to erase her family's past and start over (Enright 5).

Veronica is

trying to work her way out of what could be termed, to borrow Joyce's terms again, a post-traumatic kind of 'paralysis', which has equally affected her personal life and, on a larger scale, her society. The pretext for her to finally come to terms with the effects and consequences of such trauma is the recollection of

the sexual abuse her suicidal brother, Liam, underwent as a child, in a very protected domestic environment. Veronica herself may or may not have undergone the same violence. The exposure of these personal wounds is mirrored by the scars that are disfiguring the entire country (Oddenino 362).

In that context, she is trying to work out whatever she may or may not think happened to them within her homes, Ada's and her mother's. Baldick claims that "its historical fears drive from our inability finally to convince ourselves that we have really escaped from the tyrannies of the past" (xxii). All the efforts throughout her life won't eliminate the horror of her past or the ones of her family. The scars are there, she just did not figure out what kinds yet. Chapter eight's setting starts in the "center of Dublin" the summer that changed everything for the Hegarty children. Enright in this opening of the chapter creates her mother turning into "the creature I later knew" after her mother has a few years of dead babies. In this passage, I see the Ireland that turns into a paralyzed entity after carrying and losing so many babies/people; an Ireland that changes forever as it witnesses the death of its citizens. To further highlight the paralysis, we see Mother Moreen drugged with tranquilizers after the birth of her twins. Luke Ostrander suggests in his article "The Paralytic Affect in James Joyce's 'The Dead'" that "Joyce's masterful use of paralysis shows the crippling nature of the timeless problems afflicting people world- wide. Joyce's characters are thus more than mere hollowed-out shells; they are representations of the faceless, nameless people who struggle to live" (66). Enright described the mother's state as living with "shakes, and inexplicable difficulties, and sudden weeps" (48).

Liam's actions as a young man represent the harsh reality of his pain. His abuse

witnessed and recalled by Veronica makes him the Ireland that lives the past over and over without being able to put it all behind and creating a new life. His path is forged for him from the beginning. A child who lives through the sins of his ancestors is a child doomed to a life of self-destruction, anger, and violence, yet no one is talking about it; not even the witnesses. Even as a little boy he polluted “the artificial lake whose water had once been used in the making of Irish whiskey. It was this fact that obliged Liam to piss into it” (Enright 48). His behavior is a manifestation of his anger towards his homeland and the Irish pride with the whiskey, even when it is fake as the lake he once peed in. That little boy grew up to put “cancerous lumps into bags and carried severed limbs to the incinerator, and he enjoyed it, he said. He liked the company” (Enright 39). His job is to get rid of dead and diseased body parts. It is a projection of the death he carries inside him: his childhood, his innocence, stolen future, the cancer he carried within him that has been eating him up all throughout his life. He physically burns poison because he spiritually could not get to his eternal sickness. His case is the center of this narrative; the Ireland he represents is the one that carried the intergenerational trauma from the original assault on Ada. Enright brings attention to the fact that when he is sober, he “would miss the buses and fail to make connections and lose things or steal things” (Enright 126). His faculties play tricks on him most likely because his sober reality is hard to process. As young Ireland that is not amid the war, yet suffers the aftermath of it, Liam carries with him this envious mindset as “why you had something and he didn’t” (Enright 126). It is inevitable that every child of trauma, war, or the aftermath of it repeats in his mind; however, Enright did not leave it at that; she made sure that Liam steals his sister’s communication apparatus and connection to the outside

world, however, the “Irish phones did not plug into the British Telecom” (126). This leaves the reader with the impression that Enright is hinting at a miscommunication between the two nations. And why wouldn't she? As my reading of this novel suggests a nation's tale, then it is obvious that England's role in this narrative is the initial assault carried by the landowner Nugent.

Veronica's description of her brother's abuse is described almost poetically in the novel; a hint of romanticizing a horrific event that many oppressed nations start to feel after a long life of oppression:

“It was as if Mr Nugent's penis, which was sticking straight out of his flies, had grown strangely, and flowered at the tip to produce the large and unwieldy shape of a boy, that boy being my brother Liam, who, I finally saw, was not an extension of the man's member, set down mysteriously on the ground in front of him, but a shocked (of course he was shocked, I had opened the door) boy of nine, and the member not even that, but the boy's bare forearm, that made a bridge of flesh between himself and Mr. Nugent” (Enright 143-144).

