

***The Question of Gendered Voice in Some
Contemporary Irish Novels by Brian Moore
and John McGahern***

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Abstract

This thesis questions the use of the 'voice' metaphor in contemporary Irish cultural studies in order to examine the ways in which gendered identities are constructed in some Irish Catholic communities in twentieth-century Ireland. With reference to novels by Brian Moore and John McGahern as well as to Judith Butler's theories of performativity and citational practices, it argues that gendered identities are constructed through the repetitive citation of hegemonic cultural discourses. This thesis focuses on the ways in which gendered identities are produced and maintained through the citation of the official discourses of the Catholic Church and the State as well as the more mundane discourses related to popular nationalism and the family.

The first two chapters concentrate on novels whose protagonists are trying to construct powerful identities in urban Irish society through the manipulation of gendered discourses. The discussion of Moore's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* identifies some of the strategies through which conventional Irish women's voices are constructed and questions the validity of the category of 'authentic' women's voices. In the chapter relating to McGahern's *The Pornographer*, the powerful, abstract male voice is exposed as a performative construct which is sustained only through the abjection of those elements which disrupt the narrator's performance of masculinity.

The remaining chapters concentrate on the use of idealised images such as those of the 'woman-as-nation' and the iconised mother in novels by Moore and McGahern. Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance* provides the basis for a discussion of whether or not voices attributed to women in texts by Irish men can be read in ways that disrupt the apparent authority of Irish men's voices. This thesis discusses the issues raised when men participate in the deconstruction of idealised images of Irish women. The final chapter examines the processes through which conventional identities are discursively constructed and maintained in two novels by John McGahern: *The Dark* and *Amongst Women*. This thesis contends that through the strategic redeployment of those voices attributed to idealised images of Irish women, voices which are conventionally regarded as silent, patriarchal gendered identities can be destabilised or displaced.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Question of Gendered Voice	1
Chapter One: Gender Ventriloquism in <i>The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne</i>	15
Chapter Two: Gender Ventriloquism: Throwing Voices in John McGahern's <i>The Pornographer</i>	53
Chapter Three: De-Colleenising Irish Narrative Voices: Gender and National Literature in Brian Moore's <i>The Mangan Inheritance</i>	97
Chapter Four: Our Father, Amongst Women: Re-citing Patriarchy in John McGahern's <i>The Dark and Amongst Women</i>	132
Conclusion: Questioning Voices	182
Bibliography	185

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Introduction: The Question of Gendered Voice

'Voice' is a term which enjoys widespread use in the burgeoning field of Irish Studies. Who has a voice; who has been silenced and by whom, and who can bring their voices to bear in new and powerful ways? These are some of the questions that continually resonate in debates about power and patriarchy across Irish historical studies, literary criticism and in contemporary poetry in particular.¹ 'Voice' operates as a metaphor for the discussion of power — who has it and how others might go about exercising it — in written as well as verbal discourse. I question the usefulness of the 'voice' metaphor for the subversion of established gendered identities and suggest that its use actually produces the silence of certain voices in Irish contexts.

If a voice only registers as a voice when its acts of resistance are sustained and powerful, then the small acts of resistance effected inadvertently by conventional and conformist voices are silenced. 'Voice' as metaphor also helps to keep in place conservative fictions of identity. The idea that there is such a thing as an Irish woman's voice potentially reifies the categories of 'Irishwoman', 'Irish' and 'woman' in ways that reinforce contemporary patriarchal power relations. The potential for the disruption of these categories, which might be altered or made less relevant by differences of sexuality or class, for example, is obscured where 'women's voices' are homogenised. When we juxtapose the gendered opposites of 'her voice' and 'his voice' in feminist criticism, we potentially endorse the model of binarised, gendered subjectivities which disenfranchises women and establishes men as 'voiced' and powerful. The definition of voice I advocate in this thesis opens up the discussion of the relationships between gender and power wherever women are attributed voices in Irish fiction, in texts by women or men. By posing voice as a question rather than as the proof of identity, I will demonstrate the strategies through which patriarchy — the gendered distribution of power which delimits and disenfranchises the category of 'women' — is reiteratively constructed and maintained.

This is a feminist project, yet I have chosen to concentrate on novels written by Irish men which make substantial use of voices attributed to women. I am interested in why Irish male authors focus on women characters on such a large scale and in whether they choose to confirm or subvert existing Irish gendered stereotypes in the process. Do Brian Moore and John McGahern write about Irish women in ways which silence women's voices? Can they or should

they be classified as automatically silencing women when they write? Do men, inside and outside Irish literary texts, automatically inherit a powerful and effective voice? The chapters that follow dispute the automatic attribution of powerful voices to men in an Irish context and discuss the failures of coherence between sex, gender and voice in the conventional literary, religious, nationalist and popular discourses cited and explored in the novels of Moore and McGahern.

Brian Moore's work presents itself as an obvious candidate for any discussion of cross-gender writing. Many readers have praised Moore's novels — particularly *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (1955) and *I am Mary Dunne* (1968) — for the perceived truthfulness of the women's voices they foreground. My decision to focus on *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*² is explained by my intention to concentrate on those novels in which voices are signalled as, in some way, Irish.³ John McGahern's novels present less obvious choices for discussion here although the comparative discussion of novels by Moore and McGahern is, in itself, not original.⁴

The common ground for Moore and McGahern lies in their insistent exploration of what McGahern calls 'the experiment of the voice'.⁵ Moore focuses, in his novels, on the period in a character's life when certainties collapse. In the heightened intensity of a moment of crisis, the frustration involved in each character's attempt to protest or re-cite previously-held truths in a powerful voice is intimately explored and the painful processes through which an identity is constructed are exposed as identity collapses. In McGahern's novels, too, identity is represented as a painful and frustrating process. However, in his novels the focus on the experiment of the voice is structured not through crisis but through a rich and deliberate narrative style. As John Montague argues in a poem dedicated to the novelist, McGahern's style is characterised by 'a slow exactness | Which recreates experience | By ritualising its details',⁶ and this slow exactness lays bare the habitual acts through which identities are formulated.

Critics' responses to John McGahern's novels differ from those to Moore's novels in that they have tended to focus on the representation of familial roles rather than on the individual in

² The later novel has strong links with Irish texts. Moore's *Mary Dunne* owes an obvious debt to Joyce's *Molly Bloom*: like Molly, Mary tells the story of her day from the vantage-point of her bed.

³ Throughout this thesis, the term 'Irish' will be used with reference to Irish Catholic communities.

⁴ Brian Hughes chastises McGahern for his failure to write like Moore in 'Remembered Light: Constants in the Fiction of John McGahern', *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 5 (1992), 93-105. See also John Cronin's 'The Dark is not Light Enough: The Fiction of John McGahern', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 58 (1969), 427-432, and his article, 'Brian Moore's Resilient Realism', *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 18:1 (1988), 24-36.

⁵ John McGahern in interview with Denis Sampson, 'A Conversation with John McGahern', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 13-18, (p.16).

⁶ John Montague, 'A Bright Day — for John McGahern', in *John Montague: Selected Poems*, (Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen, 1982), p.48.

crisis.⁷ I have reserved discussion of *The Barracks*(1963), McGahern's only novel to date which has a woman as the main protagonist, perhaps perversely, but because I want to move away from a discussion of gender in Irish texts which focuses entirely on women. The choice of texts overall is governed by a desire to test rather than exemplify the existing parameters in the debate on gendered Irish voices and this involves a discussion of voices attributed to men in texts such as McGahern's *The Dark*(1965) and Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance*(1979).

This first half of the thesis focuses on novels situated in urban Ireland — Belfast and Dublin respectively — which represent characters who are attempting to forge voices which will repeat idealised versions of gendered Irish voices. In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Moore creates a voice for the protagonist which is recognisable to most readers as feminine. The chapter identifies the strategies which suggest that Judith Hearne is the agent of her voice. It also discusses how and with what effects her voice is differentiated from that of the male narrator. The second chapter concentrates on John McGahern's *The Pornographer*(1979), a novel in which an aspect of the male protagonist's voice is refracted through the character of a woman. In *The Pornographer*, McGahern raises key questions about the ethical distribution of voices in a text where the protagonist writes pornography and finds a personal voice through his rejection of women.

The representation of unidealised, negatively stereotyped women in these novels is then contextualised by the discussion of texts where the idealised images of 'woman-as-nation' and the 'Irish mammy' are deployed by the same authors. In *The Mangan Inheritance*, which forms the subject of the third chapter, Moore questions the continuing impact on Irish writers of the nationalist literary tradition associated with the exploitation of the 'woman-as -nation' image. In this chapter, with reference to Judith Butler's work on performance and reiteration, I will discuss whether Irish novelists and poets, including the novel's protagonist, can repeat parodically the strategies that have been read as silencing women without re-stating the idealisation of women. I will also question whether or not men can help to break down the idealising strategies used by earlier Irish male authors. In the final chapter, I consider two novels by McGahern — *The Dark* and *Amongst Women*(1990) — and I suggest that these novels, in their representation of role-playing and habitual discourse in the family, expose domestic Irish patriarchy as a discursive construct. This chapter suggests ways in which idealised images of Irish women can be redeployed to undermine the claims of patriarchy to ontology and permanence. Throughout these chapters, the fiction of the powerful male voice with agency over language will be subjected to critique.

⁷ However, at least one critic has argued that Moore's work is all about the family. See Kerry McSweeney, *Four Contemporary Novelists: Angus Wilson, Brian Moore, John Fowles, V. S. Naipaul* (London: Scolar Press; Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), p.99.

Some definitions of voice

The discussion of any kind of gendered voice arises as a kind of slippage. When we start to talk about deploying language to express the desires of the self, or of the community we prefer to align ourselves with, we often move away from references to ‘language’ and towards this more obviously personalised term. In this sense, voice is to speaking as language is to writing where ‘voice’ suggests a more authentic and natural use of discourse. Susan Gal argues that linguists and cultural critics approach the question of voice from different perspectives and produce separate, if complementary, definitions for the term, both of which I want to make use of in the following chapters.

Linguists use the term to describe the whole range of strategies employed in everyday conversational interaction. In this interpretation, ‘silence’ is not the opposite of voice. Instead, silence is just one of the strategies which speakers deploy as part of their vocal repertoire, either powerlessly or potentially powerfully, when they interact with others. By contrast, cultural critics often use the idea of voice metaphorically: ‘voice’ signifies those contributions to linguistic exchanges which actually manage to register in or on hegemonic practices. As Gal explains:

Unlike linguists and sociolinguists who examine the phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic details of everyday talk, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, and literary critics often use terms like voice, speech and words as a powerful metaphor. This usage has become extraordinarily widespread and influential in social science.⁸

Critics of Irish culture often refer to texts which make an impact contemporaneously in Irish society as having a voice. This metaphorical usage is evident in the editors’ decision to name a collection of Irish short stories by women, *Territories of the Voice* (1990). Louise De Salvo, Kathleen Walsh D’Arcy and Katherine Hogan choose the title because it celebrates ‘not only the tremendous outpouring, “the great wave” of contemporary Irish women’s writing, but also the powerful impact of these works upon readers’.⁹ The stories they cite are classed as ‘voiced’ because they are thought to make an impact on their contemporary readership. In a second sense of the term, cultural critics use ‘voice’ to affirm retrospectively that certain texts by women should be factored into our assessments of Irish history. The Attic Press dust-jacket for Margaret Ward’s collection — *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* — explains that:

⁸ Susan Gal, ‘Language, Gender and Power: An Anthropological Review’, in *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, ed. by Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), pp.169-82, (p.174).

⁹ The title is taken from Moya Cannon’s poem ‘Taom’ which serves as the epigraph to the collection. *Territories of the Voice: Contemporary Stories By Irish Women Writers*, ed. by Louise De Salvo, Kathleen Walsh D’Arcy and Katherine Hogan (London: Virago, 1990), p.xi.

The words of these women ['Women such as Constance Markievicz, Maud Gonne and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Louie Bennett and countless more'] — their hopes and dreams, their terrors and their refusal to accept defeat — have for too long been buried in dusty archives. *In their Own Voice* is a unique and invaluable collection for teachers, students, and anyone interested in reclaiming women's contribution to history.¹⁰

The suggestion here is that the texts in this volume have not been read but will now not only be read but also, metaphorically, 'heard'. To have a voice in these cultural terms is to signify as a stakeholder in the cultural economy. The disenfranchised are silent, where silence operates as a metaphor for powerlessness. This cultural model of voice produces more silence than the linguistic usage as Gal notes when she summarises the senses in which the term 'voice' is used outside the field of linguistics. She explains that terms like 'voice' and 'silence'

are routinely used not to designate everyday talk but, much more broadly, to denote the public expression of a particular perspective on self and social life, the effort to represent one's own experience rather than accepting the representations of more powerful others. Similarly, silence and mutedness are used not for inability or reluctance to create utterances in conversational exchange but for failure to produce one's own separate socially significant discourse.¹¹

Gal here employs the vocabulary associated with a third cultural implication of the term, 'voice'. In this case, one's utterances are not only valid because they are socially significant stakeholder utterances but also because they are simultaneously 'one's own'. They express a particular and personal perspective on the world on which they impact. In this formulation, the voiced speaker has agency and can intrude on, or disrupt, the limits of hegemonic discourses. The voice is sourced and controlled by the powerful speaking subject. This is the type of voice which Eavan Boland, the Irish poet and cultural critic, advocates for women in her essays on the role of Irish women as authors and objects in Irish poetry.

However, the terms of the debate about voice in Irish literature are not invented by Boland. The question of voice is one which interests authors at least from the outset of the Irish Literary Revival as nationalist authors work self-consciously to find a collective voice for the Irish people which constructs and authenticates the limits for that group even as it speaks on its behalf. This search for 'a national voice' arises in the sometimes overlapping contexts of the colonial relationship with England and literary modernism. Willy Maley reads voice in the first context when he argues that the idea of voice was crucial to Yeats's literary enterprise:

¹⁰ *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* ed. by Margaret Ward (Dublin: Attic Press, 1995).

¹¹ Gal, p.174.

Cultural nationalism raised the question of who was to represent the nation, in what language, in what medium, in what genre [...] For Yeats, the nation was to be heard, spoken, the voice was all important, which is why he favoured poetry and drama. He wished to write in his poems a 'syntax that is for ear alone.'¹²

Those authors who court the power of voices to construct and influence reality, often, in addition, query the limits and responsibilities of wielding voices in this way. O'Casey asks whether or not as the shadow, or impersonator, of a gunman you are responsible for the actions your reckless speech acts provoke.¹³ Synge queries the distinction between saying you killed your father, and actually killing your father,¹⁴ and, most notoriously, Yeats asks if that play of his sent out certain men the English shot.¹⁵ The ethics of voice are not the preserve of Irish feminist discussion.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus' self-consciousness about the status of identity and the voice in his anxiety over the tundish¹⁶ is caught up, not only in nationalist debates about Irish voices, but also with the concerns of international modernism, concerns which continue to influence writers like Moore and McGahern. In this context too, voice is a problematic term. Bette London argues persuasively that it is the question of voice rather than the sure pursuit of it that mobilises many modernist texts. She takes issue with those feminist readers of Virginia Woolf's novels, who read *To the Lighthouse*, for example, as the source of authentically gendered voices:

'A woman's voice.' 'An authentic voice.' 'Her own voice.' 'The voice of female experience.' 'An authentic woman's voice.' Terms such as these dominate the burgeoning Woolf industry, and, in the current critical climate, it has become almost de rigeur to read the author of *A Room of One's Own* as embodying, in her characters and in her narrative stance, the paradigm her title seems to invite: a voice of her own [but] Woolf's strategies work against precisely this claim. They present 'a voice of one's own' as the central fiction that the narrative deconstructs.¹⁷

The challenge for Irish cultural critics is to avoid the tendency to reify gendered voices, as Woolf's critics have done, and instead to interrogate thoroughly the dynamic relationships between voices, identity and power in modern Irish texts.

¹² Maley goes on to argue that Yeats' approach contrasts with that of Joyce for whom 'the nation was to be read, written, the voice was something to be broken up, parodied, impersonated, ironised.' Willy Maley, 'Varieties of Nationalism: Post-Revisionist Irish Studies', *Irish Studies Review*, 15 (1996), 34-37, (p.36).

¹³ See chapter three for a fuller discussion of these issues. Sean O'Casey, *The Shadow of a Gunman* [1925] in *Sean O'Casey: Three Plays* (London: Papermac, 1994).

¹⁴ J. M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World* (Dublin: Maunsel and Co., 1907).

¹⁵ W.B. Yeats, 'The Man and the Echo' in *W. B. Yeats: Collected Poems* (London: Picador, 1990), pp.164-66.

¹⁶ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1914-15] ed. by Seamus Deane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p.205.

¹⁷ Bette London, *The Appropriated Voice: Narrative Authority in Conrad, Forster and Woolf* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p.130.

From *l'écriture féminine* to poststructuralism

Discussions of the relationship between gender and language have been focused by the theories about *l'écriture féminine* proposed by Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and other French feminists. *L'écriture féminine* is identified as a type of writing in which women's voices are mediated, not through the dominant forms of patriarchal discourse, but instead through their bodies and more particularly through the maternal body. For Kristeva, the maternal body is the site of the semiotic; separation from it provokes the subject's participation in the Symbolic order. Equated with Plato's *chora*, it emerges as the grounds for all language: 'The mother's body is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*'.¹⁸

Kristeva's emphasis on the body as the irreducible site of identity and language has had a profound impact on the conceptualisation of gendered language. In Hélène Cixous' essay, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976),¹⁹ which is frequently taught as an introduction to the French school of feminist criticism, Cixous suggests that there is a direct link between women's bodies and the language they produce. She argues that each woman's body enables her attempt to write — 'There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink'²⁰ — and like Irish cultural critics, Cixous links women's bodies and identities to the act of writing through the metaphor of 'voice'. She refers to her own act of writing as a speech act, intimately linked to the individual body, which speaks, not just on her behalf, but on behalf of women as a community. She explains:

I shall speak about women's writing and what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies — for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text — as into the world and into history — by her own movement.²¹

However, Cixous also allows a space in which authors gendered as male can participate in the project of writing women into texts. She suggests that they can, very occasionally, breach the representational codes of patriarchal language to question the validity of existing images of women. The male poet, she argues, is able to parody normative constructions of women's identity if he can slip the constraints of the Symbolic law that binds him:

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* [1974] excerpted in *The Portable Kristeva* ed. by Kelly Oliver, trans. by Margaret Waller, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.27-92, (p.37).

¹⁹ Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', [1976] in *New French Feminisms* ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), pp.245-264.

²⁰ Cixous, p.251.

²¹ Cixous, p.245.

There have been poets who would go to any lengths to slip something by at odds with tradition — men capable [...] of imagining the woman who would hold out against oppression and constitute herself as a superb equal, hence 'impossible' subject, untenable in a real social framework. Such a woman the poet could desire only by breaking the codes that negate her. Her appearance would necessarily bring on, if not revolution — for the bastion was supposed to be immutable — at least harrowing explosions. At times it is in the fissure caused by an earthquake, through that radical mutation of things brought on by a material upheaval when every structure is for a moment thrown off balance and an ephemeral wildness sweeps order away, that the poet slips something by, for a brief span of women.²²

Moore and McGahern are not rehabilitated into *l'écriture féminine* by this move though because only poets can write in the feminine style that Cixous identifies. Cixous argues that, unlike novelists, who are trapped in a representational paradigm which relies on the linear and univocal language of patriarchy, poets are able to write in a feminine style. Poets write from the unconscious 'where the repressed manage to survive'.²³ Where Cixous's at times simplistic argument does open up spaces for the work of Moore and McGahern is in the example of 'feminine' writing she cites. Although she categorises her discussion of voices written by men as 'an oblique consideration' in an essay which advocates that 'woman must write woman. And man, man',²⁴ her only citation of an example of a feminine voice in literature is of a voice attributed to a woman in a novel by an Irish man: '... And yes,' says Molly, carrying *Ulysses* off beyond any book and toward the new writing; 'I said yes, I will Yes'.²⁵ Can we now class Moore and McGahern as feminine writers on the grounds that critics have argued that they are among Joyce's most deserving and indebted heirs? If, for example, McGahern writing is 'in collusion' with that of Joyce, as Jonathan Raban claims,²⁶ is he also part of a tradition of feminine writing by men?

For Luce Irigaray, such a claim is irrelevant. She argues that the prospect of women's voices escaping in language articulated in a phallogocentric economy is always illusory. The feminine constitutes the outside of a signifying economy in which the feminine Other is actually a solipsistic reflection of male identity. She claims:

²² Cixous, p.249.

²³ Cixous, p.250.

²⁴ Cixous, p.247.

²⁵ Cixous, p.255.

²⁶ 'McGahern's writing works in collusion with Joyce's, drawing strength from the echoes it evokes. [...] At his best, McGahern writes so beautifully that he leaves one in no doubt of his equality with Joyce'. Jonathan Raban, [Review of *The Leavetaking*] 'Exiles: New Fiction', *Encounter*, 44:6 (1975), 79-82, (p.78).

The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary undoubtedly places woman in a position where she can experience herself only fragmentarily as waste or as excess in the little structured margins of a dominant ideology, this mirror entrusted by the (masculine) 'subject' with the task of reflecting and redoubling himself. The role of 'femininity' is prescribed moreover by this masculine specula(riza)tion and corresponds only slightly to woman's desire, which is recuperated only secretly, in hiding, and in a disturbing and unpardonable manner.²⁷

For Irigaray, the figuring of women's language in dominant discourse always marks the erasure of women and the reaffirmation of a patriarchal system of representation. The potential to disrupt the terms of this system is cited in women's bodies which offer new and alternative configurations of identity. For Irigaray, a woman's body remains both the source of her voice and the point to which it constantly returns.

However, as Judith Butler argues, within the practical constraints of patriarchal discourse, the valorisation of the body as the site of women's language threatens to repeat the conventional mind-body binary which oppresses and essentialises women. Butler suggests that the maternal body is neither prior to, nor outside, the Symbolic order and asks that it should be understood, not as the grounds for language but instead as 'an effect or consequence of a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of itself and the law of its desire'.²⁸

For Butler, *l'écriture féminine* comprises a valorisation of motherhood which reduces the range of identities currently positioned under the umbrella term 'woman' in favour of a single identity — the 'univocal signifier' of the maternal body.²⁹ This reduction, Butler argues, participates in the construction of a normative heterosexual binary which only recognises polar but complementary, universal and ahistorical, male and female identities. Cixous's footnotes have already identified the erasures which are involved in the invocation of the universal 'woman'. She asks parenthetically why the texts which she classifies as 'inscriptions of femininity' cluster in certain areas: '(have you noted our [France's] infinite poverty in this field? — the Anglo-Saxon countries have shown resources of distinctly greater consequence)'.³⁰

Butler argues against the reification of the term 'woman' in favour instead of deconstructing the models of subjectivity that construct the heterosexual binary within which woman operates as the subjugated category.³¹ Her argument accords with a general shift away

²⁷ Luce Irigaray, 'This Sex Which is not One', [1977] in *New French Feminisms* ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), pp.99-110, (p.104).

²⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990), p.92.

²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.90.

³⁰ Cixous, fn.3, pp.248-9.

³¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.5.

from a discussion of 'women's writing' as a universal, ahistorical and discrete term in favour of the greater acknowledgement of the plurality of identities, modulated by race, class and desire, which have been homogenised by the name, 'woman'. The reconsideration of whether or not 'women who write' share fundamental characteristics has extended to the re-evaluation of the assumption that women also share a fundamental stylistics.

This pluralising approach raises its own problematics in a feminist debate. Linda Alcoff questions the movement of feminist critiques away from the term 'woman' which has usually served as the foundational category for feminist resistance to patriarchy. While she identifies the problems associated with the essentialist approach to gender — those feminist practices which refer to an irreducible femininity which is universally shared — she is concerned that an approach which undermines the validity of 'women' as a discrete category might disable acts of resistance for the disparate individuals and communities who are categorised as, and oppressed as, 'women' in contemporary social configurations. Alcoff suggests that:

If gender is simply a social construct, the need and even the possibility of a feminist politics becomes immediately problematic. What can we demand in the name of women if 'women' do not exist and demands in their name simply reinforce the myth that they do? How can we speak out against sexism as detrimental to the interests of women if the category is a fiction? How can we demand legal abortions, adequate child care, or wages based on comparable worth without invoking a concept of 'woman'?³²

However, the deconstruction of identity categories need not claim 'women' as its first casualty. Questioning the authenticity of a binarised system of gendered voices, as I will here, should not lead to the silencing or the simplification of those voices used by women within the constraints of patriarchal Irish culture. Rather it should open up the potential to create subversion through the raising of those 'voices' which are currently thought to be silenced and should lead to the discovery of other, un-thought of voices. As Judith Butler argues:

The question never has been whether or not there ought to be speaking about women. That speaking will occur, and for feminist reasons, it must; the category of women does not become useless through deconstruction, but becomes one whose uses are no longer reified as 'referents,' and which stand a chance of being opened up, indeed, of coming to signify in ways that none of us can predict in advance. Surely, it must be possible both to use the term, to use it tactically even as one is, as it were, used and positioned by it and also to subject the term to a critique which interrogates the exclusionary operations and differential power-relations that construct and delimit feminist invocations of 'women.' This is to paraphrase [... Spivak] the critique of something useful, the critique of something we cannot do without.³³

³² In the remainder of her argument, Alcoff moves towards a more Butlerian position by advocating the strategic use of the term 'woman' even as it is critiqued. Linda Alcoff, 'Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: the Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13:31 (1988), 405-436, (p.420).

³³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p.29.

If Irish women have been silenced by patriarchy, propriety, the lack of opportunities to write, speak out or publish (at least since the demise of bardic culture), in what ways can we make the category of 'woman' disrupt the systems and structures which have kept this situation in place while, in the same movement, questioning the usefulness of an essentialising category such as 'women's voices'? In the first chapter I will ask what we assume when we recognise an Irish woman's voice. I will also raise another of the central questions of this thesis, namely, which gendered subjects are able to participate in the resignification of women's identities in an Irish context? Does this category include only those feminists who identify themselves with the category of 'Irish women' or is it a broader coalition which allows, not only those critics situated on the liminalities of Irishness, like myself, but also Irish men to participate in tackling the nets of gendered identity which hold in modern Ireland? Before I move on to discuss *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* I will first outline my position in relation to the dominant body of work on Irish women's voices, the essays and poems of Eavan Boland.

Eavan Boland and the metaphor of Irish women's voices

Eavan Boland's essay 'A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition' (1989),³⁴ reprinted several times, marshals the arguments which continue to be explored by other feminist critics in the discussion of Irish women's voices.³⁵ In 'A Kind of Scar', Boland sets out her argument that women have been silenced in a nationalist tradition which represents women as passive and she demands, from readers and poets alike, a new ethical and active response to the idealisation and iconisation of women. I will quote her here at some length as she discusses her own relationship, as a poet, to iconised images:

The majority of Irish male poets depended on women as motifs in their poetry. They moved easily, deftly, as if by right among images of women in which I did not believe and of which I could not approve. The women in their poems were often passive, decorative, raised to emblematic status. This was especially true where the woman and the idea of the nation were mixed: where the nation became a woman and the woman took on a national posture.

³⁴ Eavan Boland, 'A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition', in *A Dozen Lips* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1994), pp.72-92. (First publ. as LIP pamphlet, (Dublin, 1989). Printed as 'Outside History', *P.N. Review*, 17:1 (1990), 21-28; reprinted as part of *Object Lessons* (London: Vintage, 1996)). All references here are to the version in *A Dozen Lips*.

³⁵ See Patricia Haberstroh, *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1996).

The trouble was these images did good service as ornaments. In fact they had a wide acceptance as ornaments by readers of Irish poetry. Women in such poems were frequently referred to approvingly as mythic, emblematic. But to me these passive and simplified women seemed a corruption. Moreover, the transaction they urged on the reader, to accept them as mere decoration, seemed to compound the corruption. For they were not decorations, they were not ornaments. However distorted these images, they had their roots in suffered truth.³⁶

From the outset, in her first essay on women's voices, Boland is careful to take account of a number of indices which make it difficult for Irish poets to assert their rights to operate as authors rather than as images. She cites the similarity between the problems faced by contemporary women poets and those encountered during the Literary Revival by idealised rural poets such as Padraic Colum³⁷ and she chooses Patrick Kavanagh as an example of how women might establish themselves as the makers of images rather than as the object of poems. She writes of her meeting with Kavanagh: 'I had seen the witness of someone who had used the occasion of his life to rebuff the expectations and preconceptions of the Irish poem. I would remember it'.³⁸

Nevertheless, Boland argues that the voice-silence binary is a particularly acute practical reality for the woman poet. Men's words are published, women have to struggle to make their texts available. Men may find their place in a masculine ethic problematic, but women find it difficult to justify their right to an aesthetic in the first place. To be a poet is socially incompatible with the living out of a recognisable woman's identity in the community. Boland illustrates this graphically when she writes about the time she asked a group of women in the west of Ireland if they could admit to being poets: 'One particular woman, from a small town west of the Shannon, looked at me bleakly. "If I said I was a poet in that town," she replied, "people would think I didn't wash my windows"'.³⁹

In this context, Boland calls for the representation of women's voices which are more truthful than the preconceived images of women in nationalist Irish poetry, voices which will represent women's personal experience, which will speak on behalf of women's foremothers and make an impact for women as a group in Irish society. It is in these cultural terms that Boland imagines 'voice' in her poem, 'The Singers',⁴⁰ dedicated to the contemporary Irish president, Mary Robinson. The narrator of the poem talks of women in the west of Ireland 'Finding a voice

³⁶ Boland, 'A Kind of Scar', p.80.

³⁷ 'Colum exemplified something to me. Here also was a poet who had been asked to make the journey, in one working lifetime, from being the object of Irish poems to being their author. He too, as an image, had been unacceptably simplified in all those poems about the land and the tenantry.' Boland, 'A Kind of Scar', p.84.

³⁸ Boland, *Object Lessons*, pp.99-100.

³⁹ Boland, 'Guest Introduction: The Minds and Voices of Modern Irish Women', in *Journal of Women's History*, 6:4 / 7:1 (1995), pp.6-8, (p.6).

⁴⁰ Boland, 'The Singers - for M.R.' in *In a Time of Violence* (Manchester, Carcanet Press, 1994), p.1.

where they found a vision'. These women, marginalised at the very edge of Western Europe,⁴¹ each find a personal voice through the synthesis of the domestic and communal aspects of their experience 'when rain and ocean | and their own sense of home were revealed to them | as one and the same'. In Gal's terms, 'Here *women's words* are a synecdoche for *gendered consciousness* or for *a positioned perspective*'.⁴² The voice each woman finds is at once personal and shared among the women themselves: they find a shared way to articulate their personal visions through song. Finding a voice, in the poem, does not neutralise a vision, it threatens those versions of vision or ideology which have carried hegemonic force.

Every day was still shaped by weather,
but every night their mouths filled with
Atlantic storms and clouded-over stars
and exhausted birds.

And only when the dange[r]
was plain in the music could you know
their true measure of rejoicing in

finding a voice where they found a vision.⁴³

The need to articulate a vision for women that can signify as a stakeholder voice is registered in the poem's dedication to Mary Robinson, herself a woman from the west of Ireland. The voice that the poem imagines, which is both a woman's and a women's voice, aims to impact on rather than collaborate in Irish masculinist cultural and political practices. Robinson quoted the verse about voice and vision from 'The Singers' in her inaugural address and so gave the women's voice it proposes a stake within the matrix of political discourses which would normally marginalise it.

However, Boland's powerful advocacy of an ethical poetry in which women transform Irish poetry and society by addressing poetic and social traditions in their own voices is always already problematic in her essays as well as her poems. The poet's voice she proposes, which challenges traditional imagery of women and makes an impact on Irish society, is haunted by the spectre of Padraic Colum, who, Boland suggests, 'found the imaginative stresses of that transit [from image to poet] beyond his comprehension, let alone his strength. And so something terrible happened to him. He wrote Irish poetry as if he were still the object of it'.⁴⁴

Boland's project is dependent on a humanist construction of the subject, a subject who is able to move from being the object of the poem to being an 'agent of change'.⁴⁵ This idea of the

⁴¹ Boland signals the global significance by capitalising her reference to 'The women who were singers in the West'.