Seeing Liam as the generation that is full of anger and retaliation, then his anger is directed at his mother for she should have been his protector; the Ireland that should have prevented the events that led to his suicide. Liam's Ireland is not one that would survive modernity, towards a better Ireland. He must die. Veronica sees him everywhere after his death: “there is a slumberous menace about his ghost that makes me realize how indifferent he was when he finally walked away from us all into the sea. I can feel his gaze on the skin of my cheek as he turns to look at me, uncanny and dead. I know what it is saying. The truth. The dead want nothing else” (Enright 155-156). Liam's apparition

brings aerie feelings that his ghost haunts his sister. His tragedy itself is a ghost that Veronica will not be able to cast off. His pain is a bleeding nation that no amount of recognition could heal.

Veronica made it to the “New Ireland” primarily because her memory was so distorted that she was able to move through life without repercussions. It isn’t until she starts remembering the assault that her life starts falling apart; not that it was great before, but at least she was oblivious or at least pretending it never happened. That Ireland with the unreliable memory can enter the new stage for Ireland; one that prospers, owns property, a new kitchen, expensive imported appliances, foreign cars, a husband, and children. Liam’s Ireland is too damaged to make it to the new world. The novel starts with him already dead. He is only a memory of what happened in the past and never healed, but Liam’s life is a complicated one. Veronica recalls him when he visits baby Rebecca. That memory is significant as he is the damaged generation checking in on the “next generation” and making sure she is okay. Paired with a “sunshine” colored room this indicates a hopeful note from Enright for a better Ireland. The hope that Veronica saw in her brother when he saw the new hope in the baby made him recognizable as “someone I knew in my bones” (Enright 53). For a moment there, hope of a better future in the new generation was apparent, but “he was on his way”; Liam’s death was inevitable (Enright 64). Before the hope, Veronica presents him as a child who collects the skeletal remains of dead animals. Right away we associate him with lifeless bodies and death; showing that hope is a displaced notion for kids like him, but Veronica chose to describe the bones of those dead animals as “clean” which suggests the stripping of the flesh as it being the dirty part of the body (Enright 1). From the very first page, we start

to see an image of how Liam sees himself, whether Veronica is reliable or not. From Veronica's perspective, she also needs to clean as she "might have a bout of cleaning around four. I do it like a thief, holding my breath as I scrub, stealing the dirt off the walls" a metaphor of the dirtiness of the domestic interior that needs scrubbing and cleaning (Enright 38). She felt like a thief in her own home may be because the dirt in it is one of shame and secrecy. A "dirt" she wouldn't want anyone to know or see; an indication that she alone can do the cleaning and reveal the truth underneath. Again, this is the gothic at play. Liam throws in the incinerator a metaphoric extension of Nugent's penis, his arm.

The painful oppressed history represented by Liam can seem to have walked away from the nation's memory but "you can spring out of your seat on the plane and change your mind and walk back the way you came, back out into Ireland, where you can make everyone miserable, for another little while" (Enright 28). There is no escaping the past where even after its death, it is still "important, to the end" until it is healed (Enright 28). A picture painting of the violence and domestic disturbance within the threshold of the home is clear when Veronica remembers the day Liam threw a knife at his mother, which left a permanent hole in the wall. "What could she have said to him?" gives the indication that Liam's rage is justified, and she provoked him (Enright 6). All the siblings seem to have thrown Liam outside the kitchen onto the grass outside. Although the entire scene is visually violent with, basically attempted murder and a form of "civil war" in the house, everyone was laughing as the numbness to the violence turns comical (Enright 6). Veronica doesn't "know when Liam's fate was written in his bones. And although Nugent was the first man to put his name there, for some reason, I don't think he was the

last,” but all she knows is that her brother was destined to a life of pain, violence, and despair (Enright 163). Liam’s future was fated since “the thing in a man’s trouser – this is what it does when he is angry; it grows into the shape of a miserable child,” an imagery that is painfully poetic to paint what childhood trauma and abuse does to a child (Enright 146). As Veronica compared her brother’s dead body to her grandfather, she realized that “Ada had seen this day coming” (Enright 64). This shows that the initial assault of the nation – Ada – knew what would happen for generations to come.

Veronica makes sure she correctly remembers a few details regarding her brother without any distortion. The stones “in his pocket” are a metaphoric representation of the entire trauma carried through generations in his body as they “explain themselves;” those stones that sunk him encompasses all the pain in the narratives combined (Enright 141). Liam represents the end of that trauma from the beginning until the end. It is what weights him down to his death; the death of what he represents. It is not a coincidence that Veronica’s memory becomes sharp and remembers every detail of her brother’s death. She remembers “the tides in Brighton are fast and they range far. He wore the jacket so he would be seen going into the water, and his body would be easily found” (Enright 141). Liam needs to be understood at the end of his life as he skated through life unseen, and his trauma went forgotten. Enright needs Liam, in a twisted way, to face his abuser one last time in England even though “Liam never liked the English. . . And I cannot manage to love them, this herd on the hoof down the Brighton front, all of them enjoying the sea where Liam drowned” (Enright 78). Enright paints a powerful scene showing how the English sat back and watched as Irish generations drowned under the “sea” of oppression. How it is all divided and the pain becomes a spectacle for people to

watch. It is very telling that Enright chose to have Liam die in England and not back home. As if to say he returned his suffering to sender. Using “Mammy’s phone in the hall, and they give me the number to an undertaker” is no coincidence on behalf of Enright to place the dead body in England while arranging its return phone through a modern apparatus (Enright 23). One might suggest that Liam is the generation born into abuse and violence, bred by that same abuse and violence, different Irelands, same fate. Nugent is the representation of the force behind that assault, the suggestion of leftover British. It is no surprise Enright creates a world where Liam kills himself in England and not Ireland. He needs to be seen one last time. He repressed his pain all those years to a point where that trauma could not contain it anymore where he felt the need to wear that bright jacket so he could be seen. One thing that can be learned about the modern gothic, is that the more trauma is repressed, the louder the explosion is. Liam embodies everything the Gothic represents.

His abuse impacted him as it would a colonized oppressed nation. Liam’s Ireland turns against its own people to lash out on the injustice done to it. Hadaegh and Shahabi in their article “Nationalism in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*” suggest “some revisionists think that Ireland was not only a victim of the empire but a ‘beneficiary’ of it as well. There are some elements that link the Irish closer to the ‘dominant’ British neighbors than with other postcolonial society and nations” (19). This hypothesis implies that Liam, with his behavior towards his girlfriend whom “‘he was horrible to’” and his disconnect with his family, starts to resemble his abuser, Nugent (Enright 245). In all fairness, Liam “was unkind to every single person who tried to love him; mostly, and especially, to every woman he ever slept with” (Enright 168). The disrespect in his behavior towards

someone he is symbolically and physically invading through sex and emotional abuse put him right in that bracket with the beneficiaries. It is evident that Liam's lashing out and mistreating his girlfriend at the time mirrors this theory brought in by this article and linked directly to Joyce's prediction. Not only did Liam's girlfriend feel the wrath of his pain, but his niece did as well. His resentment and anger did not stop at his mother who couldn't protect him because she is also damaged beyond repair, his grandmother knowing what is happening and lets it continue one generation after the other, but he also redirects it against his sister who did not stop the abuse either. Veronica's realization that Liam's resentment stems from her "selling out" to grow up and be a functioning adult was the ultimate betrayal (Enright 168). He made sure everyone around him suffers just as he did. Liam does not let out his anger on the males around him as one might think he should, considering his abuser was a man. However, a bigger plot is at play here. Liam is angry with the "mother" around him that kept silent and ignored his abuse: his grandmother, his mother, and his sister. This logic applies to Mother Ireland as well. It is Her that was the first betrayal. It is the ultimate Mother's fault. Liam's Ireland suffers because of initial Ireland, the paralyzed one; the one that couldn't save future generations from the repercussion of the initial assault that happened to it during the initial rape of the nation. Liam is the inherited punishment, however, his anger doesn't stop there; he directs his resentment at her by turning on his niece, in front of her mother. Veronica recalls one of the last times she turns her back on her brother after he had, "Emily on his knee one night after her bath" as her "bum is neat and sharp, sitting side-saddle on one of his thighs. Behind her, the cloth of his trousers wrinkles and sags around a crotch that is a mystery no one is interested in anymore. His face is amused" (Enright 169). It is

significant here to mention that Veronica, once again, freezes when she sees a child in a compromising situation. Veronica enters a state of paralysis just as Joyce predicts would happen from one generation to the other. Hadaegh and Shahabi also suggest “That Joyce wants the readers to pay attention to how people might take after their ancestors in many aspects even political ones” (24). To elaborate furthermore and connect this to Veronica’s behavior, in return, one might suggest that Veronica took after Ada in the sense that she did nothing to stop Liam’s abuse nor to stop what might have been happening with him and her daughter; assuming her memory is reliable, which is always a lurking shadow in the novel.