⁴² Gal, p.174.

⁴³ Boland, *In a Time of Violence*, p.1.

⁴⁴ Boland, *Object Lessons*, p.140.

⁴⁵ Boland, 'A Kind of Scar', p.82.

poet as agent is, for Boland, an important condition for the ethical poetics she establishes in her essays and her poetry. However, the utopian vision of a complete enfranchisement of women poets as agents arises only fitfully and disconcertingly in her collection of essays and recollections, *Object Lessons* (1996). Outside the poem she gives women a utopian agency over their voices, yet she argues that their voices are less free within it:

Outside the poem the poet is indeed free, does indeed have choices. Once he or she is inside it, these choices are altered and limited in several specific ways.[...] Image systems within poetry — of which she [the woman poet] is now a part — are complex, referential and historic. Within them are stored not simply the practices of a tradition but the precedent which years of acquaintance with, and illumination by, that tradition offers to the poet at that moment of absorption in the poem [...] I found, as all poets do, the treasurable inscriptions and fixities which are the powerful outcome of tradition and precedent. There again, as all poets do, I struggled to make some sense of them, and as all poets must, I determined to make some transaction with them which would recognize their wisdom, while still allowing me to experiment in my work.⁴⁶

Boland warns poets in the coming times that the arena of the poem is governed by matrices of convention and authority which determine, in advance and to a considerable extent, the forms in which the poetic voice can express itself. Absorbed within the poem, the woman poet threatens to lose the coherence as an agent, capable of personal and ethical choices,^{that} Boland offers her beyond the poem.

This thesis disputes Boland's suggestion that agency exists as the possibility of ideal and complete control over discourse. I will argue that there is no way in which a woman's voice can take up a position outside those poetic, nationalist, political, religious and economic discourses, among others, through which gendered identities are constructed and understood. Individual agency will emerge as the effect of those repeated speech acts which accumulate as 'a voice' rather than as the enabling condition of a voice. However, with reference to Judith Butler's theory of citationality and performativity, I will argue that those patriarchal discourses which 'silence' Irish women are similarly constructed through reiterative and potentially vulnerable acts. Patriarchal voices only achieve the appearance of stability and coherence through continual and careful acts of repetition. These acts of repetition will be destabilised in the chapters that follow as I 'raise' the voices attributed to women and to men in several novels by Moore and McGahern in ways which open patriarchal discourses and the fiction of the powerful male voice to parody and subversion.

⁴⁶ Boland, *Object Lessons*, p.209.

Gender Ventriloquism in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Brian Moore attacks the perceived complacency of the middle-class Belfast Catholic community in which he grew up and he does this by exposing its foundational truths — the need for propriety, an absolute moral system based on the sanctity of the family, and a social hierarchy based on the primacy of the church — as fictions. Reading the novel in the light of Judith Butler's work on performativity, I will suggest that the identities which are sanctioned as ideal in the community that Moore represents are produced through regulated acts of repetition. In her faltering performance of femininity, Judith Hearne inadvertently exposes the conventional discursive practices through which the presence of an abiding and socially-acceptable gendered self is persistently implied.

Moore demonstrates that the repetition of social orthodoxies gives them the status of truth. He also questions whether it is possible for a character like Judith Hearne to resist those orthodoxies and still register a powerful voice. In later novels, Moore has frequently concentrated on other characters who, like Judith Hearne, feel compelled to repeat conventional discourses which disempower them. In *Catholics* (1972) he writes about an abbot forced to follow orders from Rome; in *Cold Heaven* (1983) he explores whether or not Marie Davenport can deflect or re-cite the message she has received from an apparition of the Virgin Mary; *The Statement* (1995) deals with the ethics of men's use of performative language (wartime death sentences and absolution in Catholic confession) and *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979), which will be discussed at length in the third chapter, asks what it means to speak as an Irish male author.

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Moore focuses on the ways in which mundane conversations construct and maintain the viability of conventional gendered identities. While this chapter will make reference to the novel as a whole, it will concentrate for the most part on the opening two chapters in order to explore in detail how Moore constructs a voice for Judith Hearne which can pass as an authentic or conventional woman's voice. I want to show that gendered voices

are discursive rather than natural. Moore's novel illustrates Judith Butler's claim that gender is performative. Butler explains that:

gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. [...] There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results.¹

Judith Hearne's feminine voice is enabled by Moore's citation of a range of discourses which construct the illusion of an abiding gendered identity for the protagonist but the novel enhances the illusion that her voice is 'real' by suggesting that it is Judith Hearne herself, as the agent for her own voice, who mobilises these citations. She cites the discourses of Hollywood movies, and of romantic fiction as well as those of Catholicism and propriety, for example, in an attempt to signify as an ideal and respectable woman. She aims to win status and a positive image in society through her careful repetition of highly-regulated feminine conversational conventions.

When she fails to approximate a performance of acceptable femininity, Judith Hearne functions to reveal the status of the normative gendered identity to which she aspires as a cultural construct. Her performance of femininity exposes and parodies the acts through which an intelligible feminine identity, supportive of the patriarchal social matrices in her community, achieves coherence. In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Moore demonstrates that socially-validated truths and identities do not exist prior to discourse but instead emerge as the effects of reiterative practices which are vulnerable to inadvertent mis-citation and derailment. This reading of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* supports Judith Butler's assertion that:

The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between [...] acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction.²

However, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* does not consistently subvert the gendered identities it exposes as performative. Throughout the novel, the male narrator stages a rejection of Judith Hearne in an attempt to construct for himself a normative identity which dissimulates its own performativity. This staging disaffiliates the narrator from Judith Hearne's powerless voice which otherwise dominates the novel's point-of-view. The final section of this chapter will ask in what ways the notion of the novel's central voice 'belonging' to Judith Hearne regulates a gendered binary that safeguards the perspective of the male, author-identified narrator from cultural feminisation. On the whole, the text reaffirms the gendered stereotypes it exposes. My aim is not to authenticate Judith

¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.25.

² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.141.

Hearne's voice as realistic — although I will discuss the implications of its truth effect — and I am certainly not trying to redeem Moore as a feminist man (Brian McIlroy's account of Moore's 'buttock fetish' offers reasonable cause for unease with this idea³). However, Moore has clearly been interested, throughout his career as a novelist, in exploring the dynamic relations between gender, identity, voice and power. *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* exposes, I suggest, some of the strategies through which a gendered binary of voices is constructed in an Irish context.

Locating the voice

Jo O'Donoghue, the author of the most recent book-length study of Moore's work, argues that 'Moore excels [...] in his depiction of female characters';⁴ Tom Paulin notes that 'Moore has always been gifted with [...] the ability of imagining a woman's experience';⁵ Michael Paul Gallagher claims that 'Judith Hearne is a Belfast version of Emma Bovary, caught in the same ironic crux between sentimental schemes and half-acknowledged reality'⁶ and Charles Brady, reviewing the later novel, *I am Mary Dunne*, gives his vigorous approval to Moore's Flaubertian allusion in the novel's title. Brady claims that 'Far from achieving just [...] skilful ventriloquism [...], Moore can say with Flaubert: *Mary Dunne, c'est moi*'.⁷

However, the reader's recognition of authenticity in any voice in a literary text is always a *misrecognition*. At the most literal level, the patterns involved in novelistic dialogue are not those we encounter in unscripted conversation. As David Crystal argues, fictional dialogue, structured around the basic unit of the sentence, can never provide an authentic representation of conversational dialogue because conversation is structured around the basic unit of the clause: it is in 'informal domestic conversation that the discrepancy between standard descriptive statement and observed reality is most noticeable'.⁸ To paraphrase Butler, the woman's voice in *The Lonely Passion of*

³ Brian McIlroy, 'Displacement in the Fiction of Brian Moore', *English Studies in Canada*, 15:2 (1988), 214-234.

⁴ Jo O'Donoghue, *Brian Moore: A Critical Study* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1990), p.239.

⁵ Tom Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1984), p.53.

⁶ Michael Paul Gallagher, 'The Novels of Brian Moore', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 60 (1971), 180-94, (p.181).

⁷ Charles A. Brady, 'I am Mary Dunne', *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 3 (1968), 136-40, (p.136). Moore's latest novel, *The Magician's Wife* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997) is set in the year of Madame Bovary's publication and the female protagonist is called Emmeline. The novel was published in the same month as this thesis was submitted and so cannot be discussed in detail here.

⁸ David Crystal, 'Neglected Grammatical Features in Conversational English', in *Studies in English Linguistics for Randolph Quirk*, ed. by Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartik (London: Longman, 1980), pp.153-56, (p.153).

Judith Hearne is not a repetition of an original, but a repetition that plays on the belief that there is an authentic 'woman's voice' which can be reproduced.

The novel's critics testify to the truth effect of Judith Hearne's voice by trying to locate its origins, either in the language of 'real' women or in a normative chain of fictional women's voices produced by Irish literary men. One of the grounds cited for the authenticity of Judith Hearne's voice is that her language is determined by its relation to the language used by a woman that Brian Moore knew when he was a child. Seamus Hoseney disputes Moore's own suggestion that he wrote about a woman because his subject was faith ("They're usually more religious, or have more religiosity"⁹). Hoseney's counter-claim provides for the authenticity of Judith Hearne's voice by affording Moore's childhood acquaintance a seamless passage from context to text:

In fact, Moore based the character of Judith Hearne on a woman in her sixties who used to visit his family in Belfast, a woman who wore red all the time and was a comic figure to the children. Once she spoke of her 'brother-in-law that was to have been' and how she had been engaged to a man who had deserted her when he discovered she was not the rich heiress he presumed her to be. Moore first wrote about this character in an unpublished short story called 'A Friend of the Family'. He developed both the character and theme until they grew into his first novel published in 1955.¹⁰

The idiosyncratic and idiomatic vocabulary which distinguishes Judith Hearne from the novel's other characters — her idiolect — is here attributed to a 'real' woman. However, this is not the only way to resolve her genesis. Hoseney's anxiety about accounting for Judith Hearne's femininity emerges again when he notes that Judith Hearne pays the same tribute to religious icons as does the woman in Austin Clarke's poem, 'Martha Blake at Fifty One':

When she [Martha Blake] looked up, the Saviour showed
His Heart, daggered with flame
And, from the mantle-shelf, St. Joseph
Bent, disapproving.¹¹

In this explanation of Judith Hearne's origins, her voice is rationalised as an example from an Irish male tradition of writing about women.

The third motive provided for Moore's gender ventriloquism is also linked to a male literary inheritance. Kerry McSweeney notes that in response to interview questions, Brian Moore has suggested that Judith Hearne's primary and most positive characteristic is her failure to be Stephen

⁹ Brian Moore in interview with Richard B. Sale, *Studies in the Novel*, 1 (1969), p.68. Cited in Seamus Hoseney, 'Crisis and Identity in the Novels of Brian Moore' (unpublished M.Litt. dissertation, University of Dublin, 1983), p.2.

¹⁰ Hoseney, p.2.

¹¹ Austin Clarke, 'Martha Blake at Fifty One', in *Austin Clarke: Collected Poems* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1974), p.185. Cited in Hoseney, p.6.

Dedalus.¹² By focusing on Judith Hearne, Moore claims, he evaded the difficulties of writing a *bildungsroman* to equal that provided by Joyce. This explanation implies that Judith Hearne, defined now by lack, is not a woman for women's sake. Instead, she acts as a pawn in a dispute between literary sons and fathers.

Each of these explanations answers questions as to why Brian Moore — as a man — would want to write across boundaries of sex, gender, desire and religious faith and why he should choose to focus his narrative on a character whose powerlessness, snobbery and pettiness are, in stereotypical terms, inconsistent with his role as a middle-class man from Northern Ireland. It is not as if Moore's critics and interviewers are totally surprised that a novel should address them through a range of gendered positions, but the protracted relocation of the dominant voice in the text away from a character who shares some of the author's identifications — particularly those related to sex, gender and desire — is seen as an act of great daring as well as a considerable technical feat.

It requires explanations that will regulate its position in relation to binarised models of gendered identity or justify it in the terms of a conventional paradigm in which men always write as men to other men. These explanations either attribute Moore's gender ventriloquism to a conventional and workmanlike realist impulse or account for it as part of an engagement with other validated, male, authorial voices.¹³ Before I go on to suggest alternative readings of Moore's gender ventriloquism, I want to discuss how it is that Judith Hearne's appears 'authentic' enough to warrant these attempts to domesticate it within the parameters of existing gendered identities.

How to identify Judith Hearne's speech

One of the most obvious ways in which the identification of a fictional voice with an accepted gendered identity is achieved is through the act of naming. Jeanette Winterson demonstrates this in her novel, *Written on the Body* (1992), in which the first person narrator's gender is never specified.¹⁴ The withholding of any name for the character apart from the address form — 'you' — interrupts the reader's attempt to locate the narratorial voice within the parameters of a conventional gendered binary. In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, where pronominal references are not withheld and where speech acts are directly attributed to a named woman, each act of naming is

¹² This is perhaps the most common explanation offered for Moore's gender ventriloquism. See, for example, Kerry McSweeney's discussion of this issue. McSweeney, *Four Contemporary Novelists*, pp.58-60.

¹³ This notion rides roughshod over the history of the English realist novel, though it might carry weight if Moore is being linked to his English social-realist contemporaries: John Wain and Alan Sillitoe, for example.

¹⁴ Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992; Vintage, 1993).

constitutive: it sets and maintains some parameters for the character's identity and the voice which is linked to 'her'. As Judith Butler notes: 'naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm'.¹⁵ (I will continue to refer to the character as 'Judith Hearne', for while the form carries its own shades of sympathy and formality, it achieves some degree of balance. It is absent in the novel with the exception of its appearance in the title.)

If naming seems a mundane strategy for authenticating a character's voice as feminine, it is supported by a strategy even more banal. Moore's implication that Judith Hearne's voice is authentic is greatly supported by the assertion in the novel that there is such a thing as a woman's voice. Judith Hearne suggests that 'when you were a single girl, you had to find interesting things to talk about'(13).¹⁶ As I will go on to show, she describes what constitutes an ideal feminine voice and then works assiduously to meet the pattern she has outlined. As the novel proceeds, women's language becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When Judith Hearne, however ineptly, uses the features she has identified as feminine, her woman's voice seems to be self-generated, constructed and deployed in her own interests from a sub-verbal level. Meanwhile, Brian Moore's responsibility for structuring her voice is effectively dissimulated.

This is not to suggest that previous critics who argue for the authenticity of Judith Hearne's voice are the victims of an elaborate 'emperor's new clothes' prank, at least not entirely. A descriptive analysis of Judith Hearne's voice anticipates many of the findings of descriptive linguistic accounts of women's language. The self-fulfilling prophecies that Judith Hearne makes about women's language meet the criteria of linguistic studies of women's language carried out after the novel's publication and so the question arises as to whether Moore's novel has indeed produced a woman's voice which accurately replicates an authentic original. However, while Judith Hearne suggests that women's voices are distinct from men's voices, her interaction with other women in the novel serves to complicate the connection she makes between her language and her womanhood. Other women, like Judith Hearne's landlady, Mrs Henry Rice, make much more free with the feminine conventions which Judith Hearne isolates than the heroine does herself. The features that she identifies emerge, not as the signs of an essential gendered linguistic core, but as the contingent effects of women's marginalisation within patriarchal power relations.

Many of the things that Judith Hearne talks about at verbal and sub-verbal levels are feminine insofar as they are identifiable with women's experience in a society where women are often

¹⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.8.

¹⁶ Brian Moore, *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (London: Paladin, 1988 (First published as *Judith Hearne* (London: André Deutsch, 1955)). All further references will refer to the Paladin edition unless specified.

relegated to the sphere of the home (Mrs Henry Rice's business is based on the commodification of domestic work and even the bad Mrs Brady makes her money by providing services for men within the confines of her 'bad house'(14)). Judith Hearne's focus on clothes, and domestic items such as shoes, clocks and wardrobes, for instance, links her to the interests and spaces stereotypically associated with women.

One of the grammatical patterns associated with Judith Hearne's voice is particularly associated with these interests. In her descriptions of objects, she characteristically employs two simple adjectives before the noun itself. Too simple a structure to be associated on a large scale with a conventionally serious narrator, it appears eighty-six times in the first two chapters and almost a fifth of its occurrences (sixteen usages) are clustered on the first two pages of the second chapter. Of the forty-six phrases which deal with inanimate objects, thirteen refer to clothes and jewellery. The detailed observation involved in references to 'long pointed shoes'(10), 'a light blue dress'(25) and 'a bright flashy tie'(33) are credible on an individual level for a character who spends more than a paragraph considering 'what to wear'(24) before going down to breakfast. Eight of these noun phrases consider items of furniture from a 'white marble mantelpiece'(21) to the 'solid mahogany sideboard'(24) in the dining room while eleven further phrases acknowledge decorative details. Because references to these stereotypically-feminine concerns are phrased in a way particularly associated with the character herself, Moore suggests that her voice is at once distinctively her own and distinctively feminine. Moore balances Judith Hearne's feminine preoccupations with more idiosyncratic observations so that her woman's voice is not over-determined as such. For example, several chapters before her alcoholism is confirmed, Judith Hearne notes carefully that the sideboard carries 'empty whiskey decanters'(24).

Before her encounter with Mrs Henry Rice, very early on in the novel, Judith Hearne gives weight to the sense that her voice is feminine when she suggests that there is a formulaic set of concerns which dominate women's language. She implies that socially-acceptable women's conversation is defined by the discussion of topics which are available to those women, powerful in relation to herself, who participate in the production and maintenance of patriarchal society through their roles as wives and mothers. One of the rewards of their participation seems to be the provision of subject matter which will structure their contribution to non-subversive conversations and provide them with the means to consolidate their power. Judith Hearne wants to be a wife, because, without a husband and children, she lacks the conversational as well as economic resources, funded by participation in the patriarchal family, which would allow her to increase her own prestige.

Her objective in conversation is to impress her married acquaintances as an interesting, cultured and conservative 'lady' in order that she might win their approval and support. In her attempt to construct an ideal feminine voice, Judith Hearne appears to be the agent of her voice because she deploys it so self-consciously to maximise her status. However, in the passage which I quote at length below, Judith Hearne's voice is clearly constrained by the conventional limits of acceptable women's conversation. Topics related to her single life are simply 'not heard' and she has to manipulate the discourses that are available to her as a single woman to simulate the range of emotions and interests which are acceptable for married women:

It was important to have things to tell which interested your friends. And Miss Hearne had always been able to find interesting happenings where other people would find only dullness. It was, she often felt, a gift which was one of the great rewards of a solitary life. And a necessary gift. Because, when you were a single girl, you had to find interesting things to talk about. Other women always had their children and shopping and running a house to chat about. Besides which, their husbands often told them interesting stories. But a single girl was in a different position. People simply didn't want to hear how she managed things like accommodation and budgets. She had to find other subjects and other subjects were mostly other people. So people she knew, people she had heard of, people she saw in the street, people she had read about, they all had to be collected and gone through like a basket of sewing so that the most interesting bits about them could be picked out and fitted together to make conversation. And that was why even a queer fellow like this Bernard Rice was a blessing in his own way. He was so funny with his 'Yes, Mama,' and 'No, Mama,' and his long blond baby hair. He'd make a tale for the O'Neills at Sunday tea.(13)

Judith Hearne accumulates the elements of her conversation carefully. She chooses topics on a continuum from personal detail to those furthest from the ideal she has outlined for women's conversation in order to construct a mimic performance which will win the approval of her married friends. The image of the sewing basket signals Judith Hearne as the impetus for these observations — she is a part-time embroidery teacher — but sewing is also a stereotypically-feminine occupation and the comparison between sewing and conversation suggests that the assiduous construction of a social voice is characteristic of women. The image also promotes the idea that conversation is a species of work which is performed by women in the expectation that conformity to conventional roles will bring them financial security.¹⁷

In Judith Hearne's first encounter with her landlady after her arrival at the boarding-house, she endeavours to produce socially-viable talk in order to make a good impression and to secure her

¹⁷ Judith Hearne's association with embroidery and with song as her major means of securing independence and self-expression may have other significances. These forms of expression are often associated with voices that cannot be heard in dominant discourses; cf the Greek myth of Philomela.

place in the house. Judith Hearne validates subjects that are acceptable for women on a sliding scale and in this first conversation with Mrs Henry Rice she works to keep the discussion on the upper reaches of this scale. However, the conversation tests the limits of acceptable, socially-ratified feminine talk even as it confirms them. Judith Hearne explicitly praises the Church as a good source of acceptable conversation. As she tells Mrs Henry Rice ““Goodness knows, religion is a comfort, even in conversation. If we hadn’t the priests to talk about, where would we be half the time?””(14).

The assertion performatively instates the limits of acceptable conversation for women as it polices Mrs Henry Rice’s gossipy reference to the parish priest as ““a caution””(14). Mrs Henry Rice temporarily takes note — ““He’s very outspoken, I mean,” Mrs Henry Rice corrected herself”(14) — but her anecdote about the priest and the prostitute still sails fairly close to unacceptable conversation before its resolution. Judith Hearne is so shocked by the reference to Mrs Brady’s ““bad house””(14) that she affects not to have heard the term properly before noting privately, ‘Well, that sort of place shouldn’t be mentioned, let alone mentioned in connection with the Church’(15).

It is not that Judith Hearne is unaware of prostitution or the existence of brothels. Comically, she thinks it is acceptable ‘to read about them in books, wicked houses’(15). However, the combined reference to a priest and a prostitute in polite conversation represents a double taboo for the Catholic woman who ideally neither blasphemes nor discusses sex. Judith Hearne’s reaction constructs these subjects as the constitutive outside of acceptable women’s conversation: she uses them to help reinscribe the validity of the conventions they threaten. She implies that it is possible to mention brothels and blasphemy as Mrs Henry Rice does, but only to mention them in ways that confirm their impossibility within society and reiterate the need to be rid of them.

Judith Hearne’s performance of femininity is much more secure when she negotiates easier conversational terrain. While the discussion remains within the parameters of conventional conversation, she can rely on what McGahern refers to, rather appropriately in this instance, as ‘those small blessed ordinary handrails of speech’.¹⁸ When Mrs Henry Rice initiates a formulaic conversation about the behaviour of housemaids, the discussion allows Judith Hearne to establish her conservative social credentials:

Miss Hearne, completely at home with this particular conversation, having heard it in all its combinations from her dear aunt and from her friends, said that if you got a good one it was all right, but sometimes you had a lot of trouble with them.
‘You have to be after them all the time,’ Mrs Henry Rice said, moving into the familiar groove of such talk.(17)

¹⁸ John McGahern, *The Pornographer* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1979; 1990), p.52.

Unlike Judith Hearne, the men in the novel show little regard for the careful deployment of language. Bernard Rice shocks Judith Hearne by modifying the acceptable version of the 'priest and prostitute' story with the prostitute's retort, a retort that even Mrs Henry Rice "would not lower herself to repeat"(16): 'She said to him: "Father, where do you think the money came from that Mary Magdalene used to anoint the feet of Our Blessed Lord? It didn't come from selling apples," she said'(16). James Madden also transgresses, when, only 'vaguely conscious of indelicacy'(28), he tells Judith Hearne that because of the heat in New York, "You'd have to change your shirt twice in one morning"(28). His use of non-prestigious linguistic forms shocks Judith Hearne when he dismisses New York women with the statement that "Me, I wouldn't have nothing to do with them"(30). Judith Hearne steers him towards a more acceptable topic through the use of a question which allows her to maintain her performance of modest passivity at the same time as it diverts the problems that would arise in her performance of femininity if she were to attempt a direct response:

'Every man's a sucker for a good shape. I know. In my business, you see some funny things.'

Dangerous waters. Discussing women's figures, well, who but an American would have the vulgarity? Change the subject. 'And what is your business Mr Madden?'(31)

Where the novel begins to unravel the association that Judith Hearne makes between gender and language is in the way that Mrs Henry Rice blurs the distinctions between men's and women's language. Judith Hearne's strategies for speech management are more conservative than those of the men around her, but she is also considerably less 'free' in her speech than is Mrs Henry Rice. In this sense, women's voices in the novel dispute the type of description of gendered voice, provided here by Jennifer Coates and indebted to the innovative work of Robin Lakoff, which has now achieved almost traditional status.¹⁹ Coates predicts a collaborative model for conversation between women and claims that:

Women tend to see conversation as an opportunity to discuss problems, share experience and offer reassurance and support. In this respect, all-female conversations are therapeutic.²⁰

The conversation between Judith Hearne and Mrs Henry Rice bears little relation to this scenario and it demonstrates that conversations between women are not solely structured by gender. The women are participating in an economic exchange which Mrs Henry Rice controls as landlady and as a result their conversation is structured hierarchically. Judith Hearne submits to Mrs Henry

¹⁹ See Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 1986; 1993) and Robin Tolmach Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place* (New York, London: Harper and Row, 1975).

²⁰ Coates, p.190.

Rice as the dominant speaker and Mrs Henry Rice makes short work of the strategies usually linked with women's voices. She employs verbal aggressiveness, controls the sudden changes in conversational topic and interrupts other speakers — all features of men's speech in Coates's model in which women, unlike Mrs Henry Rice, 'value highly the role of listening'.²¹ Mrs Henry Rice indicates her dominance in the boarding-house when she interrupts James Madden and uses commands to end the conversation he is having with Judith Hearne about America. Her linguistic strategies counterpoint those of the deliberately-feminine Judith Hearne who is the first speaker here:

'O, it must be an exciting place to live.'

He smiled: 'Times Square. Watch the world go by. The things I've seen in fifteen years on Broadway. It's an education. Why I couldn't even begin to ...'

'Well don't begin then,' Mrs Henry Rice said. She stood at the opened door, monumental, stern.(31)

Rather than assiduously researching a conservative conversation topic, Mrs Henry Rice tells her dubious anecdote about the local priest, a former prostitute and a communion rail(14-17). She interrupts turn-taking patterns by answering questions on behalf of her adult son("O Bernie's a poet. And always studying. He's at the university." "I am not at the university, Mama," the fat man said, "I haven't been at Queen's for five years")(12)). And like Mrs Archer in Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*(1920), she is 'fond of coining her social philosophy into axioms'.²² Judith Hearne's pitiful childhood is dismissed as a cause for concern because "we all have to run from pillar to post"(11). By contrast, the compromising revelation that Bernard Rice failed to finish his degree, once it has escaped, is described in language which implies that it represents a social ideal:

I think the boys work too hard up there at Queen's. I always say it's better to take your time. A young fellow like Bernie has lots of time, no need to rush through life. Take your time and you'll live longer.(12)

When these features of Mrs Henry Rice's voice are taken into account, Judith Hearne's feminine voice demonstrates that those linguistic features which are associated with women can be accounted for by the fact that, as part of a marginalised group within patriarchal society, many women are likely to use speech which indicates their disadvantageous relationship to power. Mrs Henry Rice's economic superiority over Judith Hearne can in turn be partly explained by the fact that she was bequeathed her social position, her house and her furniture by her "late husband"(11) and her "late husband's father"(24). Her connections with power are stressed by her integration of her husband's name 'Henry' into her title, a move which lends patriarchal force to her formidable presence. However, Mrs Henry Rice's speech is not entirely free of the social strictures which

²¹ Coates, p.192.

²² Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* [1920] (London: Virago, 1982), p.87.

regulate Judith Hearne's voice. She has to maintain a performance of femininity at some level in order to win prestige. Like Judith Hearne, she recognises 'the familiar groove'(17) of the conversation about housemaids and she uses conversational strategies to suggest that she is a polite and friendly woman even if her performance of the social ideal is on the minimalist side: "“I see” said Mrs Henry Rice who did not see [...] “Well that’s interesting,” Mrs Henry Rice said, uninterested””(11-12).

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, those features of language which are often read as authentically gendered are shown to be much more contingent on local power relations than Coates suggests. James Madden is more powerful than Judith Hearne but at the same time he is also subject to his sister and landlady, Mrs Henry Rice, who in turn defers to her son, Bernie. Judith Hearne is much more conservative in her choice of topics than any of these other characters and if this renders her an ultra-feminine figure in terms of traditional models of gendered language, it more convincingly and tellingly demonstrates that she is the most powerless character in her circle of acquaintances.

When she talks with James Madden, Judith Hearne talks less than he does so that she becomes linked with the stereotype of the quiet or passive woman. She helps 'draw men out' by talking on neutral topics rather than foregrounding her own concerns. However, the link between these strategies and her powerlessness, rather than femininity, is made explicit by the internal monologue which shows Judith Hearne deploying and positioning her apparently-powerless speech acts to win approval and status from a man who, himself, lacks authority. She takes up the role of facilitator in the hope that James Madden will learn to associate her presence with his own access to power. The gendered voice of Judith Hearne emerges as a performance which involves her in manipulating the social conventions of gendered language to gain status:

He wants to talk, she thought, he's lonely. And she returned his look. Then she helped him, made it easy for him to tell what he wanted to tell: America 'O, Belfast's not like New York, I suppose. You must get lots of snow and sunshine there.'(28)

The extent to which Judith Hearne's conversational performance is constructed by Judith Hearne 'herself' is emphasised when she plans to find out more about America in order that she *may* play this auxiliary role more efficiently the next time they meet: 'I could go down to the Carnegie Library and read up on it. Especially New York. And then tomorrow at breakfast, I'd have questions to ask'(33). She even starts to adapt her speech to include Americanisms connected with, and possibly congenial to, Madden. She hopes she will meet him in the hall so that 'we might walk downtown together'(33) and when she thinks of the 'temptation to have a regular restaurant

lunch'(34) during the short interval between her hope of meeting him and her arrival at the library, 'regular' also functions as an Americanism.

Judith Hearne moves to increase her social status through the deployment of other conservative linguistic strategies often associated with women's language. Again these features are contextualised in ways that link them to contingent patriarchal power relations. When Judith Hearne uses social registers connected with prestigious social groups to imply her own refinement, she uses strategies that, in early studies, were associated with women's language but which have now been linked more closely to the dynamics of power in conversational interaction. *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* predates Peter Trudgill's work on the relationship between gender and the use of prestige forms by seventeen years(1972).²³ Trudgill argues that women are much more likely than men to use language which is socially validated as conservative or sophisticated. Vera Regan, in her recent survey of the treatment of gender in sociolinguistics, agrees that 'it does seem that in [a] selection of studies on usage by males and females, women use the forms which are considered prestigious by society in general'.²⁴ However, Moore's novel makes explicit the link between Judith Hearne's use of prestigious sociolects and her desire to win status. Regan points out that if women do use more conservative forms of language it is often because 'they may be particularly aware of the symbolic power of language, especially because real power is frequently denied them'.²⁵

Judith Hearne uses French idiomatic language as a prestigelect in an effort to increase her standing with her *interlocutors*. In response to the enquiry of Mrs Henry Rice, her new landlady, as to whether she wants sugar and cream in her tea she replies: "Two lumps, please. And just a *souçon* of cream"(10). The French lexical item is chosen over a Hiberno-English equivalent such as 'a wee drop of cream' and its place in only her third utterance in the encounter with her landlady may be read as an attempt to impress Mrs Henry Rice with the use of a prestigious form.

Idiomatic French phrases are in keeping with the provisions of Judith Hearne's education at the Sacred Heart convent in Armagh but Judith Hearne also employs them in order to benefit from association with a country she associates with style and romance: she considers Paris as a honeymoon destination for Mr and Mrs James Madden and uses French words to associate herself with style and sophistication. The special status she accords to French words and, perhaps, her attempts at a French accent are emphasised by the italicisation of foreign vocabulary. She decides to

²³ Peter Trudgill, 'Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in Urban British English', *Language in Society*, 1 (1972). Cited in Vera Regan, 'Variation and Gender', *TEANGA: The Irish Yearbook of Applied Linguistics*, 12 (1992), 90-97, (p.91-92).