Just as unreliability is predictable in the novel, so is pretending nothing is happening along with burying realities. Indirectly, Enright focuses on the fact that they “wait so long for a funeral that people gather not to mourn, as to complain that the corpse is still hanging around... they don’t gather until the emotion is gone” (182). This indicates that they bury their guilt, feelings, and remorse to whatever might have happened to their dead, whether they caused it or not. In this case, Enright points the finger straight at the fact that Liam’s death goes unnoticed on their land as he “lies in some unspecified foreign fridge,” unmourned. Enright’s specific description of “The young English undertaker, with the full mouth and the pierce ear; talking on his mobile to his girlfriend as he lifts the heavy head to slip the tie around” is significant to the readings of her work (192). Young English folks have nothing to do with the colonization of Ireland, this is known worldwide, but the nonchalant matter in which he is prepping Liam’s dead body paints a picture of a hopeful future as this young undertaker is with his lover on the phone discussing, perhaps, their future. This shows that on the other side of

the isle from Ireland, there is a young generation beautifying the dead Irish consequence of their nation's guilt. The undertaker is, in a way, making the Irishman's dead body seem flawless as if no damage was ever done to it. No death, no rape, no assault, and no pain; just a cover up to the truth and everything will be ok.

Conclusion

Enright chose to end the novel in an unresolved way to reflect on the lack of resolution manifested in the rest of the story. As Veronica's memory has been unreliable the entire time, so is the ending. Up until the end, she remains uncertain of what really happened to her family; "these are things I don't know: that I was touched by Lambert Nugent, that my Uncle Brendan was driven mad by him, that my mother was rendered stupid by him, that my Aunt Rose and my sister Kitty got away. In short, I know nothing else about Lambert Nugent" (Enright 224). So, for her to just hint that she is pregnant with a son at the end of the novel is not surprising because it is indicative of the ambiguity that permeates the novel. Enright gives her reader hope at the end by introducing Rowan, Liam's son who is an extension of Liam himself for Veronica. Rowan becomes the symbol of hope of a healthier Ireland, a lifeline for the Hegarty family as they all feel Liam's presence through him. While burying a part of the family's painful history, a new life emerges to the surface, which sparks life into Veronica. All she wants since seeing him is to "trick and induce this child into my arms and, after a while, kiss him, or inhale him" (Enright 242). Regardless of what the family wants and needs, Enright chooses to disrupt the intergenerational trauma that the Hegartys or Ireland suffers by not allowing Liam's son to grow up in Ireland. However, Enright makes sure to give the hope for a better generation as Rowan's mother, Sarah "nods to say that she will not disappear, that she knows who she is," reassuring the readers that the next Irish blooded generation is not going anywhere even if it does not reside in Ireland (Enright 243). The end of *The Gathering* brings us back to what James Joyce had already noted in "Cyclops" that, "A nation is the same people living in the same place... Or also living in

different places” (317). Despite Sarah’s refusal to sit with the family at the funeral, she knows that Rowan is part of it. Sarah is the ex-girlfriend Liam brought in years earlier to Veronica’s house and treated poorly as I discussed earlier. What the reader and Veronica did not know is that, apparently, Liam had impregnated Sarah. The novel does not reveal Rowan’s existence until Liam is dead, reinforcing Enright’s efforts to show her readers that a damaged Ireland and the new nation cannot simultaneously share a timeline in the novel. The truth of whether Liam knew of his son is unknown. This boy is not only born outside of Ireland and from an English mother, but he also goes back to England even when the entire family holds on to him, especially Veronica. There is no room for him in the family, in Ireland, as it is at that moment. Enright claims that Ireland is not yet ready for a child of an English mother impregnated by a man who has been interfered with, signifying the history of an unhealed Ireland. Enright’s illustration of the same blood running even after death indicates the continuity of a collective Irish trauma of sexual abuse and scandal; for that reason, Rowan was absent from the narrative until Liam is dead.