²⁴ Regan, p.93.

²⁵ Regan, p.96.

wear ‘A touch of crimson, my special *cachet*’(24). Her reference to blusher as ‘rouge’ is not italicised — the usage is too conventional — but the general association she makes between the French language and social value is confirmed when she registers her fear that she has violated etiquette by asking James Madden too many questions by thinking about ‘her *gaffe*’(28).

Her Catholicism, established through her devotion to the Sacred Heart(7 and elsewhere) and through her discussion with Mrs Henry Rice(14-17), provides one of the most distinct social registers, or sociolects, in her repertoire. Thirty-six phrases from this register can be identified in the first two chapters of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*. The title itself puns on the religious connotation of ‘the passion’ as suffering but in other areas of the text coloured by the voice of Judith Hearne religious phrases operate in two main ways. Sometimes they retain the meaning they carry within Catholic vocabulary. The discussion between Judith Hearne and Mrs Henry Rice on the subject of ‘the priests’(14) and ‘blasphemy’(17) is the most obvious source for these clustered references. Often phrases of this type are taken from an idiomatic register related to Catholicism. For example, when Judith Hearne dismisses Mrs Brady’s victory over the priest by declaring that ‘The devil can quote Scripture to suit his purpose’(16), the familiarity of the cliché gives her observation the force of popular opinion. She follows her allusions to the dead with the conventional Hiberno-English modifier, “‘God rest her soul’”(9; also a reduced ref. at 11).

In their second form, religious phrases are bleached of their religious significance, which suggests that Judith Hearne has internalised the discourse of Irish Catholicism to the extent that it shapes her responses to all areas of her experience. Lacking enough money to eat properly, Judith Hearne figures her hunger as an exercise in religious devotion, which echoes the forty days that Christ fasted in the desert. The religious metaphor is deeply submerged in Judith Hearne’s self-address:

Why had she bothered to come out at all? The library and looking up America was only nonsense, when all was said and done. Besides going out only made you peckish and it was such a *temptation* to have a regular restaurant lunch. Well, you won’t. You’ll *fast*, that’s what you’ll do.(34; my italics)

Judith Hearne’s idiolect is not entirely determined by the requirements of her social role as an ‘Irish Catholic woman’. In fact, she emerges as a skilled mimic of a range of social discourses which are superfluous to that performance. For example, she mimics a ’50’s society columnist in her fantasy about her marriage to James Madden:

Mr and Mrs James Madden, of New York, sailed from Southampton yesterday in the *Queen Mary*. Mr Madden is a prominent New York hotelier and his bride is the former Judith Hearne, only daughter of the late Mr and Mrs Charles B. Hearne, of Ballymena.(33)²⁶

However, Judith Hearne's proficiency at mimicry is constrained by her desire to advance her already-limited status in her community. Her need to win the praise and financial support of a husband structures the limits of the 'feminine' identity she performs. Judith Hearne's agency over the production of her identity is shown to be limited because she can only win status by repeating and redeploying the performance of genteel femininity which disadvantages her.

I am Judith Hearne: the construction of interiority

Judith Hearne's unattributed voice and that of the narrator are kept distinct from each other through the use of ego-references outside Joyce's 'perverted commas', which imply that Judith Hearne has agency over certain statements. The pronoun 'I' occurs twenty-five times outside quotation marks in the first two chapters and it is supplemented by usages of 'me, myself, my' and 'we' which bring the number of pronominal references outside quotation marks to fifty. Each of these references, though they appear outside graphological speech boundaries, is traceable to Judith Hearne. For instance, a reference to her piano lessons is implicit in the assertion that 'it wasn't because I charged too much'(35).

Judith Hearne's voice is *credited* with a comprehensive idiolectal register which supports the reader's decision to attribute utterances clustered around these references 'back' to Judith Hearne. Her voice is personalised through a sophisticated range of lexical and grammatical markers. Moore does not associate Judith Hearne with a restrictive, self-stereotyping set of idiolectal characteristics as McGahern does with the lover of the protagonist in *The Pornographer*. This woman, discussed at length in Chapter Two, drives the pornographer to distraction because of her failure to vary her language: 'if she said O boy once more I wasn't sure I'd be able to hold myself in check'.²⁷ In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, whenever certain features are repeated immoderately, they appear to reflect Judith Hearne's preoccupations rather than the failings of the author. For example, the idiolectal phrases 'dear aunt' and 'poor Edie' denote respectively Judith Hearne's dependence on the

²⁶ Judith Hearne usually stresses her roots in Belfast and Armagh rather than Ballymena and this might well represent an attempt to distract attention from a non-prestigious Ballymena accent. Thanks to Carol Redahan for this suggestion.

²⁷ McGahern, *The Pornographer*, p.101.

outdated standards of her mother figure and her increasing identification with the friend whose fate prophesies her own.

The features which prompt the reader to recognise Judith Hearne's voice range from prevalent morphemes — units of meaning below the level of the word — to preferred grammatical structures which differ from those employed by the narrator. The pattern established in the novel is that readers are familiarised with Judith Hearne's idiolect through short, clustered repetitions of features which are distributed again in random clusters over the following chapters. The sheer number of these features creates the suggestion of a coherent voice without saturating the narrative with an unrealistically-limited idiolect.

The morpheme 'thing' is one of the features which, precisely because of its mundanity, creates the illusion of unity in Judith Hearne's speech acts without drawing attention to the constructedness of her idiolect. It occurs twenty-seven times either as a free morpheme (a word in itself) or as a bound suffix (part of another word) and the cluster technique operates so that fifteen instances occur on the same page as at least two of the other usages. On page nineteen, 'after unpacking her things' (19) Judith Hearne recalls that although she gave the cab driver only a small gratuity 'he hadn't said anything and that was the main thing' (19). The lack of specificity in Judith Hearne's use of this morpheme marks it as non-literary. Unlike the novel's narrator, she makes no attempt to vary her words elegantly nor to describe events as accurately as possible.

One of the key ways in which Judith Hearne is constructed as the agent of her voice is through the suggestion that she is capable of generating vocabulary to support the feelings she wants to articulate. These generative tendencies support the reader's construction of Judith Hearne as the agent for the novel's speech acts because they imply that her speech is sourced by a precursive interior voice which produces coherent patterns of sub-verbal thought. Judith Hearne appears to coordinate for herself the voice which represents her to other characters. The coherence of her verbal and sub-verbal speech acts, and their implied interiority endorse Judith Hearne as a coherent humanist speaking subject. Her selfhood is doubly confirmed because the reader has access not only to her verbalised comments but also to the thought processes through which she 'talks to herself'.

Judith Hearne's voice is being foregrounded as, in part, an interior monologue produced by and in the service of the self. The 'made up' words she uses appear only at a sub-verbal level so it appears that Judith Hearne is coining these words only for her own satisfaction. For example, the appearance of eighteen compound forms attributable to Judith Hearne including words such as 'horridlooking' and 'slyboots' (18) implies that Judith Hearne makes flexible use of the linguistic resources available to her in order to generate a subjective idiolect. These compounds are not original

Her ten uses of ‘good’ and six of ‘nice’ imply that Judith Hearne, like Lewis Carroll’s Alice, is trying to reconstitute the exterior world in a form which makes it less threatening to her coherent personal worldview. Some of Judith Hearne’s more inventive idiolectal features attempt to make people literally more palatable for the embodied ‘girl’. One of the mechanisms Judith Hearne uses to regulate the exterior world is to compare people she dislikes to foodstuffs — Bernard Rice has a face ‘the colour of cottage cheese’(10) and ‘his cheeks wobbled like white pudding’(16) — or to animals. Bernard is, in addition to the above, ‘fat as a pig’(9) while Miss Friel, one of her fellow boarders, has hair ‘like a fox terrier’(25). Although neither of these comparisons is original they are both idiosyncratic and they help to construct the illusion of Judith Hearne as an individual with a coherent personal perspective. She appears to be structuring experience according to symbolic patterns which are available in popular discourse, but which she has freely chosen for herself.

A similar pattern emerges in Judith Hearne’s representation of the inanimate objects she encounters. She *credited* these objects with personalities, a process which contrasts with her reduction of animate beings. Again this pattern seems idiosyncratic but its coherence with other idiolectal practices suggests that it is part of Judith Hearne’s agentic attempt to regulate the exterior world to a patterned and manageable form. Her tendency to objectify people and personify objects helps the reader to construct Judith Hearne as a coherent subject. The reader can attribute the character’s loneliness to her inability to engage with others.

Judith Hearne endows objects with the facial features she refigures in her acquaintances. Three items are given expressive eyes. First and least markedly, Judith Hearne feels watched by ‘the photograph eyes [of her aunt] stern and questioning’(7). Later, she personifies the ‘little buttons’ on her shoes ‘winking up at her like wise little friendly eyes. Little shoe eyes, always there’(10) and the front of her wardrobe is also given ‘mournful wooden eyes’(21). Clocks are also animated. The potentially-personifying reference to ‘the gilded face of her little travelling clock’(21) is realised in the attribution of speech to all time-pieces. ‘The clock on the wall said three’(34) and ‘the clock in Commarket said four’(36) while an Ulster Scots variant of the verb ‘to chatter’ is used when she notes that ‘the little clock chattering through the seconds said eight fifteen’(23). Judith Hearne’s tendency to identify clocks as companionable signs of stability echoes the sentiments of Padraic Colum’s poem, ‘An Old Woman of the Roads’, which every Irish child of Moore’s generation had to learn at school. The old woman’s desire ‘to have a clock with weights and chains | And pendulum swinging up and down’ reflects Judith Hearne’s desire to live in a permanent home of her own. Judith

Hearne's use of her own clock to make her lodgings more familiar echoes the old woman's delight in the 'ticking clock'.²⁹

While these animating and reductive comparisons suggest that Judith Hearne articulates her feelings coherently from a stable though immature perspective, there is another way in which the objects she discusses construct an interiority/exteriority model for Judith Hearne's voice. Judith Hearne feels closer to objects than to people so it is reasonable that she should address her problems to these objects which serve as her surrogate companions. The coherence of her sub-verbal thought is justified by the fact that it is projected out towards imagined confidants. For example, she addresses her dissatisfaction with the state of the street she is living in to her Aunt D'Arcy's photograph: 'All changed, she told it, all changed since your day. And I'm the one who has to put up with it'(8). In this particular example, the disjunction between the narrator and Judith Hearne is given a particular frisson by the Yeatsian turn of phrase which might be attributed as easily to coincidence or education on Judith Hearne's part as to irony or heavyhandedness on Moore's. More generally, this type of address provides evidence of an interiority from which Judith Hearne's voice is generated and suggests that those verbalised utterances she produces are sourced from a voice which is able to be more broad-ranging and less conventional at a level prior to or below speech.

The fact that Judith Hearne's interior voice is directed 'out' towards animated objects helps to justify the coherence of the character's sub-verbal language. Judith Hearne's projection of thought onto inanimate surfaces allows the reader to overhear her dialogue of self and soul. But this coherence does not mean that the reader overhears a monologue. Like the voices of characters in other novels by Brian Moore and in the novels of his modernist predecessors, Joyce and Woolf, Judith Hearne's voice, below the level of verbalisation, is represented as a set of competing voices. After she meets James Madden, it is her mirror image which interrupts her fantasies and expresses objections to the American:

The honeymoon? Niagara Falls, isn't that the place the Americans go? Or perhaps Paris, before we sail.

But the mirror face grew stern and cross. You hardly know him, it said. And he's common, really he is with that ring and that bright flashy tie. O, no he's not, she said. Don't be provincial. Americans dress differently, that's all.(33)

For Michael J. Toolan, the mirror voice here would operate as a superego, urging Judith Hearne to social conformity. He observes that for Moore, 'a recurrent device [is] the investing of a material object with the power to reflect and articulate at least part of the psychic condition of the central character. From one viewpoint, this seems what Marxist critics would call a fetishist

²⁹ Pádraic Colum, 'An Old Woman of the Roads', in *Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1932), p.94.

externalization of personal impulses'.³⁰ I would agree with Toolan insofar as he suggests that 'the text's syntax aptly treats the photograph of the dead aunt as not mere object, but animate agent'. On the whole though, the psychoanalytic approach he adopts is unhelpful because it reifies Judith Hearne as a subject. Toolan aligns Judith Hearne to real psychoanalytic cases. He refers to her 'scarred and damaged conscience' and implies that the splitting of her voice requires a cure. For him, the debates she carries on with objects and re-imagined acquaintances are 'surely a desperate striving to recall all the forgotten crucial details, characteristic of a patient on a psychoanalyst's couch; [her characterisation] thus mirrors a fundamental psychoanalytic procedure'.³¹

Toolan reads Judith Hearne's debates with inanimate objects as confirmation of her status as an agent in the social matrix; they suggest to him that Judith Hearne is a valid if damaged subject. The dialogue between Judith Hearne and the mirror voice serves to expose the conflict between what Judith Hearne 'wants' as an agent, and what is feasible and permissible for her and her existence as a subject with an interior life, an ego and a superego, that source her voice is confirmed. I would argue instead that it is through the mirror debates that Judith Hearne is constructed as a valid speaking subject. If Judith Hearne speaks to herself, the novel suggests, there exists a self for her to talk to, a self which sources her voice. The next section of the thesis will question how Judith Hearne's perspectival voice, apparently *motivated by* a powerless 'self', comes to dominate the narrative. I will ask what interests are served by the careful sourcing of this central voice to a powerless figure deliberately distanced from the male narrator.

Judith Hearne's perspective: its centrality in the early chapters

In the opening pages of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, as I noted above, the formal distance between the protagonist and her apparently unsympathetic narrator is emphasised through a number of naming strategies. Of the thirty-five uses of the attributive word 'said' in relation to Judith Hearne in the first chapter, fifteen of these are attributed directly to 'Miss Hearne'. All of these instances of 'Miss Hearne' appear in the first ten pages. Once the formality of the narrator's relationship with Judith Hearne has been established, the narrator departs from the 'title and last name' address form *only* one of the thirteen instances of the verb in the second chapter is indexed to 'Miss Hearne'(27)) but does not adopt a less formal or preferred alternative. There is instead an

³⁰ Michael J. Toolan, 'Psyche and Belief: Brian Moore's Contending Angels', *Éire-Ireland*, 15:3 (1980), 97-111, (p.100).

³¹ Toolan, 'Psyche and Belief', p.99.

increasing tendency not to attribute her speech directly. The six instances of zero attribution in the first chapter are outstripped by eighteen in the second.

The loss of direct attribution does not mean that Judith Hearne's voice and that of the narrator are becoming less distinct from each other. Substantial amounts of speech belonging to Judith Hearne continue to appear within inverted commas and are signalled as belonging to her through a number of conventional techniques in addition to the idiolectal features noted above. We are easily able to identify Judith Hearne's voice through, for example, our anticipation of her response to direct questions. We know that Judith Hearne is speaking when she responds to Mrs Henry Rice's offer of another cup of tea:

She closed the door and turned back to Miss Hearne.

‘Another cup of tea before you go?’

‘O, no, really, it's been lovely. Just perfect, thank you very much.’(17)

Judith Hearne's speech also involves simple turntaking which makes her voice easy to identify. When James Madden answers one of her questions, she follows with the rejoinder, “So you prefer New York then?”(29). We can deduce that Judith Hearne is responsible for any utterance which is linked to an observation or physical sensation we are told is hers. So the remark “I'll just throw off this cardigan”(12) is indexed to the narrator's observation that Bernie's stare has brought ‘the hot blood to her face’(12). Judith Hearne's opinions are signalled in other conventional ways, when, for example, they are foregrounded in free indirect speech: ‘The room was not in the best of taste, Miss Hearne saw at once’(9).

Judith Hearne's centrality in the narrative is made clearest in the demarcation of space entirely given over to her voice. The idiolectal features associated with her voice appear both inside and outside graphological speech boundaries but the narrator provides one further strategy to demarcate and prioritise Judith Hearne's voice in the novel. The narrator cedes to Judith Hearne's voice spatial autonomy over clearly visible areas of the text and these autonomous zones encourage the reader to experience the narrative through the perspective of Judith Hearne rather than that of the narrator. Where Judith Hearne's voice or internal voices are designated responsible for one sentence, then the remainder of that paragraph may be consequentially attributed to her.

This consequential attribution is indicated in three ways. In the first and most conventional form, items which follow previous speech acts attributed to Judith Hearne by pronouns or the ‘title and last name’ form may be safely attributed to her. ‘That fatty must be thirty, if he's a day, Miss Hearne told herself’(13) promotes Judith Hearne's voice by foregrounding it in the structure of the sentence. It indicates that the reader has access to her internal speech acts and it goes on to support the reader's sense that Judith Hearne is responsible for the unattributed observations in the remainder

of the paragraph: 'Something about him, Not a toper, but something. O, the cross some mothers have to bear'(13). The inclusion of the suffix 'thing' and the religious allusion to the cross support attribution to Judith Hearne, while her rejection of her own suggestion that he is an alcoholic almost imperceptibly begins to lay the groundwork for the revelation of her own alcoholism.

Consequential attribution may also be signalled by the idiolectal tendency to modify utterances with additional sentences, clauses or phrases. This tendency, exhibited in Judith Hearne's verbalised speech acts, brings her voice closer to the model of speech that David Crystal identifies as unreliant on the sentence form, but it also provides a pattern which helps the reader attribute material to Judith Hearne outside inverted commas after attributed speech or thoughts. When she is talking to Mrs Henry Rice, Judith Hearne often clarifies her statements:

'My aunt came from a very old Belfast family,' she said. 'They've nearly all died out now, but they have a very interesting history, my aunt's people. For instance, they're all buried out in Nun's Bush. That's one of the oldest cemeteries in the country. Full up now. It's closed, you know.(12)

Understandably, this is the conversational gambit that provokes Mrs Rice's unconvinced attempt to appear interested. However, it helps us to recognise, outside inverted commas elsewhere, that subsequent sentences or sentence fragments 'belong' to Judith Hearne. Sentences which begin with conjunctions also help language attributable to Judith Hearne to cohere without the use of direct attribution and so apparently without narratorial intervention. For example, the use of 'I' in the following lines is clearly attributable to Judith Hearne and the ensuing remarks which modify the original statement employ idiolectal vocabulary which the reader already associates with the character. The move away from complete grammatical sentences as the basic unit around which the lines are structured increases the sense that these remarks resemble informal and unmediated speech:

I wouldn't put it past him to creep in here some day when I'm out. Still, his mother is certainly friendly if a little soft where her darling boy is concerned. And the fire and the tea were nice and warming.(18)

The most radical device for attributing language entirely to Judith Hearne lies in the attribution of entire paragraphs to an indicated speaker. Even when a character departs from 'their own voice' to carry out an impersonation for instance, a new paragraph is provided. When Bernard Rice changes his voice 'mimicking the tones of the bad Mrs Brady'(16), the impersonation is displaced into a new paragraph so that what "she said to him" is included in a new graphological unit. Similarly, when Judith Hearne addresses James Madden involuntarily — implying that all other speech acts associated with Judith Hearne are voluntary — the splitting of her speaking voice is signalled graphologically with a colon and a new paragraph:

She turned to him, still smiling and a mechanical, silly voice leaped out of her mouth, shocking her with the forward thing it said:

'O you must tell me more about America, Mr Madden. I'd love to go there.'

'Well,' he said. 'I could talk all day and never finish. What did you have in mind?'

In mind. Something, something had to be said.

'Well, is it true that the men over there put their wives on a pedestal, so to speak?'

(30)

Judith Hearne's mind, the product of an elaborate fiction, temporarily goes blank.

Judith Hearne's reference to Bernard Rice as 'the cross some mothers have to bear'(13) also cites the presence of her subconscious. Here, a new paragraph helps signal the sudden change of subject while the connection between the prompt and the memory illustrates that the subsequent paragraph also belongs to Judith Hearne. The cliché 'reminds' her of the oleograph upstairs: 'And the cross brought back the Sacred Heart'(13). Conjunctions and adverbs that are placed as the first word in new paragraphs provide another means of identifying that the utterance in the previous paragraph is continued. Secondary paragraphs may also be introduced with a sentence which establishes Judith Hearne as the cinematic focus of the reader's attention. The narrator describes her actions, informing us, for example, that 'she came out near the docks and turned hastily back towards the centre of the city'(36). Subsequent observations, especially when they are coloured by Judith Hearne's idiolectal markers, can only be attributed to the object of the reader's gaze. The idiosyncratic assertion that the docks are unsafe because of 'all those rough pubs and the Salvation Army'(36) also indicates Judith Hearne's responsibility for subsequent information. As the narrative continues, the simple foregrounding of Judith Hearne's opinions is outflanked by strategies which allow, not only her perspectival voice, but also her gaze to dominate the narrative.

Judith Hearne's gaze is personal, linked to a body which limits the movements of her eyes as well as the compass of the narrative gaze governed by her narrative 'I'. As the level of attribution decreases and the amount of territory allocated to Judith Hearne in the text increases, this perspective is often the only one offered and therefore becomes the dominant, though relatively powerless, narrative point-of-view. Sometimes, Judith Hearne's gaze is indistinguishable from that of the narrator. For example, when Judith Hearne arrives in the dining room for breakfast the reader is informed that the room is furnished with objects bought by the landlady's 'late husband's father'(24), a piece of information to which Judith Hearne has no reasonable access, unlike her omniscient narrator. The ensuing description of other features of the room can plausibly be attributed to either the narrator or Judith Hearne. The room is described in terms of its decoration, and distinctively structured phrases such as 'faded gauze curtains'(25) are employed (two adjective plus noun

structure). The grandfather clock is even animated though not on Judith Hearne's usual terms. Instead of gaining a speaking face it becomes 'an old blind dog [that] wagged away the hours'(25).

Although neither actions nor words are attributed to Judith Hearne until Mr Lenehan's greeting is acknowledged one page later —'Miss Hearne nodded'(26) — the intervening visual assessments of the diners are opinionated and idiosyncratic in a way that is by now in keeping with Judith Hearne's interior voice. Mrs Henry Rice is described with 'her hair sticking out from her head like a forkful of wet hay'(25) and Mr Lenehan's 'thin mouth' is pictured 'curving into a sickled smile'(25). The harshness of these farm-based images and their slight disjunction from the established semantic registers of Judith Hearne's voice does not preclude her responsibility for these assessments (Lenehan's cutting smile might plausibly be linked to Bernard Rice's splitting grin), but neither does the narrator dismiss the analysis offered. The result is a fusion of the powers of persuasion possessed by the narrator and Judith Hearne against the opinions of the boarders, where the narrator, if he is distinct at all, roughly coincides in his perspective with Judith Hearne.

At other times, the narrator stages a withdrawal from his role as the co-ordinator of the narrative gaze. In the opening pages of the second chapter, the narrator gives the reader a stream-of-consciousness account of Judith Hearne's awakening which is only minimally organised by his explanation of the psychological processes taking place: 'Her eyes opening, saw the ceiling, the frozen light of what day? Sight, preceding comprehension, mercifully recorded familiar objects in the strangeness of the whole'(21). The account of the room then follows the path of Judith Hearne's gaze as it moves from a dressing table 'Near the bed [...] Across the worn carpet', later 'passing over the small wash-basin, the bed-table with its green lamp to reach the reassurance of her two big trunks, blacktopped, brassbound, ready to travel'(21-22). The narrator retains a presence — 'her trunks' — but his voice and gaze as well as the reader's gaze are fused with Judith Hearne's.

This shared gaze is so closely indexed to Judith Hearne that the reader has the sense of not only having to look where she looks but of having to move with Judith Hearne's every move. Moore secures this effect through the use of words which establish Judith Hearne as the deictic centre of unattributed language. The use of deictic references such as 'here', 'there' and 'it' rely on the addressee's knowledge and temporary acceptance of the perspective which counts as the referential centre for these terms. This effect is quietly in place when Judith Hearne sources the observation that 'it was nice to sit *here*, in front of a good warm fire with a cup of tea in your hand'(13, my italics). One of the effects of Judith Hearne's situation as the nexus for these references is to signal her use of language as practical and unselfconscious rather than literary: deictic terms are difficult to decipher

in literary texts. Deixis also implies Judith Hearne's status as an embodied individual whose voice is sourced from her body rather than an abstract narrative position. As William Hanks suggests:

Deictic reference is a communicative practice based on a figure-ground structure joining a socially defined indexical ground, emergent in the process of interaction, and a referential focus articulated through culturally constituted schematic knowledge. To engage in referential practice is to locate oneself in the world, to occupy a position, however fleetingly, in one or more sociocultural fields.³²

The second-person pronoun is one of the devices through which the reader's identification with Judith Hearne (always temporary) is facilitated in the novel. 'You' operates in several ways which clearly function as elements of Judith Hearne's self-referential voice. For example, when she decides to resist 'the temptation to have a regular restaurant lunch' she commands herself, 'Well, you won't. You'll fast, that's what you'll do'(34). However, David Herman argues that the use of 'you' can also occasion uncanny identifications which blur the difference between the protagonist and the reader of the text, particularly in languages like English where 'you' is not marked by gender or status affiliations:

At the same time that some elements of the passage create a highly specific and highly particularized perceptual frame, thereby prompting us virtualize the discourse referent of *you* [attribute it to a character], other elements cue us to actualize the you via experiential repertoires we ourselves may or may not have acquired. [...] In doubly deictic contexts, in other words, the audience will find itself more or less subject to conflation with the fictional self addressed by *you*.³³

The reader has the sense of sharing Judith Hearne's position in the world of the text: 'it was nice to sit here, in front of a good warm fire with a cup of tea in *your* hand'(13, my italics). The same effect of identification with the position of Judith Hearne is achieved when the reader who 'overhears' Judith Hearne's interior discourse 'experiences the shock of being "talked to" by the text'.³⁴ Judith Hearne issues a series of commands to herself, governed from the deictic centre established above, in response to Bernard Rice's upsetting stare but because her thoughts are unfiltered the commands are inadvertently directed out to the reader:

Give him a stiff look myself. But no, no, he's still looking. Upsetting. Turn to something else. The book beside him, upside down, it's *esrev*, verse, yes, English Century Seventeenth. Reading it, yes, he has a bookmark in it.(12)

³² William F. Hanks, *Referential Practice: Language and Lived Space among the Maya*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), p.514. Cited in David Herman, 'Textual *You* and Double Deixis in Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*', *Style*, 28:3 (1994), 378-410, (p.401).

³³ Herman, p.399.

³⁴ Irene Kacandes, 'Are you in the Text?: The "Literary Performative" in Postmodernist Fiction', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 13 (1993), 139-53, (p.147). Cited in Herman, p.394.

The reader here has access to the processes through which Judith Hearne receives and organises her perceptions and has to mimic her implied mental processes in order to work out that Bernard Rice is reading a book of seventeenth-century English verse.

The exercise of repeating Judith Hearne's psychological processes suggests insidiously that Judith Hearne has a mind which carries out processes on her behalf. It also invites the reader to repeat the small humiliations which compound Judith Hearne's marginalisation in patriarchal society. Readers who identify with Judith Hearne potentially cross boundaries of sex, gender and desire, or threaten the coherence of these identifications as they are brought, through a series of small coincidences of viewpoint, to see through the matrix of cultural discourses which position and disenfranchise Judith Hearne.

This foregrounding of Judith Hearne's perspective is achieved at the expense of the traditional prerogatives of the omniscient male narrator in the realist novel. *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* is not the first novel to make use of a particularised and feminised narrative perspective as well as that of an omniscient narrator. The best comparison might be with *Bleak House* (1853) in which the broad generalising sweeps of the male narrator's voice are counterpointed by the intimate narrative of Esther Summerson. As Stephen Gill notes, in Dickens's novel the competing narratives reinscribe stereotypes of the embodied female perspective and the male as abstract subject:

Unlike the other narrative, Esther's is not a presentation of 'life' but an act of recollection, a sequential disclosure of how one particular life developed and took its present form [...] Working together, these two very different sorts of narrative continually challenge the reader's comprehension and assessment of the fictional world taking shape.³⁵

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, the movements away from the perspective of Judith Hearne to that of the narrator or of the other characters are disjunctive departures which inscribe the same distinction between gendered perspectives. They intervene to prevent the dissolution of a culturally intelligible field of identities which might be brought about through the identification of the male narrator with Judith Hearne's lack of power. The differentiation of Judith Hearne's voice from that of the narrator helps to affirm that only women can possibly be vulnerable and metaphorically silenced.

The strategic recitation of the narrator's gendered omniscience and authority restages Judith Hearne's voice as a performance of powerlessness which is produced by, but not equivalent with, the narrator's own voice. The narrator maintains his own cultural intelligibility through performative

³⁵ Stephen Gill, 'Introduction', *Bleak House*, ed. by Stephen Gill, [1853] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.vii-xxi, (pp.xvi-xvii).

assertions of his difference from 'Judith Hearne' and of his alignment in a tradition of powerful male narrators. The two chapters discussed here, chapters which establish the terms and prominence of Judith Hearne's voice, close with a comic and hyperbolic assertion of the narrator's claim to be part of an impressive Joycean tradition. In the final lines he gives ^{to} rain the treatment that Joyce offers to snow at the end of 'The Dead'³⁶ in a virtuoso demonstration of his own skills. However, this reference which helps to gender the narrator as male, quickly collapses from omniscience back into a close focus on Judith Hearne's entrapped perspective:

The rain began to patter again on the windows, growing heavier, soft persistent Irish rain coming up Belfast Lough, caught in the shadow of Cave Hill. Miss Hearne ate her biscuits, cheese and apple, found her spectacles and opened a library book by Mazo de la Roche. She toasted her bare toes at the gas fire and leaned back in the armchair, waiting like a prisoner for the long night hours.(38)

What purposes does the centrality of Judith Hearne's voice serve?

Before looking at the ways in which the narrator employs gender to differentiate himself from Judith Hearne's perspective in the first two chapters of the novel, I want first to sketch out the effects which are achieved through the dominance of Judith Hearne's narrative voice and perspective in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* as a whole. If, as I will argue, the narrator secures his difference from Judith Hearne by invoking a conventional matrix of gendered identities, then what subversive possibilities is that invocation of his difference from the text's central voice designed to forestall?

In the final pages, where the narrator withdraws all criticism from his account of Judith Hearne, reader-inclusive pronouns invite the reader to share Judith Hearne's perspective in a moment of despair. The heroine realises that she is effectively silenced and excluded by her community because of her renunciation of faith. Judith Hearne's narrative perspective seems to displace that of the narrator here and to save him from connection with her helplessness. However, a Yeatsian turn of phrase plays on the narrator's coincidence with Judith Hearne's voice to reinscribe him as sharing in the powerless perspective that Judith Hearne offers:

³⁶ James Joyce, 'The Dead' in *Dubliners*, (London: Paladin, 1988), pp.199-256, (p.255-56).

7 She was feeling tired. Why the Mass was very long. If you did not pray, if you did not take part, then it was very, very long. If you did not believe, then how many things would seem different. Everything: lives, hopes, devotions, thoughts. If you do not believe, you are alone. But I was of Ireland, among my people, a member of my faith. Now I have no — and if no faith then no people. No, no, I have not given up. I cannot. For if I give up this, then I must give up all the rest. There is no right or wrong in this. I do not feel, I do not know. Why should I suffer this?
 O, Lord, I do not believe, help my unbelief. O, You — are You -?
 The Mass was over. The priest went to the foot of the altar and knelt.
 ‘De profundis clamavi ad te, Dominum!’ he cried. [sic]
 The nuns joined in, reciting the prayer. Other prayers. And I have cried out. I am alone. Without prayer.(252)

In this scene, the reader’s expectations of the realist novel undergo some reversals: the dominant narrative voice becomes effectively voiceless, its focus is bounded by social propriety. The loss of faith is presented as a loss rather than a rationalist advance; the failure to conform to social expectations and to participate in conventional roles is mourned rather than celebrated. Moore’s statements in interview that a woman provides a more plausible fictional vehicle for religious faith than a man distances him from Judith Hearne’s loss of faith. However, since his first novel he has written several novels about faith told from the perspectives of a monk, a priest, a cardinal and a missionary.³⁷ The question of religious faith is probably the aspect of Moore’s fiction which has attracted most critical attention.³⁸

Moore is a lapsed Catholic, whose later novels have been held to chart a movement from an initial renunciation of faith in *The Lonely Passion Of Judith Hearne* back towards an acceptance of the value of faith in his most recent work (Patrick Rafroidi refers to this process as the ‘temptation of Brian Moore’.³⁹) However, the temporary identification of the narrator with Judith Hearne’s perspective in her moment of greatest despair here implies that the rejection of faith has never been easily or completely achieved in Moore’s work. At various stages in *The Lonely Passion Of Judith Hearne*, the narrator reasserts his alignment with rationalist masculinity by renouncing identification with Judith Hearne’s religious faith and her grief over its loss. Brian Moore uses her perspective to illustrate the stultifying limitations of social convention in Catholic middle-class Belfast society,

³⁷ Moore’s novella *Catholics*(1972) focuses on an abbot and a young priest; *The Colour of Blood*(1987) is the story of a Polish cardinal and the priest in *No Other Life*(1993) is based on Aristide in Haiti. *Black Robe*(1985) focuses on a French missionary.

³⁸ In his citation of Brian Moore for an honorary doctoral degree at Queen’s University, Belfast, John Cronin noted that ‘His favoured focus is on central figures, often women, who find themselves at breaking point as the foundations of convention and belief on which they have built their lives begin to crumble’. John Cronin, ‘Citation by Professor J.I. Cronin for Brian Moore for the Degree of Doctor of Literature in the Faculty of Arts, Queens’ University, Belfast, on 7 July, 1987’, *Irish University Review*, 18:1 (1988), 10-11, (p.10).

³⁹ Patrick Rafroidi, ‘The Temptation of Brian Moore’, *Irish University Review*, 18:1 (1988), 83-87.

where status is guaranteed only through participation in, and the consolidation of, the family, education and Catholicism. In the opening chapters in particular, the male narrator affirms his diametric opposition to the foregrounded protagonist on the grounds of faith.

He undercuts Judith Hearne's religiosity through ridicule. For example, Judith Hearne's particular devotion to the Sacred Heart, emphasised in her personification of his image is given an ironic twist when she is cast as Christ's crucifier: she suddenly remembers '[...] the Sacred Heart, lying on the bed in the room upstairs, waiting for a hammer to nail Him up.'(13) On another occasion, the narrator's puns openly on Judith Hearne's religious turn of phrase, with the explanation that she puts her clothes on under her dressing gown, because it is 'a *habit* picked up at the Sacred Heart convent'(22; my italics). His dissent from Judith Hearne in respect of faith helps align him with other male characters in the novel, particularly with Bernard Rice who sabotages the sanitised story about Father Quigley and the prostitute. The narrator's rejection of Judith Hearne's grief over the loss of certainties in which he, at times, seems to share, helps to assert his claims to a powerful and independent subjectivity which bears no relation to Judith Hearne's identity. However, that difference from Judith Hearne's cultural position has to be continually constructed and restated. Where it is insufficiently stressed, the novel demonstrates that Judith Hearne is not the only person who is frustrated and limited by conventional discursive practices in Catholic patriarchal society.

The novel demonstrates how Judith Hearne's use of language is regulated within the terms of social conventions. Social acceptance is only available to her while she operates within their limits. However, Judith Hearne as a poor, single, middle-aged woman is not part of the only disenfranchised constituency in her community. In *The Emperor of Ice-cream*(1965), Moore's most obviously autobiographical novel, Moore identifies other groups — Jews, homosexuals, artists, even those without a university education — who are disempowered by the dominant platitudes of a society where social status is linked to education, marriage and religious observance.

The marginalisation of Judith Hearne exposes the general ways in which certain identities are constructed as the constitutive outside of an ideal community. When she fails to match up to society's expectations of chastity, passivity, sobriety and silence, Moore exposes more generally the various strategies through which dissident voices are silenced and their disruption is contained. Judith Hearne is not after all, actually silent. She uses language creatively to try out a number of possible social roles. Her voice frequently dominates the narrative as I have shown, and she demonstrates a whole range of voices which she performs to a high degree of competency in her fantasy life, voices indexed to roles that offer security and status. Her singing voice is also powerful: it insinuates its way into,

and disrupts, the conservative routines of her fellow-boarders (““You know the singing voice carries. The tones penetrate””(137)).

However, these deployments of popular discourse are continually regulated, silenced or rendered impossible by social and economic circumstances which limit the voices through which women like Judith Hearne and men like Moore can be heard. Even Judith Hearne’s singing voice is limited by her financial resources. She lacks the money to buy the alcohol which helps her to forget her investment in conservative social practices. When she has the money, social convention prevents her from gaining access to whiskey without the assistance of men(173-175). After she has spent all of her money in her final binge, her singing seems to be irretrievably silenced. Judith Hearne is not silent, but her liminal social position restricts her freedom to articulate herself through discourses which do not reiterate her marginal position.

The novel offers an intimate discussion of voicelessness and powerlessness and invites the reader to collaborate in a voice that fails to signify effectively. This identification potentially threatens the coherence of the reader’s or the narrator’s gendered performance as a culturally intelligible man, for example. As I will show in the next section, the narrator stages a rejection of Judith Hearne on the grounds of gender, which performatively instates his difference from her and establishes him as a coherent, rational humanist subject who exercises the privileges denied to Judith Hearne when he wields a powerful voice.

Constructing gendered binaries: Judith Hearne and the narrator

As I move on to explain the ways in which the narrator performatively instates his intelligibility as a powerful masculine subject, I want to return again to the subject of naming. Naming helps to individuate voices but it also genders them and sets their conventional limits. In 1955, the year of the novel’s publication, the naming of the protagonist of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* helps to stabilise the distance between Brian Moore, the male narrator and Judith Hearne because the name ‘Judith’ links Judith Hearne to Judy Garland and so to a model of femininity which, as Judith Butler notes in an arch reference to the tendency of others to shorten her name, ‘was constituted at that moment in the mid-’50’s when the figure of Judy Garland produced a string of Judys whose later appropriations and derailments could not have been predicted’.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.x.

Garland's performance as 'Dorothy' in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)⁴¹ is so hyperbolic that it has been read as gender transgressive. It positively draws attention to the ways in which ideal girliness is constructed. It is possible then that any connection the narrator of Moore's novel might make between Judith Hearne and Judy Garland would overdetermine Judith Hearne's 'feminine' voice and expose its constructedness. Instead, the phantasmatic ideal of femininity conjured by Judy Garland operates as an agreed standard of femininity shared by the narrator and the protagonist. That standard endorses an idealised binary system in which men are 'real' men, women are 'real' women, and Judith Hearne and the narrator are clearly differentiated. The narrator and Judith Hearne may disagree on the protagonist's resemblance to the ideal that Judy Garland represents, but because they agree on the validity of the ideal itself, they endorse the same heterosexual and patriarchal binary structure.

Judith Hearne 'wants' to be like Judy Garland. She accepts Garland as an ideal, offered to her by the Hollywood films she likes to watch, and she aspires towards it. She wants to be named Judy, to be confirmed in the girliness and social intimacy that the use of the name would confer, and she is upset that the O'Neill children, like the narrator, opt for a more formal tone: 'the children still say "Miss Hearne." Funny, you'd think they could say "Judy" when they know I like it. Judy. Like the old days on the Lisburn Road. Little Judy' (88-89).⁴² Her self-identification with Judy Garland is clearest when she articulates her sense of dislocation in the same way as Judy/Dorothy does in *The Wizard of Oz*. Judy/Dorothy taps her red shoes together to return to Kansas and the security of home. In moments of distress, Judith Hearne, whose favourite colour is red, finds solace by staring at her shoes which become a symbol for stability and solace for the rootless woman.⁴³

Rather than highlighting the constructedness of Judith Hearne's voice, the Judy Garland references help to suggest that Judith Hearne seeks agency over the construction of her own femininity in an attempt which is wilfully resisted by the narrator. He cites Judith Hearne instead as an ugly, alcoholic spinster. As the narrator and Judith Hearne clash in their construction of her

⁴¹ *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM: 1939) dir. Victor Fleming. Moore has adapted some of his novels for the cinema. As I will argue in Chapter Three, Moore links the representation of women in Irish texts to the representation of women 'stars' in the Hollywood studio system.

⁴² Loreto Todd has suggested to me that a link may be established between the variety of nominal references employed in the novel and the tendency in Ireland to play on the possible variations of Christian names. This tendency which is analogous to the English use of nicknames, transforms Siobhan, for example, into Sibh, Shivvy or Siobhanin among other variants.

⁴³ As Barbara Hayley argues, 'The obsessive presences of the self-reflexive "shoe-eyes" (in itself an idiosyncratic and obsessive term) replaces the actual emptiness of Judith Hearne's life with the travesty of a caring, watchful deity'. Barbara Hayley, 'Outward and Visible Signs: Dressing and Stripping in the Novels of Brian Moore', *Irish University Review*, 18:1 (1988), 96-105, (p.97).

femininity in relation to discordant stereotypes, their voices are dialectically established as binarised, gendered opposites. The narrator's voice is masculine, classifying her only in relation to idealised images of femininity and dismissing her for her failure to conform to them.⁴⁴

The language through which Judith Hearne expresses sexual desire also contributes to the production of a binarised and oppositional relationship between herself and the narrator. In her impressionistic representations of men, she sets up aggressive masculinity as an unquestionably dominant and opposite category to the femininity she espouses. When she thinks about men she recasts herself, not as Judy Garland, but as the wife in *Punch and Judy*: 'And he's common, really he is with that ring and that bright flashy tie. *O, no he's not, she said*' (33; my italics). Judith Hearne uses naming to affirm James Madden's masculinity in clustered and repetitive uses of masculine pronominal references. The lack of emphasis on his given name reflects the desperation of her search for a husband. Thirteen years have passed since her aunt promised her that she would manage 'until the right man came along and even if he didn't'. (36) Thirteen is an unlucky number. Now Judith Hearne's desire to find the right man is reduced to the desire to find 'a' man. Her failure to use a proper name to refer to him reflects Judith Hearne's desperate interest in finding a husband.

One hundred and two uses of 'he', 'his' and 'him' refer to James Madden and they all occur in the final twelve pages of the second chapter. Judith Hearne employs these masculine pronouns in such a way as to approve and idealise men's dominance over her. This is stressed most effectively through the dominance of masculine pronouns as sentence-initial subjects in sentences coloured by her voice. In this position, they benefit from capitalisation which emphasises the superior status that men are being accorded over her. The link between men, capitalisation and status is set up on the first page of the novel where Judith Hearne makes reference to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is conventional to refer to the Sacred Heart as 'He' with capitalisation, wherever the pronoun falls in a sentence, as a mark of respect. When Judith Hearne examines the oleograph, the deferential usage becomes gradually more obvious as the pronouns move out of sentence-initial position:

His place was at the head of the bed. His fingers raised in benediction. His eyes kindly yet accusing. He was old and the painted halo around His head was beginning to show little cracks. He had looked down on Miss Hearne for a long time, almost half her lifetime.(7)

⁴⁴ John P. Frayne refers to Judith Hearne as Judy when he explains his relationship as a reader with the character: 'It is to Moore's credit as a novelist that Judy wins the reader's sympathy and keeps it despite her obnoxious snobbery'. John P. Frayne, 'Brian Moore's Wandering Irishman — The Not-so-Wild Colonial Boy', in *Modern Irish Literature: Essays in Honor of William York Tindall*, ed. by Raymond J. Porter and James D. Brophy (New York: Iona College Press and Twayne Pubs., 1972), pp.215-34, (p.215).

Judith Hearne repeats this structure in her discussion of other men. Of the one hundred and two masculine pronouns referring to James Madden, almost a quarter — twenty-three pronouns — give him the status of sentence-initial subject. Thirteen paragraphs contain three or more masculine pronouns and six of these contain at least six examples. This intensity reaches its peak in the second paragraph excerpted below, almost sixteen per cent of which comprises of masculine pronouns. The adjective ‘big’ is used to establish James Madden as physically and sexually more powerful than ‘little Judy’ who takes a passive role in the fantasy. A number of the idiolectal features noted earlier are clustered here such as her use of the morpheme ‘thing’ and the religious resolution embedded at the end of the Hollywood plot. Judith Hearne’s emphasis on James Madden’s American accent improves the alignment of their relationship to idealised popular images of romance, and the heterosexual romance plot she fosters throughout the novel helps to naturalise a hierarchical gendered binary:

He had been so glad to talk to her. And he had looked so big and stern and manly, hammering his fist on the table while he laid down the law to her. A big handsome man with that strange American voice.

He came into the room, late at night, tired after a day at work in his hotel. He took off his jacket and hung it up. He put his dressing-gown on and sat down in his armchair and she went to him prettily, sat on his knee while he told her how things had gone that day. And he kissed her. Or, enraged about some silly thing she had done, he struck out with his great fist and sent her reeling, the brute. But, contrite afterwards, he sank to his knees and begged forgiveness.

Judy Hearne, she said, you’ve got to stop this right this minute. Imagine romancing about every man that comes along.(32)

Judith Hearne is lonely and wants a man to fall in love with her, yet when Bernard Rice dismisses her, the narrator claims he is ‘rejecting her as all males had before him’(10). Although the narrator of the novel is never named as a man in the text, he performatively enacts his masculinity by aligning his opinions with responses shared by other men in the novel. His critical, sexualised evaluation of Judith Hearne is antithetical to the image she cultivates of herself as a romantic heroine. The disagreement between the narrator and Judith Hearne about her appearance genders their perspectives and signals that the narrator does not entirely share the novel’s dominant point-of-view. The narrator never moves to empathise with any of the interior emotions to which he gives the reader access, and this failure to empathise is in itself enough to align him with stereotypical images of masculine objectivity and reason.

When the narrator intervenes to differentiate his opinion from Judith Hearne his intervention often operates to assert that his sexual desire is directed in opposition to Judith Hearne’s. When Judith Hearne is introduced to Mary, the maid in the boarding house, she provides the point-of-view from which the reader engages with the character. Her unverballed opinions of Mary are

foregrounded through the kinds of strategies I detailed earlier and one of the phrases describing Mary follows the 'two adjectives and noun' format which the reader associates with the heroine. However, the narrative voice doubles or splits when the male narrator's sexual evaluation of Mary, substantially different to Judith Hearne's response, also becomes evident.⁴⁵ Here, the tension between the narrator's gaze and that of Judith Hearne is highlighted and ironised by the differing reasons they might adopt for thinking that Mary would be a useful companion:

But she did not finish because at that moment there was a knock on the door and Mary came in. She was a tall, healthy girl with black Irish hair, blue eyes and firm breasts pushing against the white apron of her maid's uniform. Miss Hearne looked at her and thought she would do very nicely indeed. If you were civil to these girls, they often did little odd jobs that needed doing.(18)

The voices of the narrator and Judith Hearne are in binarised agreement, confirming a heterosexual matrix of identities which reiterates their difference from each other.

The narrator differentiates his voice from Judith Hearne's most markedly when he is signalled as the source for comments which evaluate her on a sexual basis. Bernard Rice has already rejected Judith Hearne 'as all men had before him'(10). Any similar move by the narrator helps to distinguish his voice from that of Judith Hearne and to situate the narrator as a man who shares the 'normal' responses of other men. The interventions of the narratorial voice, when they give a different perspective on Judith Hearne, appear as almost violent interruptions of a narrative usually focused by her own opinions. The third chapter of the novel, which is dominated by James Madden's voice, strategically highlights the author's skill at constructing a wide range of gendered voices, while sourcing an endorsement for the stereotypically-masculine viewpoint that the narrator espouses. The narrator suggests that while Judith Hearne's voice dominates the novel, her voice does not reflect his own opinions or status. Although James Madden responds sympathetically to the persona that Judith Hearne projects for his benefit, he rejects her on sexual grounds as the narrator and Bernard Rice have done before him: 'He smiled at her. Friendly, she is. And educated. Those rings and that gold wrist-watch. They're real. A pity she looks like that'(39).

In the first two chapters of *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, the narrator's strategic attempts to distance himself from the voice of Judith Hearne create the sense of a splitting of the dominant perspective into oppositionally gendered voices and gazes. This is at its most marked when the protagonist and the narrator consider the heroine's reflection in a mirror and produce starkly different readings of her image. Judith Hearne 'knows' that she does not match the feminine ideal and

⁴⁵ Reading the novel retrospectively in relation to later Moore novels, the reader will find the connection between servility and women's sexuality a familiar feature of the male gaze in Moore's work, an issue I will discuss in detail later in the thesis.

rebukes herself for being silly after she has claimed a link between her reflection and images of femininity ratified in popular culture. She undercuts the resemblances she tries to establish with her 'chilly' tear and the 'skilfully' practised way in which her transformation is achieved.

However, even in her disappointment, she is not entirely self-conscious about the ways in which the identity she constructs for herself diverges from the feminine ideal in a patriarchal society with which the narrator's perspective is aligned. Even after dismissing her 'silly thoughts' Judith Hearne retains romantic vocabulary to describe her hair, which she brushes so carefully elsewhere in the novel. Its supposed plenitude is captured in the graceful 'sweep' that pulls it above her head. This image remains to be undercut by the reader who, potentially, identifies the impossibility of hairpins 'disappearing' into any 'crowning glory' and probably associates the tightly-pinned hair ('up and up') of a middle-aged single woman with the stereotype of the severe spinster that she tries to evade.

At any rate, the narrator inflects the passage in order to correct Judith Hearne's idealised self-image to a 'true' image, constructed and ratified by patriarchy. He employs verbs which highlight the process of transformation by which Judith Hearne is allying herself to society's ideal of feminine appearance and refutes the image that she so carefully establishes. I want to quote this scene at some length to show how the voices of the male narrator and female protagonist are held in tension within it. Judith Hearne is preparing to go down to breakfast and wonders whether any eligible men will be there for her to meet:

Her angular face smiled softly at its glassy image. Her gaze, deceiving, transforming her to her imaginings, changed the contour of her sallow-skinned face, skilfully refashioning her long pointed nose on which a small chilly tear had gathered. Her dark eyes, eyes which skittered constantly in imagined fright, became wide, soft, luminous. Her frame, plain as a cheap clothes-rack, filled now with soft curves, developing a delicate line to the bosom.

She watched the glass, a plain woman, changing all to the delightful illusion of beauty. There was still time: for her ugliness was destined to bloom late, hidden first by the unformed gawkiness of youth, budding to plainness in young womanhood and now flowering to slow maturity in her early forties, it still awaited the subtle garishness which only decay could bring to fruition: a garishness which when arrived at would preclude all efforts at the mirror game.

So she played. Woman, she saw her womanish glass image. Pulled her thick hair sideways, framing her imagined face with tresses. Gipsy, she thought fondly, like a gipsy girl on a chocolate box.

But the little clock chittering through the seconds said eight fifteen, and O, what silly thoughts she was having. Gipsy indeed! She rose, sweeping her hair up, the hairpins in her mouth coming out one by one and up, up to disappear in her crowning glory.(23-4)

In this scene, the gazes of Judith Hearne, the narrator and the reader are all intently focused on the imagined mirror, sharing the protagonist's gaze. The tension between the images produced by

the mirror's readers develops as much through the coincidences as well as from the differences of their perspectives. The phrasing of the narrator's hyperbolic denial of Judith Hearne's femininity even draws attention to the constructedness of Judith Hearne's character: she is not a 'real' woman but a set of outward signs which approximate to a woman's appearance — her frame is 'a cheap clothes-rack'. What the scene enables though is an assertion of the narrator's normative sexuality which limits his identification with the powerless and feminised aspects of the perspective the novel foregrounds.

Once the heterosexualisation of the male narrator has been performatively enacted, the shared gaze of the narrator, reader and Judith Hearne resumes. Her gaze again seems to be dominant. Judith Hearne has finished applying her makeup and returns to the mirror to check it. This time her voice seems to be unmediated, as the scene charts the process through which Judith Hearne's gaze is projected out from the interior and receives information back for analysis. A preposition or article acts as the mirror surface which then sends back a suitably inverted image of the preceding phrase:

There, much better. She smiled fondly at her fondly smiling image, her nervous dark eyes searching the searching glass. Satisfied she nodded to the nodding satisfied face. Yes. On to breakfast.(24)

This almost palindromic technique suggests a really high degree of psychological realism and Judith Hearne's perspective is prioritised. However, it also keeps the reader conscious of the narrator's separate presence. The realistic effect is achieved through a distortion of normal representation that allies the technically virtuous author, Brian Moore, with the stream-of-consciousness effects achieved by high literary modernism. While the protagonist is foregrounded at a psychological level, the author establishes a specific debt to Joyce — the inversion in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* echoes the pattern in the final lines of 'The Dead' in *Dubliners* where the snow is 'falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling [...] falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling'.⁴⁶ The primary effect here seems to be an emphasis on Judith Hearne's point-of-view and on the narrator's and reader's vicarious participation in it. However, the co-existence of a number of different perspectives in this scene, their collapse into and differentiation from each other serves as a better paradigm of the ways in which gendered voices and perspectives operate throughout *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*.

⁴⁶ Joyce, 'The Dead', in *Dubliners*, pp.255-56.

Judith Hearne and subversion

On the face of it, Judith Hearne's voice fails to displace the matrices of power which produce women's marginalisation. Metaphorically she is silent throughout the novel. She speaks conservatively, attempting to produce a faithful performance of femininity which wins power in direct proportion to its perceived 'naturalness' and orthodoxy. However, Judith Hearne's voice is strategically useful in a feminist reading which listens to apparently orthodox voices rather than reinscribing their silence. Through her inadvertently parodic attempt to produce an ideal performance of femininity she draws attention to the performative status of identity and exposes gendered identities as cultural constructs.

It is at least ironic that Judith Hearne, the critically acclaimed authentic woman, should be so bad at doing the acts which produce the illusion of an abiding and orthodox gendered self. Her conservatism is over-performed, her judgement of the terms of social acceptability is misjudged: the rouge is never invisible on Judith Hearne's cheeks. When Judith Hearne abandons her performance in her interview with Moira O'Neill near the end of the novel her voice breaches the limits of intelligibility and helps to deprive her of the patronage on which she relies for status. However, even as she refuses the terms of ideal femininity and transgresses them, she ensures that the performative practices she has exposed can no longer be dissimulated. The secure identities and beliefs on which her community founds itself are exposed as the effects of discursive strategies rather than as its pre-discursive and undislodgable grounds.

Moira O'Neill's family has helped imply the plenitude of the roles available within the social matrix, and in his portrayal of the happy O'Neill family, as Jeanne Flood notes, Moore almost provides an apologist justification for Judith Hearne's rejection.⁴⁷ However, Judith Hearne's performance of femininity demonstrates that even this family, which benefits within existing power relations, is only secured as ideal through continual reiterative acts. During Judith Hearne's rebellion, she makes it clear that Moira O'Neill, the ideal passive mother, only secures her status through an accomplished performance of the kinds of strategies that Judith Hearne has deployed. Judith Hearne implies that Moira O'Neill engineered her marriage to Owen O'Neill to win power. Moira O'Neill's

⁴⁷ In *Brian Moore*, (London: Associated University Presses Inc., 1974), pp.22-3, Jeanne Flood argues that the representation of the O'Neill family complicates the novel's satire of Belfast society because it participates in the idealisation of middle-class Catholic roles. The mingled horror and amusement with which the family react to Judith Hearne reflects their sense that she deserves to be marginalised for her impoverished performance of femininity. Like Mrs Henry Rice, whose social position is shored up by capital, the O'Neill family imply the plenitude of the social matrix which allows them relative freedom within the strictures of socially-regulated roles. The most arduous aspect of the family's performance of ideal identities is in the Christian charity they show towards Judith Hearne. Like Mrs Henry Rice's performance of femininity, this obligation is only cursorily fulfilled.

response to Judith Hearne's cry from the heart proves that she is carefully negotiating her own performance of an ideal femininity. Rather than listening to Judith Hearne's dilemmas which present her with the impossible challenge of faithlessness, Moira adapts the scene for use in her continued performance as an accomplished and ideal woman as Judith Hearne has done before her. The anecdote about Judith Hearne will be used to imply that Moira is an ideally intuitive, and morally conservative woman. Ironically, Moira's intuition is installed after the fact. Below, Judith Hearne is explaining about her rejection by James Madden:

'What if that doorman turned you down? **TURNED YOU DOWN!**'

Miss Hearne stopped, open-mouthed, her face quivering. Have you got a drink, Moira?' She said. 'I need a drink.'

Mrs O'Neill got up from the table and went over to the sideboard. She unlocked the liquor cabinet and took out a bottle of whiskey. (Afterwards, she said she just knew instinctively it was whiskey she wanted, although, if she had stopped to think of it, she said, she would have realized that the poor soul didn't need another drink, seeing she had far too many in her already.) (228-9)

In *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, Brian Moore exposes women's voices as the contingent effects of the discursive practices which produce and maintain patriarchal power relations. He demonstrates that gender is about doing, not being. He also contributes conservatively to the reification of some of those power relations by using gender as a lever to performatively enact the narrator's distance from Judith Hearne. The narrator, who appears to share identifications of sex, gender, desire and religious belief with Brian Moore rejects her in order to constitute his own identity as a masculine, liberal humanist subject who is unaffected by the loss of faith or the lack of a powerful voice.

However, this construction of the narrator's rejection of Judith Hearne, presented in a linear narrative constructs a false temporality for the process of differentiation between their voices. It implies that the first two chapters of the novel operate as a microcosm of the novel as a whole. Instead, the narrator's attempts to secure his distance and difference from Judith Hearne repeat the pattern of Judith Hearne's performance: they often parodically and incoherently maintain his separation from her perspective. In the next chapter I will go on to show how the coherence of the male narrator's intelligible gendered voice in John McGahern's *The Pornographer* is achieved through the repudiation of the voice of a woman who like Judith Hearne is far from idealised. I will focus more fully on the strategies through which a powerful masculine voice is constructed in negotiation with that woman's voice. The following chapter will undermine the notion, correlative to the idea of women's silence, that men always wield a powerful voice.

Gender Ventriloquism: Throwing Voices in John McGahern's *The Pornographer*

Though pedantry denies
It's plain the Bible means
That Solomon grew wise
While talking with his queens.
(W. B. Yeats)¹

John McGahern's first novel, like Brian Moore's, focuses on the voice of a woman at a time of crisis: Elizabeth Reegan dies of cancer at the end of *The Barracks* (1963), a novel which fits easily into the paradigm of post-Independence, Irish, realist fiction about rural family life. McGahern recalls, 'There weren't many prizes then, and I was the possessor of the only two state prizes — The AE Award and the Macaulay for *The Barracks*. In a way I was almost an official writer'.² *The Pornographer* (1979) seems to form an absolute contrast with that first novel. It focuses on the life of a single, sexually active man in Dublin. He writes pornography, engages in sexual relationships outside marriage and generally presents an affront to Catholic mores and Irish censorship laws: Catholic morality and the sanctity of the family intersect in Dublin as well as Belfast. Like *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, *The Pornographer* tends to be read as part of a dialogue on Irish literature between men. Terence Killeen argues that *The Pornographer* is written as a response to the banning of *The Dark*, McGahern's second novel, which was banned by the Irish Censorship Board for its accounts of masturbation and sexual abuse within the family. He argues that *The Pornographer* 'can be seen as a detour, written in response to immediate social pressures rather than from McGahern's deepest source of inspiration as a writer'.³

However, the novel's rebellion against the social conventions of Irish society is not clear-cut or simply sustained. This is the first of McGahern's novels to conclude with the protagonist planning to leave Dublin and ^{to} return to rural life: he decides to propose marriage to the nurse who cared for his dying aunt and to go back to his home place. *The Pornographer* also returns to the

¹ Yeats, 'On Woman', *Collected Poems*, pp.164-166, (p.165).

² John McGahern in interview with Julia Carlson, 'John McGahern', in *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer*, ed. by Julia Carlson (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.55-67, (p.55).

³ Terence Killeen, 'Versions of Exile: A Reading of *The Leavetaking*', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 69-78, (p.77).

first novel's emphasis on women. The pornographer's aunt who presides over the novel is, like Elizabeth Reegan, a mother figure who dies of cancer. Throughout the novel, the narrator is engaged in relationships with a number of women. He becomes involved with a mature woman who becomes pregnant with his child and at the end of the novel, having rejected her, the pornographer starts an affair with the young black-haired nurse he finally plans to marry.

Before the period of his life he describes here, the narrator's performance of a masculine identity is parodically feminised in his failed relationship with yet another woman and he refers often to this affair. At the end of the novel, which is narrated in the first person by the pornographer, the narrator's voice is self-reflexive and authoritative, grounded in and confidently reflecting the narrator's security in a masculine identity. However, it is through the narrator's interaction with, and sometimes the rejection of, the several women he encounters that he constructs this powerful and conventionally-masculine voice. The narrator acknowledges that his negotiation of a workable identity has been intimately caught up in his interaction with these women when he equates his interest in them with self-interest:

And the dark-haired girl, and the woman with child in London, the dying woman I was standing beside, propped upright on the pillow, lapsed into light and worried sleep, what of them? The answer was in the vulgarity of the question. What of yourself? (203)⁴

The narrator's masculine voice, like that of Yeats' Solomon, is constructed in relationship with the voices attributed to these women, yet the novel — rather like Yeats' biblical narrative — moves to conceal this complex debt to women's voices. The narrator attempts to cite his voice within a male tradition where his voice is indebted to and repeats only the privileges and idealised qualities he associates with other men's voices. He distances himself from the voices attributed to women in two ways, both of which this chapter will consider in detail. First, he renounces the voice of his lover whose voice uncannily repeats the performance of powerlessness that the narrator enacted in his failed relationship. Through rejecting Josephine, the narrator situates himself in the powerful role previously occupied by the woman who rejected him.

Second, the bodies linked to women's voices in the novel guarantee the separation and difference of their gendered voices from that of the narrator. As Butler argues, the invocation of bodies is one of the 'discursive means by which the heterosexual imperative enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications'.⁵ In *The Pornographer*, the narrator indexes women's voices to bodies which are variously eroticised or made pregnant and these bodies come to pre-occupy the voices associated with them. Women's bodies are emphasised as the sites and sources of gendered selves which differ from that of the male narrator.

⁴ John McGahern, *The Pornographer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979; 1990). All further references will be to the 1990 paperback edition unless otherwise specified.

⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.3.

By attributing to women those speech acts which disrupt his performance of masculinity, the narrator is able to maintain the coherence of his masculine identity. However, the distances and differences between the narrator's masculine voice and the voices he renounces are neither wholly nor effectively sustained. This chapter will demonstrate that the narrator is only intermittently successful in establishing his right to a powerful, independent, masculine voice. As the novel progresses, the voices attributed to women teach him to frame his ambitions for authority more wisely.

Keeping your distance: re-imagining the self

Earlier I discussed the ways in which the repetition of socially validated discourses constructs the apparently agentive, socially-viable subject. Throughout *The Pornographer*, the narrator emphasises that subjectivity is also constructed through the repeated rejection of acts which disrupt the performance of socially-valid identities. Towards the end of the novel, he argues that subjectivity is always constructed and maintained through a process of interaction and rejection. Remembering the 'solid hour of criticism' that always follows visits from relatives, he explains that the apparent concentration on the other family is actually always about the self: 'It is the way we define and reassert ourselves, rejecting those foreign bodies as we sharpen and restore our sense of self' (206-7).