The novel’s last scene ends with Veronica choosing to go back home to her family regardless of the loss, grief, and pain she is experiencing. This ending could be a happy one when Veronica teases us with the pregnancy. It could’ve been one of hope if Enright gives the reader a definite outcome for the baby, the new Liam, as she hints that this would be his name. It translates into a history repeating itself and the fact that Ireland will never heal from the past. Generation after the next will continue to relive that history, unless Veronica contemplates a reality where she does “not want a different destiny from the one that has brought me here. I do not want a different life. I just want to

be able to live it, that's all" (Enright 260). The unreliable narrator in *Veronica* could be imagining or fabricating a baby as she returns home. Enright leaves her reader with hope for a better Ireland that is willing to leave the past behind and heal. Ostrander puts it best, "Joyce's ultimate message preaches the inescapability of the past and forewarns that the past will ruin us unless we face it" (66). But just as any nation that suffered from violence, destruction, pain, and "rape," there is only hope in generations to come that decide to not carry with them the sins of their fathers.

In Ireland, sectarianism and closing rank inwardly allowed the Irish republic to fester in their own struggles and identity. In Lebanon, we take that concept to a whole new level. Not only do we fight each other over supremacy and power against other religions, but we also carry that same battle into our own homes and communities. Not only Muslims fighting Christians within the same national space, but Sunni Muslims fighting Shiite Muslims and Maronite Catholics fighting Greek orthodox Christians. Penelope Zogheib, in her thesis *Lebanese Christian Nationalism: A Theoretical Analyses of a national Movement*, explains how "the Lebanese state's weakness took its most exaggerated form when it failed to stop the armament of its citizens by non-governmental forces each claiming to be defending the sovereignty of the state when in fact each was placing a nail in the coffin of the state" (Zogheib 2). Each group claims to know what it means to be a nationalist, a citizen, and a good countryman. Yet no one truly works to find a way to coexist. Wars and violence affect the emerging adult population in different ways; some grow up sheltered and turn out to be productive citizens, some witness and experience violence in their everyday lives. I have seen this happen firsthand as a child of war myself. It affected my generation in different ways;

some made it out alive with a predisposition to anger and resentment and yet succeeded, and some ended up six feet under. To draw a parallel here between Zogheib's claim about the Lebanese state and my understanding of the Irish state, each has their own conception of what nationalism looks like yet fails to see what it means to create a nation that is inclusive to all its citizens.

This mirrors the religious segregation that haunts Ireland to this day. Joyce's warnings were prophecies. For Joyce and for me, there seems to be only one thing left: coexistence. In my opinion, coexistence is the main reason Joyce created Bloom the way he did in *Ulysses*: A Jewish Irish intellect married to a Spanish woman. Bloom and Molly learn how to live together, leaving the past behind, forgetting about this romanticized ancestry that serves no one any good. Therefore, Enright created Veronica and Liam the way she did as well: Liam is unable to survive in a postcolonial state without any work towards healing and Veronica survives only because her memory fails her, oblivion becomes her defense mechanism against the abuse that her family suffers generation after the other and two versions of unhealed Ireland are unable to exist in the same space. Enright echoes in *The Gathering* what Joyce predicts in *Ulysses*.

Through *Ulysses*, Joyce gives an owner's instructional guide to oppressed nations on what not to do. As a post-war or postcolonial country tries to become a nation, the line between the past, present, and future will inevitably get blurred. This binary will intertwine in a non-linear way, as no one will be able to separate with a clear line where one ends, and where one begins. But it is up to the next generations to find a way to heal and reconcile with national pain to carry the nation into modernity and into a better future. As a person who was raised during a civil war and struggled to find her voice in a

post-war country riddled with anger, despair, and violence, I can testify to the fact that looking back to the past is not the path we should take. I have spent my life voicing loudly what Joyce is preaching. As an expat, living outside of Lebanon for almost twenty years with no hope of ever returning to reside there, as someone constantly writing prose and poetry about the Lebanese identity and state, as someone trying to give a voice to a postwar generation, I can't help but see myself through Joyce's eyes. We must keep our past in the past where it belongs and remember it and prevent it from repeating itself. Holding a grudge and passing blame won't allow any nation to heal or bring about a healthy generation, one that would build a country that prospers.

Joyce was thinking about us Lebanese too as much I am thinking about him while reading *Ulysses* especially in "Cyclops." He couldn't help but mention the "Lebanonian Cedars" on the third page of the episode (282). Why would the most resilient Cedar, the symbol of grandeur that sits majestically in the middle of the Lebanese flag, cross James Joyce's mind while writing about Dublin? Maybe because he knew that the fabric of both societies, Lebanese and Irish, was the same even back then. Maybe I am not just imagining this connection I feel. Maybe James Joyce and Anne Enright felt it too.

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