His employer, Maloney, argues to similar effect that coherent, social subjects are always constructed through the abjection of behaviours which would undermine their resemblance to culturally-constructed ideals. The readers of the pornography that Maloney produces for the Irish market cannot admit that their desires coincide with those of the characters in the pornography they read if they are to maintain their performances of publicly-acceptable identities. Instead the readers experience their desire vicariously, and then reject it as Other. Maloney explains:

'No one has the faintest idea about why we exist but everybody is mad for every sort of info about other existences. That way they can enjoy their own — safely. You can't beat life for that sort of thing. They get someone else to do their living and their dying for them, there's no way they have to do it for themselves [...] Contrary to the sceptical view, your human being is mad to believe, to be convinced, especially that everything is going to turn out well in the end.' (163)

Maloney suggests that the narrator should structure his account of his trip on the Shannon with his lover in a form that allows the readers to categorically distance the sexualised character from themselves: "You should have written it as biography, with copious, boring footnotes" (163). The more formal account would make easier the process of rejection which allows readers to stabilise their roles in the social matrix. In effect, this method of 'othering' used by Maloney's readers is the one through which the narrator performatively enacts his move away from his powerless role in his previous relationship. It allows him to re-envision his place in the social

and moral networks of power in which he is situated. His performance as a traditional man, dominant in personal relationships, has faltered in his pursuit of his former lover. In *The Pornographer*, those elements of the narrator's behaviour in his last affair which align him with cultural ideals of femininity are projected onto Josephine and rejected, this time by the pornographer himself.

In the pages before he begins his affair with Josephine, the pornographer tries to imagine ways in which he might successfully transcend the role in which he finds himself trapped. He has spent a day distracted by his involvement in the concerns of his uncle and aunt. When he is alone again, the narrator considers the possibility of establishing an identity which would transcend the mundane repetitive acts through which he, like Judith Hearne, enacts a relatively powerless identity. At first, in this passage, the narrator figures identity as a burden which might conceivably be removed from the suffering subject on whom it is imposed:

All day my life had been away, in easy attendance on the lives of others, and I did not relish its burden back, the evening stretching ahead like a long and empty room. It must surely be possible to be outside of our life for the whole of our life if we could tell what life is other than this painful becoming of ourselves.(20)

The evasion of identity he proposes seems impossible, where 'self' is equated with 'life'. The insistent repetition of 'life' further ironises the possibility of the narrator being able to reject or transcend his lived identity in any practicable way. The narrator goes on to suggest that identity is, less a burden, than a process of becoming but this does not seem a more optimistic viewpoint because no final or satisfying goal is offered. If identity is a process which is painfully negotiated and unavoidable, then there should be no possibility of transcendence. Yet the narrator continues to assert that it must be feasible to 'stand outside a life' and so to achieve an abstract and ideal subjectivity, one which exists outside the social, and moral matrices of power that limit and construct lived identities.

The process of becoming which the narrator identifies, implies that the production of identity is linear and repetitive. When the narrator rejects Josephine, just before he discovers that she is pregnant, he congratulates himself on having evolved, during their affair, within the parameters of a linear and progressive process of becoming. He claims that he has evolved from the powerless role he previously performed to one where he has adopted a more serene and controlled performance:

I too had stood mutilated by another gate, believing that I could not live without my love; but we endure, as the first creature leaving water endured, having first tried to turn back from the empty land. Having drunk from the infernal glass we call love and knowing we have lived our death, we turn to love another way, in the ordered calm of each thing counted and loved for its impending loss. We learn to smile.(97)

However, his serenity is immediately undercut by the news of Josephine's pregnancy which opens the next section of the novel: 'There was no smiling, nothing but apprehension when

a telegram came several days later. Please ring me, and it gave her office number'(97). Echoes of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*⁶ resonate throughout the novel and here the narrator might be reminded that

Development [is] a partial fallacy
Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,
Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past.⁷

The narrator cannot simply abandon his past. It is through his affair with Josephine that he is able to evaluate his own anguish in the last affair more carefully and to re-negotiate his relationship to it. By distancing himself from the repetitive acts through which he maintains his own powerlessness the pornographer hopes to reconstruct his identity in a more powerful form. He attempts to achieve this distance by spatialising his performance of identity: those repetitive acts which signalled his powerlessness in his first relationship are displaced onto Josephine. Eliot's speaker goes on to argue that 'moments of agony' are never fully 'past' in the way the pornographer hopes. He suggests that although we are reluctant to accept this in our own cases we are reminded of our own problems and relate to them more clearly if we see them being lived out by another person. Eliot's speaker explains:

We appreciate this better in the agony of others, nearly experienced,
Involving ourselves, than in our own.
For our own past is covered by the currents of action,
But the torment of others remains an experience
Unqualified, unworn by subsequent attrition.
People change and smile: but the agony abides.⁸

In *The Pornographer*, the narrator is able to appreciate better his earlier behaviour when he observes it in Josephine and his relationship with her allows him to formulate a new relationship with his past. His parodic and failed repetitions of a conventionally male identity are 'othered' when they are embodied in his new lover. His voice is established as masculine through his rejection of his 'previous' voice which now belongs to a woman. The narrator's repeated renunciation of Josephine is part of the process — together with the narrator's pornographic narrative strategies — through which he performatively enacts a coherent masculine identity and distances himself from behaviour that would disrupt that identity.

In *The Pornographer*, the narrator secures the difference of his voice from the voice attributed to Josephine partly through the grammatical conventions which differentiate between the speaking subject and his interlocutor in any text. As in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, the attribution of voices works to signal the difference between them. The content of each voice

⁶ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, [1935-42] in *T.S. Eliot: Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp.187-223.

⁷ Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', [1941] in *Collected Poems*, pp.205-13, (p. 208).

⁸ Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', p. 209.

also helps to signal them as belonging to differently-gendered selves. When, for example, the narrator introduces himself to his future lover in the dancehall, the conventions of casual conversation help to signal the narrator's identification with a heterosexual male stereotype. He repeats a set of questions which are stereotypical precursors to a man's attempt at sexual conquest: "Did you come here on your own?" [...] "What sort of office do you work in?" [...] "Do you come here often?"(32).

The difference between the voice of the narrator and Josephine's voice is also secured through the repeated inculcation of the spatial metaphor of distance. Just before the narrator meets Josephine for the first time, he makes a note of Maloney's praise of distance in the writing process, and he goes on to use the same metaphor to regulate his relationship to his last affair. Maloney has argued that "Above all the imagination requires distance [...] It can't function close up"(21). The suggestion that there is a difference between the voices of the narrator and Josephine is sustained by the suggestion that there is also a spatial distance between them in the world of the novel. The narrator claims that the voices of various characters are attributable to different bodies which confirm the distance between their respective voices. When Josephine and the narrator meet on their first date, Josephine senses that she is, in some way, displacing the narrator from a physical position which he has previously occupied and in which he still has some investment. She challenges him as to why he feels she is taking his place:

'Why don't you relax? You make me feel as if I was sitting in the dog's chair.'

'How do you mean?'

'You know when you come into a kitchen and there's a dog that's used to sitting in a chair you happen to take by accident. All the time you're sitting there you feel him agitatedly circling the chair.'

It was so sharp I slowed. "I can see you write," I said.(53)

Her analogy is confirmed when, later in the conversation, the narrator refers to his old job as "dog's work"(54). As their relationship develops, Josephine continues to operate from a position, that of the less powerful partner, which the narrator claims he has now rejected. Referring to his previous employment, he explains, "It was dog's work and I gave it up"(54). It is only through his systematic renunciation of Josephine's voice that the narrator establishes his distance from his powerless performance in his last affair and constructs his voice as powerful and masculine. However, the narrator's renunciation of his former behaviour will only work if he acknowledges that the renunciation of Josephine's words has implications for his own identity. His sensitive response to her analogy about the dog counts as one such acknowledgement.

Their relationship is ventriloquial — she speaks with the voice he rejects — and the conventions of ventriloquism demand that the reader or viewer should be able to recognise that two voices are sourced in one body, even though they are located at separate sites and operate under different names. All ventriloquists make the ventriloquial act visible either through an exaggerated attempt to speak through the teeth, or through moving their lips to foreground the

performance of the second voice. However, although the act relies on the visibility of the source of the 'thrown' voice it also relies on the observer's self-conscious acceptance that one of the voices that the speaker sources is the 'real' voice of the narrator while the 'thrown' voice is separate from it. The 'real voice', which the ventriloquist acknowledges as his, is read as split from the more obviously performed 'thrown' voice, and can engage in dialogue with this, now Other, voice.

Ventriloquism demonstrates how readily we accept voices as signifiers of separate identities. One of the benefits of implying that the second voice is sourced away from the ventriloquist is the licence this provides for the ventriloquist to express opinions which are not consonant with the identity he constructs through the 'real' voice. In his ventriloquial relationship with Josephine, the narrator of *The Pornographer* is able to reject the voice which, while recognisably 'his', is sited in another body. He is able to repeat the words he used in his last affair but also to engage in a dialogue with the voice attributed to Josephine, to reconsider and reject it in favour of a different voice. McGahern explains his decision to write about sexuality through pornography in terms which suggest the same kind of process: 'it's the old literary trick that you look at the floor in order to see the sun, rather than looking up at the sun [...] That was the idea behind *The Pornographer*. It's like trying to follow the sun in the dusk rather than looking up at the sky'.⁹

Often, in ventriloquism, the 'real' voice is constructed within the bounds of social proprieties and conventions and performatively enacts its separation from a less disciplined and more obviously-performed voice. In *The Pornographer*, the narrative voice, signalled as authentic, which addresses the reader is constructed as masculine and powerful through its renunciation of the voice attributed to Josephine. Her voice, if attributed back to the narrator, would subvert his normative performance of masculinity. The novel demonstrates that his performance of masculinity is neither natural nor secure but is instead constructed through a continual process of citation and abjection.

Josephine's status as an empty site for the voices of others — a suitable site for ventriloquism — is noted when the narrator criticises her for showing false sincerity. He implies that the voice he attributes to her is somehow imported or projected from other sources: 'She was so energetic with happiness when she came [into the lounge] that I could believe she was lit by some inner light, except I knew by this time that all her power came from outside'(70). Her idiolectal voice is made up of the voices of the other people she knows. When the narrator asks her why she has "a touch of an American accent"(57) she explains that it is because of "the movies. I must have spent half my life at the pictures [and] my two best friends are American, Janey and Betty"(57).

⁹ John McGahern in interview with Rosa Gonzales Casademont, 'An Interview with John McGahern', [1993] *The European English Messenger*, 4:1 (1995), 17-23, (pp.17-18; p.20).

Her most distinctive idiolectal marker — her cry of “O boy, O boy, I sure picked a winner”(101) — mingles her repetition of Americanisms with a parodic *allusion* to the words with which her first lover marked the loss of her virginity. Having noted the racing results, he told her, “I’ve just missed the crossed treble by a whisker”(41). Although Josephine now finds the remark funny, “it sure wasn’t funny at the time”(41) and gambling metaphors haunt her arguments with the pornographer. When the narrator criticises her perceived over-use of this phrase, he distances himself from the vulnerability it signals. He uses his rejection of her voice to emphasise his own association with patriarchal force: ‘I turned away and dug my nails into my hand. If she said O boy once more I wasn’t sure I’d be able to hold myself in check’(101).

As the narrator’s relationship with Josephine develops, the narrator intermittently recognises Josephine’s voice as having once been attributable to him. The narrator’s response to these moments of identification usually follows a pattern of recognition, discussion and recoil. This allows him both to acknowledge and reject the powerless role in which he has become trapped since his last affair. For example, the pornographer illustrates his connection with the voice attributed to Josephine when he claims to recognise the motive which lies ‘behind’ her words. When Josephine suggests that they should visit places together, the narrator projects onto Josephine the motive which prompted him to make similar requests of his beloved:

At the mention of the Park, I remembered the days at the races I’d often gone to with her I had loved, and I drew back as if I knew instinctively what she was seeking: if we could meet people that either she or I knew it would give our relationship some social significance, drag it out of these dark pubs for christening.(64)

When the narrator describes the motive for the behaviour attributed to Josephine, the pronouns fail to distinguish the narrator from the powerless role that Josephine now adopts. ‘Our relationship’ refers as easily to the relationship between the narrator and his beloved as to his current involvement. The narrator’s projection of a motive onto Josephine exposes the extent of his own desperation in his last affair and temporarily identifies the narrator with Josephine’s position. However, the identification ends with the narrator’s clear rejection of the involvement that he, like Josephine, has sought. When he refuses to give their relationship a social dimension, his controlled voice is definitively differentiated from Josephine’s voice. His words are represented as stereotypically masculine. The narrator suggests that they act like physical force against Josephine and her vulnerability is no longer shared by the two characters. The narrator says, “No. I don’t feel like going to any of those places. But why don’t you go?” and I saw it fall like a blow. She made no attempt to conceal it’(64).

When the narrator agrees to go on the Shannon boat trip with Josephine, he empathises with her again. He projects onto Josephine a sense of peace that, he suggests, such consent would

have provoked in him in his last relationship. As in the passage above, it is unclear who exactly shares in the emotions he projects:

She kissed me and there was a sense of rest. I knew it well. Two whole weeks were secured and rescued from all that threatened. A small heaven had been won. Within its secure boundaries love somehow might be set on its true course.(68)

Although the emotions he attributes to her are sourced away from the narrator, they also announce his own experience of loss. The projected feelings are repeated by the male narrator in McGahern's later short story, 'Parachutes'(1983) — a narrator who, in many ways, repeats the move of the pornographer from desperation towards recuperation after a failed affair. The narrator in the short story echoes the feelings that Josephine and the pornographer have experienced when he hopes momentarily that his relationship is saved: 'it was a sign that the whole course of the affair had turned towards an impossible dream of happiness. "We will be happy. We'll be happy. It will turn out all right now." It was a pure dream of paradise'.¹⁰ In *The Pornographer*, the narrator moves away from these groundless hopes and his grief over them by projecting them across boundaries of sex, gender and time onto Josephine.

As the relationship between Josephine and the pornographer develops, the narrator registers his abandonment of the speech strategies he employed in his last relationship. After making a contentious remark in an argument over dinner, he decides to remain silent to prevent a quarrel although, 'When it had mattered to me I was never able to stop'(79). When Josephine insists on being given details about the last affair, he again claims to recognise the motive which underlies her interest, but distances himself from it. The emotions he once experienced are clearly attributed to Josephine's voice and Josephine's body:

'This girl,' she said with a pause that I knew to be the pain of jealousy, 'this girl, the girl you were in love with, who was she?'

I looked at her, how vulnerable and open the face was. She was going to hurt herself by searching about in a life that no longer existed, that she had been unaware of when it was going on.(80)

The narrator's powerless behaviour, his vulnerability and desperation in his last affair are culturally-feminine acts which disrupt his performance of masculinity. When he associates his powerless speech acts with Josephine, he employs stereotypes of gendered speech to differentiate Josephine's voice from his own and restates his alignment with power and patriarchy. As I argued earlier, the features traditionally associated with women's speech are more properly attributable to speakers who are less powerful than their interlocutors. By projecting his powerless speech acts onto Josephine, the narrator naturalises them within a conventional gendered binary. Josephine is the speaker who chatters as a means of prolonging conversation and maintaining their relationship. She becomes associated with the negative image of the woman who cannot control

¹⁰ John McGahern, 'Parachutes' [First published in *Encounter*, 1983] in *High Ground*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), pp. 11-24, (p.20).

her speech. Meanwhile, the narrator notes his own newly-restrained exercise of language. He speaks sparingly, functionally and rationally, and so performs an identity which is culturally male. In his response to Josephine's question about his last affair, he provides an abstract of it which represents it through this newly-powerful voice. This voice is capable of installing order and reason where chaos previously reigned:

At first she did most of the running, and when she tired I took up the pursuit. It's a usual enough pattern. The more I pushed myself on her the more tiresome I became to her and that speeded up her withdrawal, which made her ten times as attractive. I felt I couldn't live without her. Which made me ten times as tiresome. I was ill, lovesick, mad. [...] She kept the thing going, interested in my madness which was after all about her, and we can all do with a lot of ourselves. I think it nearly turned into a farce at the end. (80)

The extreme stylisation of this version of the affair into a tidy decimalised pattern is an ironic comment on the narrator's lack of control over the affair itself. It highlights that the narrator is preoccupied with negotiating his own identity rather than with Josephine. Josephine responds angrily to the narrator's story as an example of his stereotypical masculine — rational and ordered — treatment of romance. When she accuses him of heartlessness, she helps to maintain the gendered opposition between her role and that of the narrator which the pornographer is working to establish.

Her voice echoes or repeats the narrator's earlier speech acts, but Josephine regards their voices as oppositionally gendered. She aligns herself with stereotypically feminine sentimentality and links the narrator with rationality: "You seem to have it all figured out. If I didn't believe there wasn't some happiness I don't know how I'd be able to go on" (81). McGahern in interview implies that rather than proving the difference between their voices, this kind of exchange exposes the distance between the narrator and Josephine as illusory: 'I see sentimentality and violence [as] closely connected because they are both excesses and they are both really escaping from the facts of the truth, you know, that we live in ourselves and we live in other people'.¹¹

In his role as the narrator of the novel, the pornographer is able to modulate Josephine's voice so that its difference from his own is carefully established. Josephine is capable of using language skilfully as the narrator notes in his response to her analogy about the dog, and when they travel together on the Shannon he is impressed by the skilful way she researches and writes the article for her magazine (88). However, as he rejects the voice he used in his last affair he stresses it as different *from* his own writerly voice and dismisses it as limited and derivative. This approach neatly diverts attention from the limited and derivative nature of the voice he cultivates in his pornographic stories.

¹¹ McGahern in interview with Gonzales Casademont, p.20.

Critics of *The Pornographer* have tended to join the narrator in distancing Josephine's voice from that of the literary narrator. Both McGahern and the narrator are sometimes berated for labouring the language of philosophical abstraction. Brian Hughes criticises McGahern for 'getting too close to abstraction in the novel [...] We find this "Idea" with the capital "I" the novelist gives it, staring at us'. He suggests that this style compares unfavourably to that of 'such Brian Moore novels as *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* and *The Mangan Inheritance*'.¹² Karlheinz Schwartz argues that the philosophical observations are not excessive. He suggests that they operate as 'authorial comments [which] emphasize the objective and general application of the theme'.¹³ While critics agree that the narrator's voice is concerned with rational abstractions, Josephine's voice is criticised as restricted in range and limited in outlook. Suzanne Fournier argues that Josephine is a 'naive woman [...] relian[t] upon clichés and empty assurances'.¹⁴ Denis Sampson notes that the narrator is able to recognise his earlier behaviour in Josephine's voice. However, Sampson goes on to differentiate their voices in such a way that he unproblematically endorses the gendered binary the narrator is trying to establish through his renunciation of Josephine's voice. Sampson argues that the narrator

appears to have a scrupulous and searching conscience and a belief in certain principles to which he guiltily adheres in spite of extreme exasperation with her personality. [...] If the primary instinct of the pornographer is to be free, Josephine's is to possess. If the narrator is able to recognize a variety of instincts in himself, he tends to see only one in Josephine, and thus her status in his life remains no more real than that of his pornographic characters.¹⁵

In a footnote, Sampson's acceptance of the narrator's characterisation of Josephine becomes clearer still: 'In my own view she is willful and unscrupulous in pursuing her own goals, whether they are social, sexual or journalistic'.¹⁶ This assessment of Josephine simplifies the strategies through which the narrator differentiates his voice from the voice attributed to her, and idealises the narrator as a magnanimous and powerful masculine subject.

The narrator's attempt to construct a masculine identity sometimes draws attention to its status as a performance. For example, when the narrator explains to Josephine that he is an independent and self-sufficient man he comically overstates his case. He tells her that he prefers not to meet the people in neighbouring flats because he is implacably resistant to emotional

¹² Hughes, pp.100-101.

¹³ Karlheinz Schwartz, 'John McGahern's Point of View', *Éire-Ireland*, 19:3 (1984), 92-110, (p.107).

¹⁴ Suzanne Fournier, 'Structure and Theme in John McGahern's *The Pornographer*', *Éire-Ireland*, 22 (1987), 139-50, (pp.145-46).

¹⁵ Denis Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye: the Fiction of John McGahern* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), p.146.

¹⁶ Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p.139, fn. 4.

dependence. He stresses his self-knowledge and self-control while hinting at his ability to commit a stereotypically masculine, violent outburst:

‘Why I avoid getting involved with anybody here is that I know myself too well. This place suits me. If I got involved with someone and they turned out boring or bothersome, I’d not get out in time — because I can’t stand the tension that sets up — and I’d wind up having to do something violent like leaving the house altogether.’ [Sic]

‘You sound a very unsocial person,’ she laughed, ‘but I don’t think you’re unsocial at all.’

You’re the sort of person who needs a woman, I thought I saw behind the words; you’re the sort of person who’s ripe for the plucking. And I’m the one for the job. (59)

Josephine’s laughter at the narrator’s hyperbolic performance of aggressive masculinity threatens to undermine that performance, and is quickly countered. The narrator provides a motive for Josephine’s words which forcefully links her to the stereotype of the manipulative woman.

As their relationship disintegrates, the narrator’s renunciation of Josephine’s voice further undermines her claims to being an agentive and rational speaking subject on a par with the narrator. The narrator suggests that she now resembles, not a ventriloquist’s dummy but a mechanical toy which can claim no connection with the voice of a speaking subject. In her attempts to convince the narrator that she is not likely to become pregnant, she has assured him that she is “as regular as old clockwork” (39) and now, to distance himself from her voice, he suggests it lacks any human agent. As he watches her emerge from the escalator at the underground station at Leicester Square, he suggests that her clockwork mechanism is grinding to a halt:

She saw me while she was still on the escalator, and started to wave. The wave seemed less certain of itself than when she used to come towards me down the cherry and almond avenue. Instead of waving to that drumming inner music — I’m walking and everything is beautiful — it seemed to hesitate: It’s all a bit confusing but boy I sure am keeping on trying.’ She was dressed in a tweed costume and she wore a pale blouse.

‘You sure are one sight for sore eyes,’ she said,’ she kissed and kissed me again, her eyes brimming, a blast of dead air driven up from below by an incoming train.(180)

The pornographer usually reacts to Josephine’s language with aggression and he renders her speech as weak, unintelligent and emotional in counterpoint to his own separate voice which is signalled as effective and resourceful. This is evident in his paraphrased versions of her letters from London where she is waiting for the birth of their child at Christmas. When he visits her in London he notes that ‘I was finding it difficult to curb my irritability in the face of the stream of words’ (182). When he reads her letters, he refers to them as ‘a steady stream’ in which Josephine has ‘completely quenched’ (215) her doubts about his good intentions towards her. Her words are signalled as relentless and unconsidered. The narrator goes on to imply that Josephine’s tone replicates the anodyne tenor of the Christmas season when he refers to ‘this festival of goodness

and renewal that the letters proclaimed'(215). References to the clichés 'she sang'(216) and 'her bells for good cheer'(217) construct her speech acts as tritely conventional and lacking in semantic content.

It is the characterisation, selection and editing of her voice by the narrator which allows him to accentuate his difference from Josephine. He is able to construct their identities in terms of a gendered binary which gives the narrator the privileged role. For example, Josephine's lack of intelligence is implied through the level of repetition which characterises her language in the narrator's rendition. When he paraphrases her letters, he avoids elegant repetition and uses either simple clauses or basic co-ordinated and subordinated clauses which sound childish instead of more considered forms. For example, he explains that:

She had grown larger. She had got away with it when she'd met her cousin at the Strand Palace but only just. She'd bandaged herself tightly and several times during dinner had almost passed out. 'Are you sure you're all right?' her cousin had kept asking and she had pleaded migraine. (216)

This differs materially in structure from the selected portions of her letters that the narrator quotes directly. For instance, in the letter which explains her separation from her friend, Jonathan, Josephine skilfully echoes romantic fiction to achieve dramatic force:

'I am not going to be married, which — going by the tone of your last letter — can, I know, be little relief to you. I could not bring myself to marry Jonathan. Since I couldn't, it was only proper that I move from his house and give up the job on the magazine, which, I found, wasn't really a job at all, but something he created for me.'(164)

As the novel nears its close, the narrator no longer acknowledges the connection which has existed between his voice and the increasingly feeble voice attributed to Josephine. When he visits her in London after their child is born, the narrator writes that she speaks in 'a low pleading voice'(236). Rather than engaging with her, he becomes involved in a debate with her friend and self-styled protector, Michael Kavanagh. Her voice, which the narrator has so vigorously rejected, no longer signifies for him: 'I hardly looked at her. It was with Kavanagh I'd have to contend'(227). The narrator rejects all connection with the voice attributed to Josephine in order to performatively construct a masculine voice. The narrative voice he employs when he writes pornography also contributes to the narrator's attempt to stage himself as a powerful man.

The narrator's pornographic voice

It is through his deployment of a pornographic voice that the narrator is able to recast himself as a powerful, masculine subject after his last affair. The narrator is not named in the novel. However, the title of the novel signals that this first-person narrative is produced by a pornographer. In the terms of Andrea Dworkin's and Catharine MacKinnon's theories on

pornography, this automatically signals the narrator as masculine and patriarchal.¹⁷ They argue that pornography is an inherently patriarchal form which reifies women's oppression and reinforces men's rights to exploit women. MacKinnon's asserts that 'Pornography brings its conditions of production to the consumer: sexual dominance'.¹⁸ The discussion of *The Mangan Inheritance* in the next chapter will explore the ways in which pornography might signify differently in an Irish context, but the pornography produced by the narrator in McGahern's novel seems likely to reflect the narrator's automatic collusion in and empowerment through the patriarchy.

The narrator operates outside the terms of acceptable masculine identities in contemporary Irish society. The pornography he writes is illegal in Ireland during the period of the novel. It endorses the social taboo of pre-marital sex. It also focuses on relationships which threaten the stability of the nuclear family as the basic unit of society. However, insofar as the narrator diverges from male identities which are acceptable within Irish society, he does so only by taking the characteristics that that society validates as masculine to their hyperbolic extremes. The narrator seems to exemplify the massive potential power of masculine men. Several of the other men in the novel treat the pornographer as a man who has succeeded in slipping the limits which usually constrain masculinity within the bounds of socio-moral propriety. His friend, Peter White, is silently rebuked by his wife when he declares, in a vitriolic defence of the narrator, that "“You don't have to love someone or even to be fond of them to want to fuck with them!””(112). The narrator's employer, Maloney, praises the pornographer for producing such an extravagantly successful performance of unrestrained masculinity:

Your bad behaviour and general situation is making us feel good. It's making us all feel very good. [...] Your behaviour has dropped the moral averages to zero overnight. It makes some of our own reprehensible past acts practically beatific.(133)

However, the narrator's work does not function simply to vindicate his masculine and misogynist nature. Instead, his pornography functions as part of his performance of a male identity. Through his pornographic speech acts, the narrator cites himself as a powerful man and helps to counter the powerless acts which previously impaired his resemblance to social ideals of male behaviour. Maloney's praise of the narrator's current actions is undercut by the surprise he expresses at the pornographer's apparently recent alignment with masculine behaviour. He has always associated the narrator with the Irish stereotype of the effeminate, priestly man:

'I always thought you were one of those priested types, a lot in the head, but not much on the ground. That you'd do the decent, follow your conscience, even if it meant tearing your balls off, but apparently I was wrong,' he shouted.(132)

¹⁷ Andrea Dworkin, *On Pornography* (London: Women's Press, 1981); Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words*, [1993] (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993; London: Harper Collins, 1994).

¹⁸ MacKinnon, p.17.

Through writing pornography, the narrator constructs himself as the abstract masculine subject who installs order and wields a powerful voice. Although Josephine accords with Dworkin and MacKinnon when she argues that pornography is linked to patriarchal masculinities, she recognises that the narrator's stereotypical performance as a man is constituted through, rather than confirmed by, the process of writing pornography. She argues that the narrator — as a basically benign humanist subject — has been corrupted into a stereotypical, patriarchal man: the narrator's work turns him into 'a pornographer' who incorrectly repeats his performance as a pornographic narrator outside the stories that he writes. Josephine claims that it is through the production of pornography that the narrator has assumed the exaggerated pose of a rationalist, and emotionless man: 'All the sex writing must twist and blind you to everything about love, make it just pure cynical'(81). When she becomes pregnant, she asks him to stop writing pornography in order that he might 'return' to an idealised performance of conventional masculinity in the roles of husband and father.

Josephine situates the narrator as the passive victim of patriarchal discourses who inadvertently finds himself distorted by them and who needs to re-assert his 'real' identity in order to recover. However, like Judith Hearne, McGahern's narrator does not exist as a powerful subject prior to his interpellation into discourse. Pornography is one of the discourses through which the narrator constructs his agentive male voice and states his claim to the privileges of the authoritative male subject. Outside his pornographic fiction, these privileges have belonged to his former lover. As Suzanne Fournier notes, the narrator conjures order in his pornographic stories as a way of renouncing his inability to install order beyond the page:

These one-dimensional figures [Mavis and Colonel Grimshaw] exist wholly within words of the narrator's choosing, an artificial space free of the unwieldy circumstances and coincidences threatening him in his own life.¹⁹

For example, when his lover becomes pregnant on a boat trip on the Shannon, the narrator rewrites the scene as pornography. Fournier argues that the pornographic story is 'an act of plagiarism' which indicates that the narrator is attempting to control his relationships with others. He is able, through pornography, to impose order and disguise his mistakes after his authority has been undermined.²⁰ However, the narrator plans to write up the boat trip in pornographic form even before the conception scene takes place. The writing of the story as pornography is one of the acts through which the pornographer aims to constitute himself as a powerful subject. In a particularly Wildean moment, Maloney explains to the narrator that art ideally functions to provide much-needed order:

¹⁹ Fournier, p.145.

²⁰ Fournier, p.145.

Life was a series of accidents. Art was a vision of the law. Rarely did the accident conform to the Idea or Vision, so it had to be invented or made anew so that it conformed to the Vision. In short, it was life seen through a personality. Which brought us to the joyous triumph of all art. For though life might be intolerable or sad, the very fact of being able to bring it within the law made it a cause for joy and celebration.(27)

By declaring his plan to write the story before he goes on the cruise, the narrator attempts to situate himself as a powerful 'personality' who imposes his vision of order on life, although, like Wilde and Maloney before him, the narrator finds that his 'vision of the law' has little jurisdiction. He represents his participation in the trip as part of an ordered and plotted scheme which will be repeated and confirmed in the story he will write on his return from the Shannon. The actual trip only signifies as preparatory research. He tells Maloney that his next story might involve the Colonel and Mavis on "a trip in a cruiser up the Shannon [...] In fact, I've got an invite on one of those trips and I want to borrow a car for next weekend. It's all the paper will have to contribute to the field work"(77).

As Maloney points out, the relationship that the pornographer sets up between the planned story and the trip itself aligns the narrator with the hero of the pornographer's stories in an apparently seamless relationship: "Very in-ter-esting. Do you have a Mavis to take along to your Colonel?"(77). The narrator will perform the role of the stereotypical Englishman and then Colonel Grimshaw will repeat the narrator's bravura performance in the story the pornographer will write on his return. The narrator's attempt to control the progress of his relationship with Josephine continues in his answer to Maloney's question about who will take on the role of Mavis. The narrator constructs Josephine as both weaker than him and incapable of becoming pregnant: "She's seventy-nine and every time we do it we have to search between the sheets for her false teeth"(77).

In his performance as the pornographer, the narrator adopts the ideal privileges of the male subject: he has authority and a powerful voice. When he presides over the lives of the characters within his texts — Mavis Carmichael and Colonel Grimshaw — he exerts an authority over the unfolding of events which is unavailable to him outside the bounds of those narratives. Outside his pornographic stories, he adopts a first-person narrative which radically implicates him in the social matrices that produce and limit agency: the 'I' of the narrator has to negotiate its position in relation to conventions and its power relations with the other voices that the narrator encounters. In the pornography he writes, the narrator enjoys the perspective of a Flaubertian omniscient narrator. When he watches his lover reading his pornography, he aligns himself with God: 'If God there was, he must enjoy himself hugely, feeling all his creatures absorbed in his creation; but this was even better'(66).

The narrative voice he employs in his writing aligns him with a rationalist, scientific perspective. It situates him as an agent who can delimit and control his relationships with others.

When the narrator tries to break off his relationship with Josephine, she reinforces the link between his arguments and the masculinist, rational perspective he presents in his stories:

'I see you have it all worked out, just like one of your plots [...] You're letting nothing through and you can really swing them.'

'Swing what?'

'Reasons. Figures. You have it all figured out, haven't you? There's hardly need to even talk [...] it's that horrible stuff you're writing that has you all twisted and unnatural.'(96)

When Josephine tells him that writing pornography has made him cynical, emotionless and blind to love, he crudely emphasises his alignment with a masculine perspective by using a reference to sport to explain his rationalist position: "On the contrary, it clears it [love] out of the way. You learn it [sex] has nothing to do with love or living. It's like sport. Except it's between the sheets instead of in the gym"(81). However, the narrator's performance as a pornographer, in and beyond his stories, does not successfully establish him in an ideal, independent and powerful male identity. His attempt to control the boat trip through the deployment of his pornographic voice fails when Josephine conceives a child.

The narrator's claim to orchestrate the unfolding of their relationship is now open to parody and the pornographic version of the trip, re-written through the medium of his omniscient narrative voice, becomes comic. In the pornographic version which was supposed to endorse his control over his relationship with Josephine, the narrator substantially repeats the scene which threatens to entrap him in the unwanted roles of husband and father. In McGahern's novels, fatherhood always signals a failure to exploit the privileges of abstract subjectivity as the fourth chapter here will demonstrate.

When the narrator produces his account of the Shannon trip, the extent to which the story repeats his earlier work clearly undermines his bid to situate himself as an individual who resists the limitations of rules and conventions. The pornographic Shannon adventure occupies exactly the same amount of space in the novel as does the actual boat trip (Both the 'real' and 'fictional' accounts cover about ten pages of the novel, that is if the narrator's summary of the closing stages is included in the fictional account(82-91; 153-162)) and details are repeated verbatim. In both stories, the boat's caretaker assures the couples of the owner's good intentions: "Mr Smith wanted everything to be right for yous. Mr Smith is a gentleman"(84; 157). The narrator highlights the status of the phrase as a refrain when, on the second occasion, the statement is 'chorused'(157). Meanwhile, the sex scene included in the pornographer's 'pornographic' version of the Shannon trip almost exactly replicates the account of a liaison between Colonel Grimshaw and Mavis Carmichael that Josephine reads earlier in the novel(23 and 160). The second sex scene is written in the perfective aspect, but apart from other changes in paragraphing, the account is a repetition of the wording of the first, already-clichéd story we read with her.

The masculine voice that the narrator has established in his pornography is shown to be incapable of articulating an original and personal perspective. The narrator explains to Josephine, early on in the novel, that the stories he writes ‘might be hot for Dublin, but [they are] old hat in pornography by now. The new pornography has polar bears, bum frigging, pythons, decapitators, sword swallows’”(66). Maloney is struck by the predictability of the pornographer’s work and comments that “It breaks no new ground but it’s up to your usual, high, traditional standard”(76). Maloney has advised the narrator that when he writes pornography he should aim to transcend the circumstances which frustrate him outside the text: “Write it like a story. Write it like a life but with none of life’s unseemly infirmities”(21). However, the narrator’s pornographic voice only renders comic his attempts to transcend the unseemly infirmities he has to deal with beyond his stories.

The narrator finds that the personality who structures the law in art is not, as a corollary, a controlling agent beyond the text: he still has to negotiate with mundane laws in contemporary matrices of power. Peter White puns on the narrator’s sexual exploits when he warns him that Josephine’s pregnancy threatens to place the narrator within the nets of social convention: “What’s wrong with the situation now from her point of view, is that it’s outside the law. By marrying her you put it inside and she’s protected in all sorts of ways”(108).

The narrator has represented his attempt to ‘stand outside’ these matrices of power as an attempt to transcend the limits of the body. Josephine’s pregnant body becomes the sign of his entrapment. Before her pregnancy though, the narrator’s focus on Josephine’s body has helped to distance the narrator from the image of the embodied, ‘situated’ subject. On the evening when he meets Josephine for the first time, before he leaves the house to go to the dancehall, the narrator imagines, as he has already done earlier in the novel, the possibility of stepping outside an identity which is constructed through social and moral discourses. The narrator aligns himself with the soul which aspires to transcend the body but cannot. He represents his bid to assume the privileges of a masculine subject in the terms of the classic mind/body binary which is traditionally constructed as a gendered binary and should, in these terms, liberate him:

I am tired and flushed as I get up from the typewriter. I am not able to read what I’ve written. Will others be inflamed by the reading, if there is flesh to inflame, as I was by the poor writing? Is my flush the flesh of others, are my words to be their worlds? And what then of the soul, set on its blind solitary course among the stars, the heart that leaps up to suffer, the mind that thinks itself free and knows it is not — in this doomed marriage with the body whose one instinct is to survive and plunder and arrogantly reproduce itself along the way?

I am impatient for the jostle of the bar, the cigarette smoke, the shouted orders, the long first dark cool swallow of stout, the cream against the lips, and afterwards the brushing of the drumbeat as I climb the stained carpeted stairs to the dancehall.

I check myself in the mirror but I am already well groomed enough, except for a dying flush, for both the bar and the dance, and with a shudder of relief I go out, leaving the light burning beside the typewriter and pages on the still marble.(24)

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The relationship that the narrator immediately embarks on with Josephine marks his attempt to free himself from anything but a functional and sensory relationship with his body which — flushed, jostled, groomed, drinking and climbing — dominates the passage as he anticipates the tastes and sensations which will assail him when he sets aside his pornographic writing. In the affair he attempts to identify himself with the soul by identifying Josephine with the body and then rejecting her. ‘The body whose one instinct is to survive and plunder and arrogantly reproduce itself’ crudely prefigures Josephine’s role in his narrative. In his relationship with Josephine, the narrator projects his powerless performance of masculinity out onto her — he makes his words her world and implies that he is the soul who transcends the circumstances of his oppression. The pornographic voice which fails to liberate the soul is linked to death when his stories are laid out on the cold marble, before the narrator leaves the room. It is only through the reiteration of his voice as separate from and superior to the body, figured in Josephine and through his negotiation of the responsibilities attendant on the pregnancy his body shares with hers, that the narrator is able to construct for himself a powerful, independent and masculine voice.

Voices and bodies

The narrator’s refusal to name Josephine, or to provide a name for himself other than ‘the pornographer,’ is part of his performance of a masculine voice, capable of objectivity and control. Before he meets her, he explains that he refused to provide names for the characters in his pornographic stories because he felt that they did not merit consideration as subjects: ‘My characters were not even people, they were athletes’(21). It is Maloney who christens them as Mavis and the Colonel. In retelling his story in *The Pornographer*, he limits his vulnerability in his affair with Josephine by installing order and distance in the account through the same device. The refusal to name Josephine suggests that the narrator is alienated from her and the use of pronouns to differentiate the narrator’s voice from the voice attributed to his lover simplifies the relationship between their voices to one based on gendered difference. In *The Pornographer*, neither the narrator nor any of the women with whom he interacts are consistently referred to by their given names and although I have followed the convention of referring to the narrator’s lover as Josephine, her name only occurs once in the novel in a story she tells about a conversation she had with her dying uncle(35).

As a pornographer, the narrator’s focus on sexual difference to demarcate these voices seems to set up a clear power relation between his voice and Josephine’s in which his voice dominates hers. His reliance on personal pronouns to refer to Josephine suggests that he only relates to her as a sexual object or ‘athlete’. His desire for her body installs their bodies and their

voices on either side of a heterosexual binary that endorses the narrator's dominance. In his sexual pursuit of Josephine, the narrator assumes the role of the predatory man: when he meets her in the dancehall he describes her as 'astonishingly beautiful, a wonderful healthy animal'(34). Although Josephine's voice repeats the narrator's speech acts from his last relationship, that voice is located in a body which is subject to the narrator's sexualised gaze.

As Judith Butler argues, when the body is identified with a sex, it is already being gendered because the attribution of sex in itself implies 'an interior "truth" of dispositions and identity [...] naturalized interiority and surface'.²¹ The attribution of a sexed body to a voice gives that voice coherence within a gendered matrix of culturally-recognisable identities. In *The Pornographer*, the relationship that the narrator establishes between Josephine's voice and her sexed body naturalises the speech acts she utters as feminine and so distances them from the narrator himself.

As I noted earlier, the body attributed to Josephine is the ventriloquial site onto which the narrator's rejected speech acts are projected. The representation of Josephine's body as the object of the narrator's sexual gaze helps to conceal the narrator's identification with the voice attributed to her and to keep her voice at a distance from his. As John Berger suggests, the relationship between the male observer and the image of the naked woman has traditionally been used to reduce the complex matrices of gender relations to a simple binary which differentiates men and women:

At the moment of nakedness first perceived, an element of banality enters: an element that exists only because we need it. [...] The other is reduced or elevated — whichever you prefer — to their primary sexual category: male or female. Our relief is the relief of finding an unquestionable reality to whose direct demands our earlier highly complex awareness must now yield. We need the banality which we find in the first instant of disclosure because it grounds us in reality.²²

Berger draws attention to the status of sex as a discursive strategy for normalising patriarchal gender relations when he goes on to refer to 'the proverbial mechanism of sex' but he also identifies here the symbolic force of the naked body as proof of a simple gendered binary.

In the early part of his relationship with Josephine, the pornographer's sexualised gaze constructs her body as an object which symbolises his difference from her. His role as the observer of her naked body constructs him as masculine in a specular economy where, as Berger suggests, 'men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at'.²³ When he first meets Josephine, the pornographer admires her 'clean, strong

²¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.33.

²² John Berger and others, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin Books, 1972), p.59.

²³ Berger, p.47.

features'(32) and praises her 'magnificent strong figure beneath the light blue woollen dress'(34). Later that evening as he waits for her to join him in bed, he suggests that he is already alienated from his attraction to the body which forms the object of his gaze:

For one moment I saw her stand as if to record or reflect, the flames flickering on the vulnerability of the pale slip with lace along the breasts, and then she slipped out of the rest of her things, and came to me.

'It's wonderful just to lie and bathe in another's body. You have a very beautiful body,' I heard my own words hang like an advertisement in the peace of the firelight.(39)

The narrator continually stresses that his attraction to Josephine is provoked solely by his own sensory needs and his pursuit of her body to resolve those needs cites him as an agentive, heterosexual subject. He tells her:

'If I got you pregnant, I wouldn't marry you.'

'Why do this then?'

'It's a need — like food or drink.'

'You could come to love me.'

'I don't think so. I like you. I desire you ...'

'Even if I didn't love someone to begin with and I was doing this, I know I'd come to love after a time. I'd have to,' she said as if willing it.(56)

The pornographer states the limits of his interest in Josephine's body in ways that align him with the stereotype of the unemotional, methodical and rational man. He tries to set up an almost contractual format for their sexual relationship which declares it as separate from all social and moral frameworks. Meanwhile, Josephine makes a stereotypically feminine attempt to domesticate the same relationship within a teleological romance plot. The narrator establishes a comic opposition between what constitutes fulfilment for himself, as a man, and for Josephine, as a woman. He imagines her, at the altar, saying "This is what I need"(99). He equates her desire for the security of marriage with his own need for orgasm: "This is what I needed. This-is-what-I-need-ed"(39).

Josephine's body operates as the ventriloquial site for the narrator's former speech acts and the narrator's distance from the voice attributed to Josephine is only maintained while he stresses their connection with her body. Where the bodies that separate these voices are constructed through the medium of the narrator's voice in a first-person novel, the distance between the narrator and the identity attributed to Josephine is only secured through its continual citation. Fictional bodies and the distances between voices that they help to maintain are only signified and secured as separate — even as existing at all in a literary text — through the narrator's performative iteration of their existence. The body functions as a discursive mechanism through which the narrator's difference from Josephine's performance is produced. However, when the invocation of fictional bodies is mis-cited or not sufficiently stressed, the narrator fails to maintain the distance and difference between his voice and the self that Josephine embodies. In

these circumstances, the narrator's coherent performance of masculinity threatens to collapse as it does, temporarily, on the first night they spend together.

The distance that the narrator seeks to establish between Josephine and himself falters during orgasm when he momentarily identifies with her. However, spatial metaphors quickly reinstate their difference: "“This is what I needed. This-is-what-I-need-ed.” And we were more apart than before we had come together’(39). During the narrator's second orgasm that first night, his alienation from Josephine temporarily collapses again. The narrator claims to achieve transcendence in a moment of identification with Josephine, but this transcendence only succeeds in securing him within the linear reproductive process he is trying to evade and so again he moves to reinstall his difference from her:

We were man and we were woman. We were both the tree and the summer. There was no yearning toward nor falling away. We were one. It was as if we were, then, those four other people, now gone out of time, who had snatched the two of us into time. For a moment again we possessed their power and their glory anew, pushing out of mind all graveclothes. We had climbed to the crown of life, and this was all, all the world, and even as we surged towards it, it was already slipping further and further away from one's grasp, and we were stranded again on our own bare lives.(42)

Josephine's pregnancy interrupts the patterns of attraction and rejection that the narrator has established for his relationship with Josephine's body and its voice. Although he has used his relationship with her to reject his association with powerlessness and vulnerability, the pregnancy signals his connection with her body and undermines his status as a subject unconstrained by social conventions. It threatens to situate him as a husband and father firmly implicated and limited within social, moral and legal frameworks: 'a cold sweat broke out over me as I traced my own place in her words: the grey suit, the church, her friend the boozy priest, her dotting face above me'(99). The narrator has successfully inverted the power relations that operated in his last affair, and now, with comic justice, Josephine threatens to disempower him simply by going to the extremes the narrator would have attempted to maintain the other relationship: 'If I had got my love pregnant she would have walked beside me in this same misery, and I, released from suffering, would have no hint of it in my gross triumph'(100). The absolute power the narrator has envisioned as the correlative of his dominant role has been illusory:

When I had cried I cannot live without you, I had cried against the loss of a dream, and believed it was worse than death, since it could not find oblivion. I had thought no suffering could be worse. I was wrong.

I had gone in and suffered when it was clear my love could not be returned, like the loss of my own life in the other. This now was worse. The Other would now happily lose her life in me and I would live the nightmare. It would be worse than loss. It would be a lived loss, and many must have been caught this way and made to live it. (104)

The philosophical formality of this passage re-asserts the separation between the narrator and Josephine which her pregnancy threatens to undermine. His difference from the role she plays

in their affair is carefully sustained and, in some ways, the pregnancy helps to secure the distance between the narrator and Josephine. Josephine's voice moves into a newly self-reflexive relationship with her body during her pregnancy which conceals her voice's connection with that of the narrator. However, the pregnancy first complicates the simple relation of difference and distance between bodies and voices attributed to himself and to Josephine that the narrator has established.

Denis Sampson makes particular note of a scene where the narrator contemplates Josephine's pregnant body as she sleeps and suggests that it marks the conclusion of the pornographer's dilemma over his involvement with her. He claims that the narrator has carefully contemplated the relationship between his behaviour in his last affair and Josephine's current role. Sampson notes their similarities, but he argues that the scene where the narrator gazes at Josephine's sleeping body marks the conclusion of the narrator's involvement both with Josephine and with his own past behaviour:

Throughout these episodes a debate regarding responsibility and marriage is central to the social drama, but they also dramatize the anguish of desire and desperation, and are finally completed by the narrator's reflection on what he learned from his earlier parting.²⁴

McGahern is not always the most lucid of writers, as Marianne Koenig Mays points out²⁵ and the narrator's description of Josephine's sleeping body is far from a clear reflection on any lessons the narrator might have learnt. However, the incoherence of the scene to which Sampson refers seems ^{to me} to be consistent with a crisis rather than a resolution in the narrator's attempt to secure his differentiation from Josephine's powerless and feminised performance and I want to focus on it in detail here.

The narrator has just imaged himself as an object of consumption for Josephine. He suggests that she relies on him in the same way as his aunt relies on the brandy she drinks to stave off pain, 'except my male body in its cloth covering replaced the brandy bottle in its brown parcel'(135). Now, he battles to prevent his absorption into the life he has evaded and which Josephine represents. When he contemplates Josephine's naked body, it is only with great difficulty that he sustains the fiction of her body as a complete, and clearly-bounded entity. He is unable to objectify it successfully. The spatialisation of his identity begins to fracture as he recognises that Josephine's body is the site for more than one self:

²⁴ Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p.154.

²⁵ Marianne (Koenig) Mays, "Ravished and Exasperated": the Evolution of John McGahern's Plain Style', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 38-52.

Her body was as sleek and beautiful as when we'd met. Morbidly I'd let my fingers trail along her stomach but there was no sign of swelling. The only pleasure was in staying outside oneself, watching the instinct that had constructed this prison suffer its own exhaustion within its walls and instead of bounding with refreshed curiosity to some new boundary of sense, having to take off its coat, and wield a painful pick. In this bright early summer weather it was always daylight when she left. (136)

In his initial evaluation of her body, the narrator situates Josephine's body as the object of his sexualised gaze. When he notes his fingers trailing over the surface of her body, he installs skin as the boundary between her body and the body associated with the narrative voice. Their bodies are signalled as separate objects, which source and contain different selves, voices and gazes. However, these clear signals which maintain the distance between them begin to collapse when the narrator attempts to use a narrative voice which transcends the body to speak confidently in abstractions. Since the beginning of the novel he has suggested that it is possible to stand outside the process of becoming and to establish an unfettered and stable identity, but now, when he tries to adopt this imagined stance it becomes increasingly unclear if 'staying outside oneself' is possible or sustainable.

The omniscient narrative perspective that the pornographer constructs remains parodically close to his own, embodied perspective in the scene. He tries to erase the deictic markers which would expose the location of the narrative voice within the spatial network of the scene by using participles like 'watching,' but he has already established that he, as the owner of the scene's trailing fingers which are presumably located with the rest of the narrator's implied body, is doing the watching. If the narrator is watching the self from outside, he is also watching Josephine from outside her body. The difference between these two acts of watching starts to collapse when ^{as I will argue,} his 'self' and Josephine are shown to be identical. So far, the narrator is repeating the strategies of identification with Josephine which usually preceded his declaration of difference from the role she represents.

Here though, his renunciation of Josephine is more difficult than before because of the problems involved in trying to distinguish between these dual acts of watching. The remainder of the passage can be interpreted in two ways. The first reading in which the narrator is the abstract male, gazing at the embodied woman, is made unwieldy by the inconsistencies in the narrator's distance and difference from the body to which he refers. The narrator, as he watches Josephine sleeping, suggests that to watch her is to witness the abstract process through which the instinct that Josephine embodies brings about its own downfall. He implies that she is an instinctive, irrational woman who, by becoming pregnant, has trapped herself in a performance of vulnerability and suffering. This identifies her with the stereotype of the scheming woman. Several pages earlier, the narrator's friend, Peter White, has argued that Josephine became pregnant through an instinctive attempt to trap the pornographer.

The instinct, traditionally associated with women in opposition to masculine rationality, is like the sleeping Josephine, 'exhausted'. Like her, it has demonstrated boundless energy but is now trapped by the pregnancy. However, this reading is complicated when the feminised image of the trapped, instinctive woman shifts to the image of a chain gang. It is an image McGahern has already used in *The Dark*²⁶ to represent the subject's entrapment in repetitive and fruitless performances of social roles. In *The Pornographer*, it suggests that the trapped instinct, which the narrator is trying to associate with Josephine may also be associated with men. Once instinct has been imprisoned, it has to 'take off its coat and wield a painful pick'(136). It aligns 'the instinct' with aggression towards women rather than with women themselves. The pick reminds us of Peter White, wielding his carving knife(113) and of the abortion, suggested by White and the pornographer, that Josephine has vehemently refused to countenance.

This first reading of the scene is complicated by the changing gender and location of the instinct with which Josephine is, at first, identified and it competes with the implication that Josephine's body represents the self which the narrator is trying to escape. The tortuous abstractions that the narrator uses are, in this second reading, part of his attempt to install himself as a powerful, omniscient, masculine subject separate from instinct and the feminised body. The narrator has worked throughout his relationship with Josephine to signal bodies as discrete objects, loci for separate selves. Josephine, in the powerless role she adopts in her relationship with the pornographer, has performed as the self that the narrator wants to reject. However, the pregnancy has shown bodies to be permeable and selves to be interdependent rather than self-governing. Although she is not yet visibly pregnant, the narrator's involvement in Josephine's embodied identity is figured more clearly than before in her pregnancy.

The narrator declares that he occupies a position which transcends the self, but the pleasure he finds in that transcendence is only maintained if he sustains his distance from the self that Josephine embodies. If the pornographer is to renounce the identity he once performed, he has to work hard to differentiate the abstract, masculine voice he uses here from the feminised, embodied position which he identifies with his 'self'. The narrator's voice uses abstractions to signal his status as a powerful subject who transcends any position within the matrices of social, moral and legal relationships.

However, when he refers to instinct in abstract form — 'the instinct' — the phrase threatens to include him within its remit. Without a gendered pronoun, it is not clearly signalled as belonging to Josephine alone. The instinct which constructs its own prison might equally refer to the narrator who has endangered his performance as an independent masculine subject through his involvement in the pregnancy. In *The Dark* and *Amongst Women*, fatherhood is represented as a

²⁶ John McGahern, *The Dark* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965; 1983), p.58. See the fourth chapter for a fuller discussion of the use of the chain gang image in *The Dark*.

kind of entrapment.²⁷ When the pornographer accepted Josephine's refusal to use birth control, his acceptance was part of his hyperbolic performance of masculinity ("If it's raw meat you want, raw meat you'll get, I thought" (57)) but now it threatens to fix him in the unwanted roles of father and husband. Throughout the rest of the novel, the word 'instinct' occurs only in connection with the pornographer himself (See p.252, for example). As the narrator tries to maintain his abstract position through his discussion of 'instinct', the problems about where exactly the 'instinct' is located, or which self it is associated with, become more difficult:

The only pleasure was in staying outside oneself, watching the instinct that had constructed this prison suffer *its* own exhaustion within *its* walls and instead of bounding with refreshed curiosity to some new boundary of sense, having to take off *its* coat, and wield a painful pick. (136; my italics)

The pornographer derives pleasure from watching 'exhausted instinct' from a position 'outside it'. In order to construct a position 'outside' the instinctual embodied self, the narrator uses images of confinement to delimit 'the instinct' from his abstract and powerful voice. The boundary between the two bodies which is signalled by skin at the beginning of the scene is re-emphasised through concrete images which set limits on the self and safeguard it from involvement with the narrator's abstract perspective. The number of limits the narrator invokes to separate himself from 'the instinct' — prisons, walls and, in particular, the tautological image of instinct bounding claustrophobically to boundaries — implies the difficulty with which the narrator signals his distance and difference from the self that Josephine represents. When the feminised instinct that the narrator has worked to reject is represented in the image of a disenfranchised man 'wield[ing] a painful pick' the image threatens to undermine the narrator's claim to an autonomous male identity by raising the spectre of trapped instinct as a fate available to men.

The self that the narrator tries to remain outside, and which he has worked to signal as feminine throughout the novel, is now represented through an image of powerless masculinity. Only the violence of the narrator's image of aggressive, penetrative blows, where those blows are mentioned in confused connection with Josephine's body, re-cites him as stereotypically masculine and inimical to the embodied 'self'. After the scene in which he gazes at Josephine's body, the pornographer switches his narrative to a conversation with Josephine in which he is able, on the same page as this tortuous passage, to re-instate his absolute difference from the 'self' her body represents or hosts. He declares his absolute indifference to the pregnancy which has complicated his rejection of the self. Josephine's response locates the narrator's ^{voice} now much simpler and more clearly rational, in a tradition of patriarchal and abusive male voices so that his performance

²⁷ See Chapter Four for a discussion of the rights of, and limitations on the father in McGahern's novels.

of masculinity is both restored and endorsed. She explains to him that if she decides to marry someone else:

'You'll have to sign over all your rights to the child. Will you do that? It means you can never lay eyes on the child again in your life,' she continued angrily.

'I'll be glad to do that.'

'Have you no curiosity about the child?'

'None.'

'I don't know, there must be something wrong with you, something missing. I don't know whether you picked it up writing that pornography stuff or not but there's a lack of feeling that makes me feel sorry for you.'(136)

Josephine's pregnancy endangers the narrator's ability to sustain his absolute difference from the self that she embodies, but as the pregnancy develops, Josephine's voice enters into a new relationship with her body which separates her voice definitively from that of the narrator. Josephine's conversation concentrates on her pregnancy, and her focus on her bodily state — its responsibilities and consequences — reiterates the connection between her voice and the gendered body with which it is associated. In addition, the fact that Josephine has become pregnant outside marriage constructs her as an unspeakable subject in Irish society. Once she becomes pregnant she becomes metaphorically silent. She is unable to admit to her connection with the pornographer and she has to leave her job in the Northern Bank and move to London to avoid social ruin.

In her discussion of Irish extramarital pregnancy, Ailbhe Smyth describes the flight of women like Josephine:

The facts of women's lives didn't fit the image so women were locked away. Out of sight, out of mind.

Which is precisely how Ireland has continued to behave into the 1990s. Britain, ironically, has become a vast laundry for the human 'dirty linen' that Irish morality refuses to handle.²⁸

In *The Pornographer*, when Josephine leaves Ireland — a place where her voice is now unspeakable — the narrator's embodied and reviled self moves out of the world of the novel and liberates the newly-powerful masculine identity he is constructing for himself. The repeated references to Josephine's pregnancy distance her from the narrator's masculine, authoritative identity. Because her voice is connected with a body which figures so prominently in the narrative, and because it appears to be engaged in a reflexive relationship with that body, the voice that Josephine uses — which repeats the narrator's performance in his last relationship — is distanced from the narrator and increasingly naturalised as feminine.

²⁸ Ailbhe Smyth, 'A Sadistic Farce: Women and Abortion in the Republic of Ireland, 1992', in *The Abortion Papers*, ed. by Ailbhe Smyth (Dublin: Attic Press, 1992), pp.7-24, (p.21).

Women's bodies, voices and nature: a conservative relationship?

Before concluding this chapter by focusing on the narrator's final rejection of the role of women in the construction of his powerful voice, I want to discuss the roles that women's voices play in persuading the narrator to modulate his claim to an ideal abstract, masculine voice, that voice which he attempts to construct regardless of the contingent circumstances of space, time, nature and culture that constrain and produce liveable subjectivities. The narrator learns from the women he encounters that he must come to terms with the social and moral discourses which constrain the subject rather than simply denying their validity. Although they limit the performance of masculinity he produces, conventions also provide some security for the subjects they endorse. The narrator feels an increasing need for support in his attempt to construct a powerful identity for himself. When his aunt's death shatters his reserve, the narrator tries to distance himself from the tears that demonstrate his fragility, but he also demands that there should be strategies available to help sustain the faltering performance of identity that he, less successfully than his aunt, produces:

Emotion kept rising treacherously: her sturdy independence, her caustic laugh, her anger and her kindness, her person, the body of all life, growing, fighting, joying, weeping and now gone; and suddenly it beat me. I broke, and far off I could hear the wildness in my crying. Guard the human person well even in all its meanness, in its open hand, spite, venom, horror, beauty — profane sacredness, horrible contradiction.(230)

The women's voices in the novel bring the narrator to accept that identity is not formulated through absolute agency, or from some position 'outside' social and moral matrices of power. Instead, he learns from his interaction with women to modify his claims to independence and authority. He increasingly moves to align himself with discourses about nature which are conventionally feminised rather than claiming the traditional privileges of the abstract male subject. When the women deploy definitions of nature, their ideas do not function to reify the conventional gendered binary of nature and culture as their ideas about nature are clearly saturated with cultural meaning. The women — Josephine, the narrator's aunt and Nurse Brady — suggest that the self always has to be negotiated in relation to the natural and cultural limitations on the performance of an embodied identity. Once discourses about nature have been 'denaturalised' in the novel, they operate as a paradigm to demonstrate, for the narrator's benefit, the ways in which other subjects construct secure and positive roles for themselves through the recitation of those conventional discourses including the languages of Catholic ritual and conventional morality which, especially in the case of women, for the most part limit and marginalise them. As the narrator learns to modify his bid for the privileges of absolute agency, that vision of agency is refigured as comic.

The narrator establishes his status as a male subject through his rejection of the ideas about nature that Josephine is the first to advocate. In rejecting Josephine's definition of 'nature' the narrator is able to align himself with 'culture' and so reinforces the traditional gendered binary which links women to nature. However, Josephine's investment in 'natural' cycles is shown to be a pragmatic and limited manipulation of the cultural discourses which delimit her potential to move beyond the roles of wife and mother. Just as the narrator works to construct his position outside process, Josephine tries to naturalise her relationship with him within the range of liveable 'natural' identities. She promises to be the ideal Irish Catholic mother when she tells him that "I'd be a compliant wife, an old fashioned wife" (100) and insists that she will have more children because "We won't have a Protestant family" (99). If the narrator were to behave naturally in Josephine's terms he would play the roles of husband and father which carry social status in Irish Catholic society and so she would be able to take up the powerful roles of wife and mother which offer to maximise her own status.

Josephine is made vulnerable by any move beyond the limits of the performance of ideal femininity that society promotes as natural. Cultural and economic practices put pressure on her to participate only in these 'natural' roles. When she resigns from her job at the Northern Bank, she forfeits the 'married woman's gratuity,' a sum of money accumulated during the years a woman worked for the Irish banks or the civil service. This would only have been payable on her marriage, after which she would have been obliged by law to leave her job (the law was revoked in 1973 after pressure from the European Community).²⁹ The loss of this money upsets Josephine — "I hate to think of them being able to hang on to all that money just because I walked out without getting married" (116). Clearly, she has an investment in promoting the repetition of socially valid identities as natural and inescapable. Her increasingly desperate need to marry is figured comically when she tells the pornographer that his son is identical to him apart from his ears. She echoes Osgood's blind willingness to marry Jack Lemmon's character, even after he has revealed that he is a man in drag, at the end of *Some Like it Hot* (1959): 'we can't all be perfect [...] from her favourite movie' (224).³⁰

Josephine counters the narrator's refusal to comply in normative societal practices with the assertion that their relationship is governed by pre-existing 'natural' laws which are perverted by his attempt at rational intervention. She refuses to use contraception because she argues that it is "unnatural. It turns the whole thing into a kind of farce" (56). When, in a separate dispute the narrator argues that death is a renunciation of involvement with others, "a sort of vamoosing", she disagrees: "But it's natural," she said slowly. "It's making room for others" (68). She

²⁹ With thanks to Colette Holland for this information.

³⁰ *Some Like it Hot* (1959) dir. William Wilder.

rationalises her own pregnancy and the illness of the narrator's aunt in the same terms: "One person going out of life [...] and another person coming into life. I suppose that's the story"(122).³¹ Her faith in nature is not presented as innocent or prior to culture in the novel. Her ideas about nature are transparently indexed to the hegemonic social and economic discourses in Irish and Catholic society as Josephine cites conservative discourses about nature to try and secure her position within her community.

The narrator's aunt has, through citing similar discourses, managed to maximise the status available to her as a woman in society much more successfully than has the younger woman. She has constructed a position of power which is both maintained and limited by conventional, gendered social and economic discourses. She is not a birth mother, but, in a social matrix which evaluates women's status in relation to the family, she has built up her authority around the theme of the home. She has performed a maternal role for the narrator (his parents died when he was young) and the narrator explains that her considerable wealth is all invested in other people's homes: 'Over the years she'd acquired seven or eight houses in the town, and as she didn't believe in cash was always on the lookout for more'(120).

Mrs O'Doherty manipulates rather than passively endures the discourses which restrict her. Throughout the novel, her distinctive voice wages a fight to control not only her body but also the men who surround her. In her role as the woman of the house she has had the status to attack both the narrator and his uncle: "Bad luck to both of you [...] the pair of yous are the same thick old blocks"(121). She adopts the same fighting tone in relation to her illness: "Bad luck to it"(150). Although her devotion to her feckless husband, Cyril, matches Josephine's devotion to the pornographer, she is eventually able to control him by reinforcing her orders with the authority her money gives her. She leaves him everything only on the condition that he never visits her again(235).

The narrator is awed by his aunt's continued attempt to resist being dominated by her body. She reflects the stage of the body-self relationship which, in Gadow's model of the relationship between mind and illness, is known as 'disrupted immediacy'. During this stage, in Leslie Rebecca Bloom's words, 'the self, conscious of the body as a site of constraint, enters into a new and negative relationship with the body, positioning the body as an object'.³² Like the narrator, his aunt fiercely resists the limitations on her agency and, like him, she uses the metaphor of 'shape' to describe her attempts to control her identity:

³¹ McGahern's novels establish a number of key scenarios which are signalled as 'stories' or 'the old story'. They isolate the fictions on which the community founds itself. These stories, here and in *Amongst Women* (1990) all privilege women as the masters of 'the social'.

³² Leslie Rebecca Bloom, "How Can we Know the Dancer From the Dance?": Discourses of the Self-Body', *Human Studies*, 15 (1992), 313-334, (p.318).

She was tough. There was nothing but to salute that proud hardness with a perfect silence. She stood at the foot of the garden, under a far outriding branch of the oak, her ravished face and few wisps of hair turned away from the searching light, and she said in a voice matter-of-fact enough to be running through a tenant's contract, 'I don't know. It's only after years that you get some shape on things, and then after all that you have to leave. It's comical. You want to go on and you can't.'(144)³³

Despite these exercises of power, she cannot prevent her own death. Like Josephine, the pornographer's aunt responds to the limits on her authority by citing her personal crisis in a pattern of loss and renewal, which is substantially more optimistic than the one that the narrator is trying to establish. The garden she tends, and later finances, is surrounded by thistles which will produce parachutes like those symbols of hope and renewal in McGahern's later short story. Both Josephine and Mrs. O'Doherty are linked to gardens which suggest that the process of life and death that they come to endorse is both natural and ordered. Both women represent their contribution to this process as positive, figuring it as a gift. Josephine, contemplating her ability to create a new life, considers the enormity of this power with typical energy when she marvels:

'I'm giving another person the gift of life, of the sky and the sea and summer and the crowded streets of cities, everything that Man or God has made. And I can't get over what a miracle of a gift it is to be able to give to anybody, what a gift it is to give, not only a whole garden in the evening but everything, can you imagine it, everything, just everything?' She raised herself above me on one arm so that her breasts and fine shoulders shone.(189)

The pornographer's aunt, just before her death, sends a gift to a woman, a cousin of the family, who is getting married. The gift is accompanied by a message which suggests the aunt's acceptance of death fits within a process of loss and renewal. The narrator's uncle explains:

'She sent them a present. But she said that she'd not be at the wedding, that she had a much harder thing to do, and that she wished them as much joy and fun from the wedding as they could get, for one day they'd have to do the same hard thing that she had to do now.'(237)

For both women, any attempt to ward off or to adopt a position 'outside' the processes of life and death, is comic. Maloney defines comedy for the reader when he provides 'a good definition of the funny, if I may say so. Tension set off by the realization of the difference between what should be possible and what it is fact impossible. The idea of seeing one take place in the other'(165). Some of the narrator's grandest attempts to establish his status as an abstract and powerful masculine subject are accompanied by a cosmic laughter which mocks the possibility of him ever occupying that role.

Near the beginning of the novel, when Josephine reads the pornography that the narrator has written, he feels able to empathise with God who 'must enjoy himself hugely, feeling all his

³³ Marianne Koenig Mays argues that McGahern uses the words 'ravaged' and 'ravished' interchangeably without any apparent stylistic motive, just as he uses 'exasperated' where sense suggests he means 'exacerbated'. See Mays, pp.38-52.

creatures absorbed in his creation'(66), yet he figures another level of Gods elsewhere who laugh at his and Josephine's belief that they have more agency in their world than the pornographic characters have in theirs. The narrator is represented as both the creator of fictional agents and the creature within a world orchestrated from elsewhere: 'It must have been the drink, for I felt the flat shake with an uncontrollable silent, laughter, that I was both taking part in some farce and at the same watching it from miles far off. [...] "you and I. Mavis and the Colonel. The whole setup seems somehow such a huge farce"'(66).

Josephine rejects any attempt to prevent pregnancy as 'farcical'(56) because it represents an inevitably comic attempt to stage impossible control over nature and chance. His aunt finds the narrator's attempt to control his relationship with Nurse Brady comic because unrealistic. As the narrator rushes away from her bed to avoid the nurse, his aunt's last words in the novel are rocked with a laughter which presides over his capitulation to the nurse's advances. His aunt's laughter is, according to the narrator, 'obviously cancelling any pain she may have been feeling'(207) and it constitutes a comic blessing for the new affair which marks the narrator's imminent reintegration into the community:

'O you're a sly one,' she said laughing, for the whole muffled comedy was now so extreme that it didn't matter what words were said. 'O my God, bad luck to you anyway. I never thought I'd live to see the day. You're a crowned pair. Bad luck to both of yez.'(208)

After his aunt's death, the narrator discovers that in her last hours his aunt marked the limit between her desire for life and its impossibility with comedy. The involvement of the narrator's mother in this final laughter seems to remind the narrator that he has been the subject of this laughter during his recent affair, though he is not able to establish who or what the women were laughing about. The narrator's uncle tells him:

'I thought at first that she was talking to the nurse, but then I saw she wasn't talking to the nurse at all. Her voice was so low that it was hard to hear, it but I think she was talking to your mother, God rest her. Whatever it was it must have been funny for she seemed to be laughing a great deal or it was like as if she was laughing.'

'Was she talking all the time?'

'No. She'd talk and then go quiet as if listening. It's in those times that she'd start to laugh. Then she'd start up talking again.' (236)

The narrator has made one final attempt to state his sombre independence from all other characters. In a set-piece passage which has attracted a lot of critical attention, he argues that he is entirely self-reliant. He stresses that the process through which identity is constructed is solitary and contemplative. However, the narrator's contemplation does not mark the terminus of his search for an independent identity any more than does the scene in which he contemplates Josephine's sleeping body. Although his journey into the self is figured as inward and cerebral, the language he uses is reminiscent of earlier accounts of sexual penetration in the novel and his

✓ philosophical style is as derivative as that of his pornographic stories. He echoes again the rhetoric of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. For Eliot's speaker, 'the end of all our exploring | Will be to arrive where we started | And know the place for the first time'³⁴ so that a journey forward is figured as one towards the kind of rediscovery that the narrator of *The Pornographer* is still trying to evade. McGahern's narrator declares:

We can no more learn from another than we can do their death for them or have them do ours. We have to go inland, in the solitude that is both pain and joy and there make our own truth, and even if that proves nothing too, we still have that hard joy of having gone the hard and only way there is to go, we have not backed away or staggered to one side [...] We had gone too deep inland to think that a different physique or climate would change anything. We were outside change because we were change. [...] To find we had to lose: the road away became the road back. And what company we met with on the road, we who no longer sought company, at what fires and walls did we sit. Our wits were sharpened. All the time we had to change our ways. We listened to everything with attention, to others singing of their failures and their luck, for we now had our road. All, all were travelling. Nobody would arrive. The adventure would never be over even when we were over.(203)

This formal and linear model of the narrator's change and progress shares with the account of Josephine's naked body the tone of an over-wrought set-piece. Like Eliot's speaker, he addresses the reader with an inclusive and plural pronoun which refuses to keep his identity single or isolated. Despite his claim to having 'listened to everything with attention' and having paid attention to others, he later attacks his own failure to do this in his relationships with the women he has encountered. In the remaining pages of the novel, the narrator modifies the argument he sets up here. This apparently conclusive statement of the narrator's perspective falls at an inconclusive stage of the novel where the narrator has not yet decided on his new course of action. It follows the narrator's decision to stay out of the interactive 'life' that Nurse Brady offers. It also has the sonorous tone of some of Maloney's comic rhetoric. When the narrator offers an observation in this tone to his employer soon after, Maloney complains that 'That sounds like I should have said it'(205). Maloney goes on to undermine the kind of linear, formal, phallic rhetoric the pair now share when he suggests: 'There must be a moral. You can't thrash the tide back with mere sticks, not even with the pure spirit'(205).

The narrator's philosophical considerations precede his comic and reluctant jolt into a relationship with the young nurse. Initially, the narrator represents his relationship with the nurse as proof that he has resumed masculine agency over his performance of identity. He is clearly far more willing to engage in his relationship with the young nurse than he was with Josephine and the nurse's voice is not signalled as part of the narrator's earlier performance of powerlessness. Instead it is signalled as distinctively feminine. This allows the narrator to state his difference

³⁴ T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding' pp. 214-223 in *T.S. Eliot: Collected Poems 1909-1962*, [1942] (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1963), pp.214-33, (p. 222).

from and attraction to it in ways that secure his experienced, dominant and so stereotypically masculine role in the relationship. When he takes her out for dinner, he signals her inability to choose as attractively feminine: 'There was so much pretty confusion and smiling and choosing what to eat that the waiter helped her to choose'(210). While Josephine troubled him as an equal, he imagines the nurse as a provincial, and less worldly counterpart for himself. She suggests that the restaurant they are eating in is expensive. While he demurs he imagines the nurse's last affair as a comically tame and provincial transgression compared to his own: 'I tried to think of what places she must have eaten in with the older man in the photograph. I thought of soda bread and tea and a hotel beside the river in Ballina'(210).

The narrator's relationship with Josephine has helped him to make the transition from a parodically overstated to a more normative masculine voice. Nurse Brady is not given the same status as the woman the pornographer was first in love with, but the narrator points out that his relationship with her marks the conclusive movement of his recovery from that first affair. This conclusion is undermined by the trite rhyme he employs when he refers patronisingly to his decision to pluck her from obscurity:

It seems we must be beaten twice, by the love that we inflict and then by the infliction of being loved, before we have the humility to look and take whatever agreeable plant that we have never seen before, because of it being all around our feet, and take it and watch it grow, choosing the lesser truth because it's all that we'll ever know.(219)

Suzanne Fournier argues that Nurse Brady appeals to the pornographer because she becomes 'an increasingly attractive symbol of affirmation within a setting of suffering and death.' As such, 'Nurse Brady offers him an alternative to the older Josephine, her home in London or his own closed space in Dublin'.³⁵ However, the nurse seems strikingly similar to Josephine. The narrator has criticised Josephine for imagining herself, as he imagines himself, superior to the people who surround her: 'I could see that she thought she was well above this suburban herd, a dangerous thought for anybody in case they happened to wind up in it'(55). When Nurse Brady similarly attempts to distance herself from the common crowd he is less resistant. The nurse claims that a childhood in which she was treated in the same way as her eight brothers means that she does not behave or speak like other women, and she uses this statement to distance herself from negative stereotypes of women's behaviour:

'I can't stand women who are lady-like and fragile, never sniffing at a fact of life, while they'd carve you up in small pieces without batting an eyelid [...] It's women I find who are mostly boring and small and spiteful.'(170-1; 174)

³⁵ Fournier, p.147.

She makes it clear that she wants to get married and, like the woman in Hemingway's short story, 'Cat in the Rain,'³⁶ she constructs an itemised list of things she feels that marriage should offer her: "To have my own husband and child and house and garden and saucepans and pets. All that"(174). At twenty three, Nurse Brady is substantially younger than Josephine and she says that she wants all of these things because "it's far more fun, isn't it?"(174). However, like Josephine and Judith Hearne, the nurse considers the man she will marry as less important than the achievement of winning marriage in itself. As she explains to the pornographer, "I wouldn't marry a boring man. And I don't find all that many men are boring. Usually the very attractive ones are married, but that's a different thing"(174). When the narrator asks her how she would react if she were to become pregnant, her reaction confirms the unliveability of certain identities for women in Irish society and her desire to remain within conventional bounds:

'What would you do if you found yourself pregnant?' I asked tensely.
 'You mean if I weren't married?'
 'Yes.'
 'I'd want to get married.'
 'And if the man was already married or wouldn't marry you for some reason.'
 'I'd throw myself in the Liffey,' she drew herself up in unfeigned alarm. 'What are you laughing at?'
 'You wouldn't. You're too young and healthy. And beautifully normal. Anyhow the man would be sure to marry you. I'd want to marry you.' (174)

The narrator's relationship with the nurse marks his modification of the performance of powerful masculinity he has tried to construct rather than his confirmation as a dominant, masculine 'personality'. Only his final decision to ask her to marry him situates him as the controlling agent of their relationship. By contrast, when he first meets Nurse Brady in the hospital ward, she is the pursuer, an even more aggressive one than Josephine. She threatens to disconcert his performance of a powerful masculine voice even before he has managed to distance himself from his powerless performance in his first affair. Her flirtatious shout after him in the hospital ward after this first meeting interrupts the beginning of his affair with Josephine and disrupts his attempt to write as the pornographer:

'Auntie is well enough taken care of. Why don't you come in to see us the next time?' echoed all the next morning as I tried to get to the typewriter. I'd shaved, dressed, lit the fire, washed my hands several times, scraped fingernails, had cups of coffee ... and each time I tried to move I'd hear, 'Why don't you come in to see us the next time? Why-don't-you come-in?'.(49)

At this point, the narrator feels too vulnerable to risk her dismissing him and his refusal to approach her is part of his attempt to stand outside social interaction (49). Like Josephine, Nurse Brady uses speech to involve the pornographer in social situations. He does not notice her in the dancehall until she says "Cheer up!" before she takes him on to the dance floor and tells him

³⁶ Ernest Hemingway, 'Cat in the Rain', in *In Our Time* [1925] (New York: First Scribner Classic / Collier Books Edition, 1986), pp.91-94.

“You see, you weren’t paying attention. If you were paying attention you’d have seen me. Well, here we are at last”(169). She exceeds any of Josephine’s attempts to prevent the pornographer from evading her when she shouts after him as he leaves the hospital ward for a second time, near the end of the text. He recalls ‘I had not gone far when the clear words rang out behind me, full of rage and hurt, “You never come in to see us now. You just come in to see Auntie”’(208). His description of her words ‘ringing out’ even resembles his sarcastic characterisation of Josephine’s words as ‘bells of good cheer’(217).

His movement towards Nurse Brady indicates his subjectification within the conventional discourses that women employ in the novel. Nurse Brady, is, like the other women in the novel, implicated in the novel’s paradigm of life and death, loss and renewal, and she prompts the narrator to move towards life. Like the other women, she is also linked to images of natural and ordered growth. Early on in the novel, when he remembers a meeting with her, the narrator associates her with the investment in life that he strives to reject:

I saw the ridiculous white cap pinned to the curly black hair growing thick and close to the skull, her strong legs planted apart, her laugh, its confident affirmation of itself against everything vulnerable and receding and dying. (49)

Towards the end of the novel he remains cautious that she will be able to situate him once more within social, and moral matrices of power supervised by women: ‘When it came to ringing her or not, I did not want to be born again. I had no doubt that I had enough of “life” for some time more’(202). However, when he responds to her shouted challenge in the hospital corridor, he abandons his attempt to evade his interpellation into a relationship. As he turns to face the nurse, he comically mourns his refusal of the strategies he has used to separate himself from Josephine. He represents himself as stripped, emasculated and vulnerable in his new relationship. For the first time the narrator is imaged as naked in his own text: ‘I felt myself trembling, feeling the whole naked humiliation of life that we mostly manage to keep at bay with all those weapons that can only be praised’(208).

In *The Pornographer*, the narrator has repeatedly laid claim to an abstract subjectivity which stands outside process. Throughout the novel, as the narrator’s lover and his aunt negotiate their relationships to birth and death, he has observed the ways in which they construct their relationships with others and with their bodies through their use of the conventional discourses relating to nature and Catholicism. Although the narrator emphasises the ways in which women are limited by, for example, cultural constructions of motherhood, without having the ability to choose more powerful roles, he praises the ways in which they work within and manipulate those cultural constructions to construct liveable identities. He praises their deployment of the ritualised languages of Catholicism and nature, a deployment which counterpoints and offers him an alternative to his own overarching claims to absolute agency.

The narrator reconsiders the power of discourse to ritualise and shape experience as he witnesses the closing of his aunt's coffin. As he considers the ritualised treatment of his aunt's body and the brown stain her body leaves behind on the bed sheet, he celebrates the power of social, moral and religious discourses to hold the abject at bay and to create the illusion of order, more successfully than his own efforts have allowed. Ritual and convention produce and maintain gendered relationships and divisions even after death more successfully than the narrator has been able to through his pornographic voice: 'Was the division between men and women, so great, the simple facts of sex so tabernacled, that a woman had to be chaperoned between deathbed and coffin? In the same mysterious way that word went down to Cyril it went down to the 'women' and none of them wanted to come up'(238). He marvels at the power of ritual and convention to organise and hold in place every aspect of the 'life' he has tried to stand outside.

The narrator argues now that the hegemonic social and cultural discourses he has rejected allow the speaking subject to install form and order in their experiences even as they construct and delimit that subject. He has attempted to secure a position outside the limits of conventional discourse. He suggests here instead that discursive conventions can help at least to consolidate and stabilise the positions of the people, like women or the pornographer himself, that they restrict. The subject who repeats socially-validated discourses 'masters' the very processes which limit his authority:

The superstitious, the poetic, the religious are all made safe within the social, given a tangible form. The darkness is pushed out. All things become interrelated. We learn sequence and precedence, grown anxious about our own position in the scheme, shutting out the larger anxiety of the darkness. There's nothing can be done about it. There's good form and bad form. All is outside.

At heartsease we can roll about in laughter at all divergences from the scheme of the world. We master the darkness with ceremonies: of delight at being taken from the darkness into this light, of regret on the inevitable leaving of the light, hope as founded on the social and as firm as the theological rock. (238)

The passage seems to link women to conservative or 'natural' social practices in ways that simplify the representation of women in the novel. Josephine has brought a child into the light while his aunt came to terms with her impending death. However, mastery is always a fraught term in the McGahern canon.

Here in *The Pornographer*, it refers to the processes through which women exert a limited amount of control against the grain of dominant systems of power and, at the same time, expose those systems of power as grounded on an impossible ideal of agency.³⁷ Women learn 'mastery' in the absence of agentive power: it involves the manipulation, rather than the transcendence, of the circumstances of their oppression. Mastery never offers women the abstract privileges of traditional agency which the narrator has sought in

³⁷ In the fourth chapter, this thesis will examine Rose Brady's claim to mastery.

his pornography but, in *The Pornographer*, and particularly in *Amongst Women*, mastery helps to question the possibility of the type of agency that men in these novels claim as their absolute right.

Like Yeats' Solomon, the pornographer learns his wisdom from the women who surround him. The mastery that the narrator claims to participate in is learnt from them as they ridicule and scold him for his claims to absolute power. His attempts to resist the normative natural and cultural patterns of 'life' have been met with laughter and he has to adapt to a different view of his relationship to convention. He learns the lesson that Terence Brown suggests is common to all McGahern's early characters: 'Memory and meaning, myth and mystery, passion and pattern, seem controllable for the protagonists of [McGahern's] novels only through the mediation of rite and symbol'.³⁸

In the last of the novel's set-pieces, immediately after the narrator's endorsement of the conventional social and moral discourses which put 'a shape' on experience, he hears a range of unattributed but roughly recognisable voices which encourage him to take up the limited mastery available to him rather than to aspire for transcendent agency. As his aunt's body is taken to the church in the ritual of 'removal,' voices perhaps attributable to the narrator, Josephine and the narrator's aunt appear in disembodied form. No voice is properly attributed to any named agent, body, or gender and the narrator refuses to situate or evaluate this conversation. They address the narrator from the abstract disembodied point-of-view to which he has aspired and use that position to situate him firmly within the cyclical process of life he has resisted. He no longer controls our narrative:

'It is nothing. It's not what we struggled towards in all the days and nights of longing. We better look at it again in case we've missed something we find at the end of each arrival. But then many see that they've arrived in the longing of eyes that used to be their own.'

'It's always this way,' an old voice says. 'Everything. Sex, money, houses. Death will be the same way too, except this time you won't even realize it. You will be nothing.'

'Since its this way it's still better to pretend. It makes it easier, for yourself and others. And it's kinder.'

'But I don't need kindness.'

'You will,' a ghostly voice said. 'You will. We all will before we'll need nothing.'" (239)

The first voice undermines the narrator's attempt to remove all connections with Josephine. It hints at the process through which people differentiate themselves from 'those eyes that used to be their own'. The second voice is marked by its age or by its status as an old version of a voice in the present narrative. The reference to money and houses, his aunt's concerns, and the didactic tone it uses is closer to the one she used to chide the pornographer than to the other

³⁸ Terence Brown, 'John McGahern's *Nightlines*: Tone, Technique and Symbolism' in *The Irish Short Story*, ed. by Patrick Rafroidi and Terence Brown (Gerrards Cross, Bucks.: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1979), pp. 289-99, (p.294).

alternative, Maloney's voice, although this does not in any real sense attribute these words to her. It seems to be the narrator who wants to resist kindness, but the other voices, the voices which mock his search for transcendence and advocate positive involvement in 'life' are more difficult to source.

Thomas Kelly argues that the scene demonstrates that 'the sternness of voice that characterizes the early work is softened by a sort of humility before life and death, as though the author joins the community of his characters'.³⁹ Perhaps the significance of the passage is in the narrator temporarily suspending the separation and differentiation of voices into clearly sexed, and gendered identities and surrendering his attempt to control the novels' voices. The passage confronts the narrator's continued attempts to signal voices and gender as fixed rather than contingent and interactive.

The dialogue can be placed in a masculine literary tradition, where men speak to men in other literary texts. The narrator of 'Little Gidding' finds himself in a dialogue with the ghost of Yeats which resembles the confused dialogue the narrator has had with the voices of women in the novel:

So I assumed a double part, and cried
and heard another's voice cry: What! are you here?
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself but being someone other — and he a face still forming.⁴⁰

This Yeatsian ghost advises Eliot's narrator in terms which echo those the narrator in *The Pornographer* finally adopts, urging him to go through:

The rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done and been; the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to other's harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.⁴¹

As the narrator of *The Pornographer* re-evaluates his role at the end of the novel he criticises himself for not listening — not 'attending' — to the voices of others and he seems to connect this to his interaction with women. His own laughter marks his decision to participate once again in the process of life he has tried to evade: 'I gritted my teeth to try to stop the fit of laughter because it hurt so much, but the very pain was making it all the more impossible to stop' (252). Like the women, he has become involved with, the narrator has come to terms with the limits of subjectivity *and* the impossibility of constructing a position for the self which is outside the parameters of conventional social and cultural roles. Like them, he implies that the social and cultural practices which construct subjectivity are not just normative but natural, founded in an

³⁹ Thomas H. Kelly 'Review of *The Pornographer*', *Éire-Ireland*, 15:3 (1980), pp.154-56, (p.155).

⁴⁰ Eliot, 'Little Gidding', p.217.

⁴¹ Eliot, 'Little Gidding', p.218.

'instinct for the true' and he abandons the 'road of reason' he has otherwise advocated. He figures his acceptance of a role within social parameters in such a way that, while it echoes Eliot, it is also structured as a response to a challenge from Nurse Brady:

'You'd have seen me if you had been paying attention,' she'd once said to me, the night she came towards me across the floor of the Metropole. By not attending, by thinking that one thing was as worth doing as any other, by sleeping with anyone who'd agree, I had been the cause of as much pain and evil as if I had actively set out to do it. I had not attended properly, I had found the energy to choose too painful. Broken in love, I had turned back, let the light of imagination almost out. Now my hands were ice.

We had to leave the road of reason because we needed to go farther. Not to have a reason is a greater reason still to follow the instinct for the true, to follow it with all the force we have, in all the seeing and all the final blindness.(251-2)

In the final pages of the novel, the pornographer's narrative voice repeats the strategies of participation and of renewal he has learnt from women, but he develops a genealogy for his newly optimistic voice which situates it as produced through interaction with men, and as a man's voice in its own right. The final section will consider what effects this re-citation of the narrator's voice has on the plausibility of the powerful masculine voice he finally claims as his right.

Re-Citing a Masculine Voice

In the final three pages of the novel, the pornographer affirms his status as a powerful, masculine speaking subject. Throughout the novel he has argued that standing outside 'the social' constitutes a powerful identity. Now, he criticises his failure to listen or to take part in the relationships he has rejected. However, in order to redeem his decision to participate in life as masculine, he rather hurriedly suggests that it is in his attempt to stand aloof from participation in conventional social matrices that he has failed to produce a powerful masculine voice. He claims that it is through his renunciation of the ability to 'choose' and 'act,' as well as in his failures to address and listen to others, that he has failed to perform a powerful masculine role. He carefully situates his acceptance of the limits and responsibilities of a normative role as a dynamic choice. He explains to Maloney that he will marry because "There comes a time when you either run amok completely or try to make a go of it. I'm going to try and make a go of it"(251). His decision to propose marriage to Nurse Brady situates him as the agent in a relationship which she has so far dominated while his increasingly frequent echoes of Eliot's *Four Quartets* signal his place in a tradition of effective male voices. In the final pages, the narrator sets up a genealogy for his participation in the community which allows him to restate his masculinity even as he gives up the abstract male role to which he has aspired.

He aligns himself with other men who, he perceives, have managed to construct a position which is both participatory and yet outside process. Throughout the novel, men suggest that the

other men in the novel are able to claim the position outside process which they themselves try hopelessly to achieve. They maintain the fiction of the powerful masculine voice even as they demonstrate the impossibility of adopting that ideal voice for themselves. For instance, the narrator explains as the novel begins that 'My uncle saw his own state as the ideal, and it should be the goal of others to strive to reach its perfect height'(18). Though the narrator initially shies away from this example, it is his uncle's static nature, his fixity as a still centre in a turning world to borrow another of the novel's Eliotisms, that seems to provoke the narrator's final resolution to marry. The narrator clearly admires his uncle, but it is Maloney who singles out and praises his absolute certainty. Maloney's admiration for the uncle's stability, like other claims to masculine subjectivity, is linked to cosmic laughter:

'There's one man who knows he's going everywhere by staying put,' Maloney said. It was impossible to tell from the tone whether it was intended as a cosmic joke or a simple breath of admiration.

'I'm thinking of proposing marriage to a woman and coming back here,' I said suddenly.(250)

The narrator's uncle claims that his voice has absolute autonomy. As he explains in a question which appropriately brooks no dissent, 'if you talk to the wall this weather — am I right or am I wrong — will the wall answer back?'"(18). Yet the appearance of his stability is wrought from the continual repetition of the acts through which his identity is constituted. His conversations with his sister have accumulated a discursive weight which creates the illusion of fixity: 'These chidings, and his acceptance of them, were but tokens of the total security they felt with one another. Nothing threatened. Everything was known. Within its protective ivy frightening affection must have grown'(14). His arguments with Jim, his workmate, have been repeated so often that they too gain the appearance of materiality: 'They dropped the quarrel with as much emotion as they might show when putting down a heavy, cumbersome tool they had grown tired using and came towards me with outstretched hands, both smiling'(145). The narrator collaborates in maintaining his uncle's performance of powerful masculinity by refusing to parody or expose its moments of inconsistency or incomprehension (his affectionate participation in the maintenance of performances of masculinity is repeated in *Amongst Women*). When the narrator's uncle fails to understand what 'conscious' means, the narrator delicately rephrases his question to allow his uncle to save face. Similarly, he refuses to rebuke his uncle's erratic use of proverbial language:

'You shouldn't stock that land yourself,' he said later in the evening. 'You shouldn't let it any more when this letting runs out.' He'd forgotten that till he'd stocked his own land he was against all stocking. 'Nothing but trouble,' he used to declare.(242)

While the narrator suggests of his uncle that 'In him all was one'(15) his aunt inadvertently puns on his repetitive, stolid use of language when she criticises the way he runs his business. She

complains that “All he thinks about is those old saws. There’ll be plenty of saws when he’s gone” (47).

In his turn, Maloney has appeared to be the man who has a stable and all-encompassing perspective on lived experience. He dispenses definitive moral judgements, and like the uncle, he is connected to the image of the wall, an image of fixity and stability which suggests that he is in control of his world. The pornographer watches Maloney correct his work and argues that is ‘almost standing back to admire the line of the sentences, like someone admiring the true line of a wall he has just straightened.’ (28) Walls, in a rural community, are traditionally barriers set up and maintained by men but they are not automatically part of a masculine discourse of permanence and power. When the narrator argues that ‘The body was the shelter of the self’ he suggests that ‘Like all walls and shelters it would age and break and let the enemy in’ (177).

Although the men claim that the other men have achieved the privilege of abstract subjectivity, each of them is, like the narrator, constructing that subjectivity through careful repetition which is exposed in their inadvertent failures to reach that goal. The abstract masculine voice that Maloney uses is heavily indebted to Wilde rather than autonomous and personal and he has failed to escape the normative identity that he, like the narrator, tries to avoid. He mocks the voice he uses at home, a voice which comically counterpoints his abstract, public performance: “I have to go home after I see Moran. Dada has to say good-good night, tuck the hush-a-baby in, go to safe-safe sleep, or Mama will spank-spank” (29). Nurse Brady has a more fluid analysis of Maloney’s personality than the narrator offers which notes the inconsistencies and failures in her performance of masculinity. She observes that “He tries very hard [...] It’s as if he’s always racing to keep up with an idea of himself that he never quite catches” (214).

When the narrator of *The Pornographer* announces his new, apparently agentive role in his community he links his claim to the examples presented by these men who, like him, aspire to, rather than achieve the privileges of the abstract masculine voice. It seems that his uncle rather than the women he has interacted with has prompted his decision to marry and the sense of cyclical progress the pornographer now accepts is apparently masculine. Maloney suggests life as well as death: ‘He looked definitely more danceband now than funeral.’ (252) and as the narrator closes the text with the image which opened the novel, the image seems to present itself as a masculine version of the ‘natural’ cycle the narrator has decided to endorse:

A fragment of another day seemed to linger among the sweeping wipers, and grow: the small round figure of my uncle getting out of the train [...] at the beginning of the journey — if beginning it ever had — that had brought each to where we were, in the now and forever. (252)

The narrator leaves the novel at high speed in Maloney's car, hurtling forward in a linear and masculine version of progress.⁴² The closing shout, "Yoo-hoo, Road. Yoo-hoo, Road. Yoo-hoo, Road. Yoo-hoo, ..." (252), seems at first to be a celebration of the self-referential voice which utters it. It echoes the shout just given by Maloney and could indeed be Maloney's voice. The non-specificity of the origin of the voice that closes the novel suggests that the narrator's voice has been liberated through the participation in the hurriedly masculinised process he has tried to escape. Here the echoes of *Four Quartets* are stronger than ever and reinforce the narrator's participation in 'the social' as part of a performance in a masculine tradition. Eliot's narrator praises the language of conservative social ritual as a means through which the speaker can transcend those individual conformist speech acts: 'prayer is more | than an order of words, the conscious occupation | of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying'.⁴³ McGahern's narrator praises the same speech acts as a means of validating the speaking subject:

What I wanted to say was that I had a fierce need to pray, for myself, Maloney, my uncle, the girl, the whole shoot. The prayers could not be answered, but prayers that cannot be answered need to be the more completely said, being their own beginning as well as end. (252)

However, he cannot express this aloud because he cannot stop laughing: 'What I did say was, "Why don't you watch the road?" Maloney's reply provides the final comic comment on the road of reason the narrator has tried to validate: "'I've been watching the bloody road all my life, and it tells me nothing. Yoo-hoo, Road!' (252.) If this cry celebrates the abstract, disembodied voice it also emphasises that that voice does not exercise control over what it names.

The pomographer's re-citation of his voice within a masculine tradition exposes the ideal and powerful masculine voice as an effect rather than as the founding premise of discourse. He secures his masculine identity through the renunciation of acts which are not sanctioned within the range of acceptable, liveable masculine identities and also through the careful, though sometimes parodic, performance of speech acts which successfully signify as a masculine voice. The voices attributed to women in the pomographer's narrative enable the narrator's performance of masculinity by signalling the narrator's distance and difference from culturally feminine acts. However, those voices coincide with and criticise the narrator's performance of masculinity in ways that expose it as a performative, contingent construct. The women make comic the version of absolute agency that the men promote as their inalienable right. Women's bodies, sexualised, diseased and linked to a discourse about nature, are discursively constructed to prove the gendered binary that naturalises the narrator's authority, but that binary is imperfectly maintained.

⁴² Both Mahoney in *The Dark* and Moran in *Amongst Women* sit in car seats inside their houses. The seats function to signal their frustration and lack of progress in their social roles. See, for example, *Amongst Women* p.4

⁴³ Eliot, 'Little Gidding', p.215.

The next chapter, which focuses on Brian Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance*, will continue to demonstrate that the powerful masculine voice which appears to be the enabling condition of the humanist subject is an ideal constructed through continual iteration rather than an automatic right. It will illustrate that in an Irish context, the citation of that right is complicated by the local politics of gendered voice and the particular resonances of the type of fictional bodies the pornographer has represented here.

De-Colleenising Irish Narrative Voices: Gender and National Literature in Brian Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance*

Inasmuch as we [women] had once been objects — or objectified — in those poems, we had been perfect and timeless. Now, as authors of poems ourselves, if we were to age or fail or be simply mortal, we would have to do more than simply write down those things as themes and images. We would have to enter the poem and reinscribe certain powerful and customary relations between object and subject. And be responsible for what we did. (Eavan Boland, *Object Lessons*)¹

Published in the same year as *The Pornographer*, Brian Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979) similarly focuses on the roles that voices attributed to women play in the articulation of successful Irish male identities. Both novels are self-conscious about what McGahern refers to as 'the experiment of the voice'² and about the context of that experiment in a patriarchal state still re-negotiating or re-affirming its relationships to nationalist, familist and Catholic rhetorics in a post-Independence environment. Although, like *The Pornographer*, Moore's novel questions the independence and authority of voices attributed to men, *The Mangan Inheritance* differs from the novels discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis in that it features a type of women's voice which reinforces those conservative and idealising rhetorics, a voice which contemporary feminist critics have identified as metaphorically silent: that of the 'woman as nation.'

Moore's own 'special cachet' — to borrow a phrase from Judith Hearne — has always been to ventriloquise women's voices and in *The Mangan Inheritance*, Moore is self-conscious, not just, as he was in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, about how women's voices are limited and produced by social and cultural discourses in Irish society, but also about the repercussions of writing 'through' women's voices in Irish fiction. Moore questions the ethics and aesthetics of the representation of Irish women's voices in texts by Irish men from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. In *The Mangan Inheritance* Moore enters into and re-inscribes the poet's ethical relations with the idealised woman in James Clarence Mangan's famous poem, 'Dark Rosaleen'.³ In the

¹ Boland, *Object Lessons*, pp.23-45.

² McGahern in interview with Denis Sampson, 'A Conversation with John McGahern', p.16.

³ James Clarence Mangan, 'Dark Rosaleen' in *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, ed. by Thomas Kinsella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.273-75.

process, Moore situates the use of gender ventriloquism by contemporary male authors, including himself, squarely within the context of a problematic Irish literary tradition.

When Jamie Mangan travels to Ireland to investigate his connection with James Clarence Mangan, his blood link to the older poet and their shared physical appearance give materiality to the idea of a literary tradition. His patrilineal link to James Clarence seems to offer him a right to a powerful voice. His Mangan inheritance gives Jamie's voice what Judith Butler refers to as citational force: it allows his voice to carry the status of the 'Mangan' name when he cites it as his own. Butler argues that where a speech act is successful, it is 'only because that action echoes a prior action, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices*'.⁴ Jamie Mangan's voice takes that of James Clarence Mangan as its enabling precedent. In Eavan Boland's terms, Jamie's is 'the voice at the center of too many Irish poems which assumes that an inherited stance can stand in for an achieved poetic authority' [sic].⁵

The Mangan Inheritance explores the terms of this inherited stance. Moore questions whether the poet who recites the patriarchal conventions other male poets have validated actually has agency over those conventions. Moore also explores whether the poet within a powerful literary tradition is able to control the ways in which the images he makes use of signify beyond the text. In Ireland, Jamie Mangan initially feels that his poetic inheritance gives him status and support. He stresses that he feels at home in his new role as a Mangan poet as he has never felt at home before (144). However, this *heimlich* inheritance — comfortable and secure — quickly becomes uncanny as all that needs to be kept secret, hidden and private in order for the Mangan voice to exercise its presumptive rights to poetic authority is brought out into the open. The Mangan voice is shown to be indebted to the citation of voices attributed to women and unable to make an impact without incurring that debt at the cost of women.

When Jamie Mangan, the protagonist of *The Mangan Inheritance* discovers that he is a direct descendant of James Clarence Mangan, he regards the discovery as a means for him to articulate a powerful, masculine voice within a secure, male tradition that will guarantee his authority. Moore gives materiality to the idea of a masculine literary tradition by establishing a blood link between James Clarence and Jamie Mangan. However, at the same time, he also gives material form to those images of women which have provided the focus of the narrative voice that Jamie inherits. In *The Mangan Inheritance*, the 'woman-as-nation' operates on the same narrative level as the Mangan poet. She is a real person in his world. The versions of James Clarence's 'Dark Rosaleen' that Jamie encounters exist inside the novel, but outside the poem. In this new space, the poet's behaviour towards the 'woman-as-nation' potentially involves issues of appropriation and abuse and so his inheritance of absolute authority is made more complex.

Moore questions the relationships between images of women and the lives of those who operate under the sign of 'Irish woman' beyond the text. In doing so he anticipates the concerns expressed by Eavan Boland, Nuala ní Dhomhnaill, Lia Mills and other critics about the ways in

⁴ Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, vol.1, (1995), 17-32, (p.19).

⁵ Boland, *Object Lessons*, p.201.

which women are represented in Irish nationalist literature. As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, these critics have argued that the representation of idealised women as icons of the nation has repercussions for the ways in which women are able to construct their identities outside the text. For example, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in her poem 'Cailleach' (translated as 'Hag' by John Montague), argues that when women are identified with the nation that identification violently distorts the ways in which women can be imagined in Irish culture. Ní Dhomhnaill's title refers to the Hag of Beara, a version of the woman-nation trope most famously seen in Padraic Pearse's poem 'Mise Éire'.⁶ The woman who narrates 'Cailleach' has dreamt that she 'was the earth, I the parish of Ventry its length and breadth, [...] that the brow of Maoileann I was my forehead'. The narrator's vision is somehow communicated beyond the dream and threatens to dominate the ways in which her daughter imagines the relation between mother and nation. She runs up to the narrator in fright crying 'O, Mam, I'm scared stiff, I I thought I saw the mountains heaving, I like a giantess, with her breasts swaying, I about to loom over and gobble me up'.⁷

Moore — like Ní Dhomhnaill — explores the consequences of the poet's performative language on women's voices outside the poet's vision. He creates a space inside the text but outside the poem where the ethical relation of women to images in literature by Irish men is debated. However, in *The Mangan Inheritance*, a novel about a male writer in which the idealised woman is changed from abstract ideal to sexualised body, Moore potentially constructs himself as a pornographer who objectifies women rather than as an author who challenges that objectification. The issue of whether or not images which objectify women are 'only words' is, after all, not the preserve of feminist criticism of Irish fiction. Even the narrator of Nabokov's *Lolita* (1950), a clear intertext of *The Mangan Inheritance*, is curious about the effects that his fantasies about young girls might have on the girls themselves. Humbert Humbert speculates:

In this wrought-iron world of criss-cross cause and effect, could it be that the hidden throb I stole from them did not affect their future? I had possessed her — and she never knew it. All right. But would it not tell sometime later? Had I not somehow tampered with her fate by involving her image in my voluptas? Oh, it was, and remains, a source of great and terrible wonder.⁸

Moore's coincidence with feminist concerns about the impact of imagery reflects a number of concerns, not specifically feminist, which are debated in *The Mangan Inheritance*. As Seamus Deane argues, Moore is writing, around this time, not only here but in his earlier novel, *The Great Victorian Collection* (1975), about the tyranny of the image in modern culture and the problems of any author trying to establish himself as agent over any image in the postmodern era. Deane argues that:

⁶ Padraic Pearse, 'Mise Éire' in *Padraic Pearse - Rogha Dánta: Selected Poems*, ed. by Dermot Bolger (Dublin: New Island Books, 1993), pp.46-47.

⁷ Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, 'Cailleach', individual poem trans. as 'Hag' by John Montague in *Pharaoh's Daughter* (Meath: Gallery Press, 1990), pp.134-37, (134-137).

⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* [1950] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p.21.

Moore[’s] questioning takes [a] contemporary form. What is it that exists when it exists as words? The world? Is the origin of all we know in words and not in the world and is the copy (writing) actually the origin of the world we see and believe to be prior, the source?’⁹

As I noted in the introduction to this thesis, Moore is also interested in the possibilities of performative language. He chose the title for his most autobiographical novel, *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* (1965), from a Wallace Stevens poem in which the narrator demands, ‘let be be finale of seem’.¹⁰ In *The Mangan Inheritance*, just as in many of his other novels, Moore is pre-occupied with the capacities of language to ‘do’ rather than simply describe and is concerned to investigate the ethical problematics of performative language.

To suggest that Moore has other points of access to debates about the impact of images on the lives of women is not to suggest that Moore is not or cannot possibly be anticipating feminist critiques of nationalist iconography in feminist terms. This chapter will deal, as Moore does in the novel, with the issues involved in men trying to deconstruct patriarchal modes of representation. First though, I want to discuss the place of *The Mangan Inheritance* within a discourse which presumes that literary texts are performative. Later sections will focus on the extent to which the agentive Irish literary male voice which the novel seems to offer as its eventual prize is shown to be phantasmatic; I will then go on to suggest that where Moore makes strategic use of the notion of the authentic embodied gendered voice to question the ethics of Irish fiction, that strategy potentially serves to reinforce the power relations he sets out to deconstruct.

How to do things with Irish words

In the introduction to this thesis, I suggested that during the Irish Literary Revival, nationalist authors courted the power of voices to construct and influence the world beyond the text. Maud Gonne, for example, actively encouraged Yeats to focus on the task of writing texts that would make a practical impact on contemporary politico-cultural debates. She explained to him in a letter that ‘the men and women who started the National Theatre [...] have not time & energy for purely literary and artistic movements unless they can be made to serve directly & immediately the National cause.’¹¹ As Luke Gibbons argues, ‘All culture is, of course, political but in Ireland historically it acquired a particularly abrasive power’.¹² A powerful literary text in Maud Gonne’s terms is one that is performative, a text that gets things done. In *How to do Things with Words*, J.

⁹ Seamus Deane, ‘The Real Thing: Brian Moore in Disneyland’, *Irish University Review*, 18:1 (Spring 1988), 74-82, (pp.81-2).

¹⁰ Wallace Stevens, ‘The Emperor of Ice-Cream’. Cited in McSweeney, p.69.

¹¹ Maud Gonne, ‘Letter to William Butler Yeats, Paris, 25th September 1903’ [no.132] in *The Gonne - Yeats Letters 1893-1938: Always Your Friend*, ed. by Anna Mac Bride and A.N. Jeffares (London : Hutchinson, 1992), pp.176-78, (p.178).

¹² Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press in assoc. with Field Day, 1996), p.8.

L. Austin describes a performative speech act as one where 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of the action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something'.¹³

Jamie Mangan's discovery that he is a direct descendant of James Clarence Mangan is tantalising because it offers him a poetic voice that is performative. The Mangan voice has the capacity to transform not only the events that the poet describes but also to construct a powerful identity for the poet himself. Jamie Mangan is a poet whose voice, at the beginning of *The Mangan Inheritance*, exerts authority neither in nor beyond the poetry he writes. When he tries to impress on his father the idea that he has lost a stable sense of his own identity his scrabble for clarity as he offers his explanation parallels the fractures in his self-image which the recent collapse of his marriage has exposed:

'Since she left,' Mangan said, 'something strange has happened to me. It's as if I — the person I was — your son — the person I used to be — it's as if there's nobody there any more. Sometimes I feel as if I'm going mad. Except that there's no me to go mad.'(43)

Jamie believes that if he pursues his connection with James Clarence Mangan he will be able to shrug off the powerless role he has inadvertently assumed in his marriage. Through citing his ancestral connection to the literature of the Irish literary revival, Jamie will be able to signal his right to a coherent masculine identity. While he is looking at the photographic evidence of his link with James Clarence Mangan, Jamie's language represents his powerlessness as a disease or lack which has impaired his 'natural' masculine authority. This lack will now be resolved by his participation in a post-marital covenant with his male forebear:

For the first time since he had watched Beatrice walk down the museum steps with her lover, he felt cured. He picked up his cure, his antidote, the face of Europe's first *poète maudit* [...] A genie who had vanquished Beatrice, that robber of his soul. Giddily, he raised his glass. 'To Mangan the poet,' he cried. 'To my resurrection. To my life.'(55)

Jamie Mangan believes that his right to a powerful voice will be guaranteed by a patrilineal inheritance which makes poetry his birthright. It transpires that at various times since James Clarence's death from starvation in 1849, other descendants have already followed his lead in the joint pursuit of poetry and personal ruin. Without the inspiration of his inheritance, Jamie has neglected the poetic talent which brought him some success in his youth. He admits now that he has been 'an indifferent caretaker'(61) of his talent. However, his discovery of a link between himself and James Clarence spurs him on. The famous poet seems to be 'urging him to start again, to pursue his true vocation'(61).

Jamie is initially dismissive of James Clarence's poetry. He argues that Mangan's poetic voice is only powerful within its highly visible historical and social circumstances: "I think a life like that obscures the work. The *poète maudit* is remembered for his drugs, horrors, escapades — for his life itself"(45-46). His father, in contrast, defends James Clarence's poems on the grounds of their great popularity: 'James Clarence Mangan's poems are in all the [Irish] schoolbooks. And they're still admired'(46). His poems are worth notice because, Pat Mangan argues, they have had

¹³ J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, (2nd. ed.), ed. by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 6-7.

a powerful impact on Irish society. Their language has had a practical effect: “‘Believe me’ his father said, “for the common people of Ireland, Mangan is still the big man. His poetry was the stuff that sent men out to kill the landlords””(58). He characterises James Clarence Mangan’s poetry as part of an effective dialogue between men, a dialogue in which language is powerful and performative.

When Jamie argues that Yeats is a better poet than James Clarence, his defence operates on the same terms as his father’s advocacy of Mangan. He suggests that Yeats’s writing was more powerful than that of James Clarence because it prompted more nationalist action than did ‘Dark Rosaleen’. He cites Yeats’s anxiety about his play, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, to prove his point: “‘Did that play of mine send out | Certain men the English shot?’”(58).¹⁴ Both Jamie and his father evaluate literary worth at least partly in terms of the potential for men’s literary voices to provoke action in the world of men.¹⁵

Yet both of the texts that the modern Mangans cite for their ability to provoke action and demonstrate men’s authority rely for that provocation on women. They both cite a colleen-nation who operates in a number of ways to facilitate the narrator’s address to the nation. A colleen-nation here is a young woman who serves as a rhetorical figure for Ireland. As David Cairns and Shaun Richards suggest, the use of the ‘woman-as-nation’ trope made the potential for a nationalist reading of the play evident to a wide audience. Citing Yeats’s *Cathleen ní Houlihan* as the most famous example of the use of the trope, they suggest that

the presentation of ‘Ireland’ as the ‘Poor Old Woman’ or ‘Shan Van Vocht’ had obvious advantages for dramatists, stemming from the popularity of the trope in ballads and Irish language poems, and its familiarity to audiences whose reading of it was unambiguously nationalist.¹⁶

The colleen-nation, in several ways, enables authors to reach a wide audience with a nationalist message. For example, James Clarence’s Rosaleen, as a beautiful woman who is vulnerable to attack, provides the narrator with a provocation for nationalist action. In ‘Dark Rosaleen’ the young woman’s plight, analogous to Ireland’s plight, is intended to provoke Irish men to defend her from invaders:

¹⁴ Yeats, ‘The Man and the Echo’, *Collected Poems*, pp.393-95, (p.393).

¹⁵ Lady Gregory’s co-authorship of *Cathleen ní Houlihan* is not remarked. However, the play was first printed in Lady Gregory’s name in 1995 as *Kathleen ni Houlihan* so it is unlikely that Moore was fully aware of her co-authorship. See *Lady Gregory: Selected Writings* ed. by Lucy McDiarmid and Maureen Waters (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1995), pp.301-311. Further references to the play will refer to *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in *W. B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1997), pp.19-28.

¹⁶ David Cairns and Shaun Richards, ‘Tropes and Traps: Aspects of ‘Woman’ and Nationality in Twentieth-Century Irish Drama’, pp.128-137 in *Gender and Irish Writing*, ed. by Toni O’Brien Johnson and David Cairns (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), p.129. This chapter later offers a reading to explain Cathleen’s appearance as the Sean Bhean Bocht rather than as the colleen-nation sighted at the end of the play.

O, the Erne shall run red,
 With redundance of blood,
 The Earth shall rock beneath our tread,
 And flames wrap hill and wood,
 And gun-peal and slogan cry
 Wake many a glen serene,
 Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,
 My Dark Rosaleen!
 My own Rosaleen!
 The Judgement Hour must first be nigh,
 Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
 My Dark Rosaleen! (Cited by Jamie Mangan, p.57)

She may function, at the most basic level, as someone to talk at in order to provide an example of the ideal relationship between a man and his nation for other men, and although James' Clarence's Dark Rosaleen does not speak, in other texts the presence of the colleen-nation allows the author to speak through her and so to give a voice the authority of the nation. The attribution of voices to women can also facilitate a dialogue between the nation and those who need to be persuaded to defend 'her.' For example, Yeats's Cathleen is validated as a privileged ventriloquial site for nationalist voices. She claims that she has the ability to amplify the voices of Irish men when she sings that the men who fight for her "shall be speaking for ever, | The people will hear them for ever".¹⁷

The focus on women as objects in nationalist literature constructs the male narrator in a dominant role, not only as the agent for the poem, but as a powerful and combative man among others of his type. In one sense, the invocation of the colleen-nation is a performative speech act which constructs and gives stability to the nation it names. However, in the process it also constructs an imagined community of powerful Irish men. The representation of the relationship between men and the nation through the frame of a heterosexual romance plot in the colleen-nation text produces a broader commonality of desire than any one image of the 'Irish man' would allow during the Revival. For Jamie Mangan, his discovery that he is physically identical to James Clarence signals him as a male subject with a powerful voice who has the right to cite the authority of his kind. This authority seems to be confirmed when Jamie Mangan and a woman who closely resembles the description of James Clarence's Dark Rosaleen become involved in a sexual relationship.

However, before he meets Kathleen Mangan, Jamie's powerless role in his relationship with his wife, Beatrice Abbot, emerges as a template for the relationship he will have with the colleen-nation later on in the novel. Beatrice Abbot helps to suggest that the masculine poetic voice is actually dependant on being able to attribute voices to women: without women's voices to ventriloquise the poet is effectively silent. This clearly undermines the presumptive rights of Jamie's masculine poetic inheritance.

¹⁷ Yeats, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, p.27.

The first Mangan inheritance: Beatrice Abbot's bequest

The first of the three books in *The Mangan Inheritance* deals with the period prior to Jamie's departure for Ireland. During this time, he tries to cope with the fact that his wife — the Academy Award nominated actress, Beatrice Abbot — has deserted him for another man. Before her sudden death, Jamie discovers the extent of his family connection to James Clarence Mangan and after her funeral he travels to Ireland to research his family's history more thoroughly. Jo O'Donoghue argues that 'to James Mangan at thirty-six, failed writer and failed ex-husband of Beatrice Abbot, the face of the Victorian poet represents the 'cure' for, the 'antidote' to his lack of identity'.¹⁸ However, Jamie's failed marriage is not simply the catalyst for his pursuit of his Mangan inheritance. One of the additional functions of the representation of Jamie's marriage is that it allows the narrator and Jamie to preface Jamie's experiences in Ireland. His marriage provides the first version in the text of the relationship between a poet and a colleen-nation and it implies that the colleen-nation is actually the powerbroker of men's powerful voices, without whom the male poet can neither attract the attention of, nor influence, his peers.

Beatrice Abbot's name and profession signal her potential to operate as a ventriloquial site or muse for men's voices. Her Christian name, Beatrice is the name of Dante's child-muse (this provides the first link between Beatrice and Kathleen Mangan, who later provides the focus of Jamie's paedophiliac fantasies). Meanwhile her surname, 'Abbot,' connects her the Irish national theatre, the Abbey, where *Cathleen ní Houlihan* was first staged in 1902. Beatrice's power as an actress wins her the praise of the first of the incidental characters in the novel to be named for an Irish feminine icon. In Canada, a friend of Jamie tells him that his daughter is a dedicated fan of Beatrice Abbot: 'My daughter Deirdre is crazy about her, you know. I remember when [Beatrice] came up here that first time with you, a few years back, right? Deirdre made me get her autograph'(22). These connections, together with her place in an American theatrical dynasty as the daughter of Del Abbot, consolidate Beatrice's authority as a powerful image for her nation. The narrator explains that

The world was in love with her. In the New York Times Clive Barnes wrote that she was 'the most accomplished actress to appear on the New York stage in the last two decades,' and another characterized her as 'the American dream girl next door.'(32)

Beatrice differs materially from James' Clarence's Dark Rosaleen in that she is married, American and capable of talking at the start of the novel. As an icon of America, she has far more power than James Clarence's Rosaleen who silently represents a nation on the point of being invaded. However, both women gain their power through facilitating voices belonging to men. Beatrice is constantly citing words which originate with men and appears to operate, like Josephine in *The Pornographer*, as a ventriloquial site that enables the citation of powerful male voices. As an actress she has gained status by speaking words, chosen by others, to greater effect than other actresses. She suggests that her aim in producing a theatrical performance is to allow the author of the role to retain control over it. Beatrice explains to Jamie that she works with one particularly

¹⁸ O' Donoghue, p.77.

difficult playwright because “I think he’s a genius [...] And I think it’s my job to recognize his genius and help him do things the way that’s best for him” (36-38). For the authors of the plays and films she stars in, she claims to provide a performance which amplifies the nuances of the text and assists the intention of the author. Her voice has been authoritatively validated as a powerful ventriloquial site through the Tony awards and the Oscar nomination she has secured.

However, Beatrice’s claim to ‘give voice’ to the intentions of male authors is disingenuous. McGahern writes of a character in ‘Along The Edges’ that ‘Her gravity as much as a small child’s took all the light to itself’.¹⁹ Beatrice Abbot, as a famous actress, seems to gather to herself the credit for all the words around her. When Beatrice Abbot performs a role, she is obviously repeating discourses sourced elsewhere and that performance is highlighted by the frame of the stage, screen or poem which signals its status as a performance. However, her fame demonstrates that an ideal theatrical performance is indistinguishable from the kind of ideal performance of identity required off-stage. In that ideal theatrical performance, the actress successfully dissimulates the status of her voice as a citation and draws attention away from its frame: the role does not appear ‘stagey’ and convincingly implies that the actress is the agent for the words she speaks.

Beatrice Abbot is capable of producing exactly this kind of performance. When she ‘create[s] an unforgettable Joan of Arc,’ (67) Joan’s words are scripted by someone other than Beatrice. She acts under the name of Joan and her voice is dubbed by someone who speaks the French language, but this does not prevent the film’s viewers from attributing credit for the performance to Beatrice. The image of her body operates to prove her agency over the performance. When a friend of Jamie discovers that Beatrice did not learn French for her part in “Flight from Orleans” (67) he is unperturbed to find that she was dubbed. He declares “Anyway she was terrific” (25), giving her full credit for the performance. Beatrice’s appearance as Joan of Arc, a French version of the colleen-nation, consolidates her role as a national muse.

Anxiety about what happens when an actress successfully constructs herself as the agent for the speech acts she performs is explored in the Hollywood film, *All About Eve* (1950) in which Bette Davis plays the actress, Margo Channing. The parallel between the Warner Brothers’ studio star and Beatrice is suggested by the fact that Beatrice is also cast in a Warner Brothers’ picture. In addition, Davis appears in one of Beatrice’s films. In *All About Eve*, the writer of the role that Margo Channing has made famous challenges her ability to signify as the agent of the words she speaks:

LLOYD: I shall never understand the weird process by which a body with a voice suddenly fancies itself as a mind. Just when exactly does an actress decide they’re her words she’s saying and her thoughts she’s expressing?

MARGO: Usually at the point when she has to re-write and re-think them, to keep the audience from leaving the theatre!

LLOYD: It’s about time the piano realised it has not written the concerto!²⁰

Lloyd tells Margo that as an actress, she is simply ‘a body with a voice’ and he tries to resituate the actress as simply a ventriloquial site for his powerful creative voice rather than as agent

¹⁹ John McGahern, ‘Along The Edges’ in *Getting Through* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp.107-120, (p.119).

²⁰ *All About Eve* (1950), dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz.

for the authoritative and dissimulated performance. Margo Channing is upstaged by an understudy with, coincidentally, a West Cork name: Eve Harrington (although there may be a connection in the detail that a family of Harringtons from Bantry are responsible for painting the Mangan's family portraits). Before she cedes centre stage to Kathleen Mangan, Beatrice Abbot resembles Margo Channing in her ability to appear as the agent for the voices she cites.

Beatrice may be an attractive site for ventriloquism, but the authors of her words do not always choose to have their voices associated with that site rather than with themselves, nor can they compel her to enable their voices by starring in their work. She brings a Warner Brothers' film to a halt when she walks off the set on the grounds that "the script is a lot of old rubbish and the star hasn't been sober in three years" (31). Her tendency to take credit for voices sourced with others is represented in a stylised form when she acts in the opus of the 'genius' playwright whose authorial intentions she claims to foreground. When the playwright rehearses the play with Beatrice, he is effectively silenced. The narrator explains that

Beatrice had the only speaking role in the play. The other actors were mimes. So when Fortini would show up at the apartment, he acted out the mime roles himself, while Beatrice spoke his new lines in monologue. Mangan found himself spending a great deal of time in the bedroom with the door shut, trying to avoid the sound of her voice. (36)

When Beatrice visits Jamie after their separation, the scene emphasises her abilities to simultaneously cite and silence male voices. Instead of talking to her, Jamie acts like a mime artist: 'Wordless, he beckoned' (9). Jamie's first words — a sparse "All right" (9) — occur about two hundred words after she first addresses him. Throughout their encounter, Beatrice uses speech acts which are not signalled as her own. These utterances are part of a defensive conversational strategy through which she carefully avoids antagonising Jamie. However, they also chime with the way her voice is represented in terms of her career. In her marriage too, Beatrice uses words scripted by others to her own advantage. When Jamie rebukes her for having an affair with a man she once ridiculed, she explains that she did not criticise Perry Turnbull: 'Other people did [...] I just told you what they said' (39). She also disowns responsibility for the divorce details she is passing on: 'I've no opinion. I'm just repeating what [Weinberg] told me to ask you' (11). When Beatrice leaves Jamie for Turnbull, he remembers the comment she quoted about him. It suggests that she enjoys the privileges of exercising a powerful voice at the expense of men. Perry Turnbull is, it appears, at least metaphorically more voiceless than Jamie: 'Someone had said of him: "Money talks all right, but this money needs remedial speech therapy"' (38).

Despite his experience in his marriage, Jamie maintains the convention that polarised gendered roles in language exist. He simply argues that they have been wrongfully inverted in his marriage. He argues that as a man he has a right to an authoritative voice. When he imagines his reaction to Beatrice's visit, Jamie sees himself as assuming the powerful role which he regards as rightfully his. However, Beatrice remains the focus even where she is not, in a grammatical sense, the subject of the encounter:

He would be polite. He would make her believe he was better off without her. He would be magnanimous, yet indifferent, for indifference is the ultimate revenge [...] Polite, magnanimous indifferent. Didn't that describe *her* behavior perfectly? (14-15; sic)

Jamie has always relied on others to give his voice authority and a wider impact. Prior to his marriage, Jamie's voice was fostered by his father, a newspaper editor, who gave him his first job. Jamie claims that he was later hired to write for the Globe and Mail in Toronto 'again through parental influence'(24): Until he met his wife, Jamie's words were given authority through his connections with other Mangan men. During their marriage, Beatrice Abbot has, in Jamie's terms, adopted the authority over language which is his masculine prerogative rather than lending him the authority of her voice.

Beatrice's reported performance in conversation suggests that she employs the powerful linguistic strategies traditionally associated with male gendered voices. The doorman's assumption that Jamie's name is 'Mr. Abbot'(68) signals Jamie's loss of the authority traditionally allotted to men within marriage. The conventional patriarchal distribution of power within marriage is completely inverted in Jamie's relationship with Beatrice. Jamie marries her at her suggestion and we learn that she overrides their joint decision that they would not have children. She is also the breadwinner in the relationship.

Rather than accepting her power as modifying traditional models for the gendered distribution of power within marriage, Jamie argues that Beatrice's voice only stages a temporary usurpation of the automatically masculine superior role in their marriage. This allows him to maintain that masculinity and power are identical. Jamie's belief that he and Beatrice have swapped traditional gender roles is expressed and consolidated in his experiments with Byron's assessment of the relationship between gender and love. For Byron, the male lover is able to transcend his involvement in the lives of others while women cannot: 'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart, / 'Tis woman's whole existence'(8). When Jamie observes that 'By Byron's standards, he was not a man'(8) he assesses masculinity solely in terms of authority. Beatrice's authority is figured as masculine: she moves 'like some youthful Regency buck'(10). Shortly before he discovers his relationship to the poet, Jamie suggests that he has assumed a completely feminised and powerless role in his marriage. It is Beatrice's voice which is powerful and draws attention to his own flawed performance of masculinity:

Even when a play fails, she gets good notices. She's a winner, one of the All-American winners. And if she ditches you it's because you're a loser. A Canadian loser.

Time to rewrite Byron's lines: 'Her love was of her life a thing apart/ 'Twas my whole goddamned existence.'(28)

The marriage between Jamie and Beatrice undermines the suggestion that women's voices allow authors to speak powerfully to the nation. Jamie loses his contract to report on the United Nations when he accompanies Beatrice to London on a trip associated with her career. After Jamie marries her, he starts to take on the role of the poet who celebrates rather than controls his muse. His poetic career repeats that of James Clarence Mangan, but recasts that career as a demonstration of the poet's failure to control the colleen-nation. James Clarence Mangan often wrote poetry based on translations from the Irish. Jamie begins to work on 'a series of "imitations," roughly translated from Cree legend, in the then-fashionable manner of Robert Lowell.'(33)

For Jamie at least, Beatrice's phenomenal ability to broadcast words written by men is of no practical use. In the accounts of his marriage, his voice is constructed in competitive opposition to

the powerful voice ascribed to Beatrice Abbot. Beatrice's power is established in cumulative fashion in stories told about her by both Jamie and the narrator. They suggest that her success has been matched by the correlative erosion of Jamie's authority as male poet and journalist. Jamie remembers that during his marriage, his voice no longer signalled his agency and validity as a speaking subject. Instead it was metaphorically silent, only signifying when it endorsed and amplified Beatrice's more powerful voice:

If he said something witty it would often be quoted back to him as 'that marvelous thing Beatrice said the other night.' In fact, as it became increasingly clear that people listened more intently when his subject was Beatrice, he had begun to act as her skill, talking of her new projects, giving out the gossip of her days. (34)

As Beatrice drives away from the flat for the last time, Jamie has suggested that she has usurped the traditional, dynamic and agentive male role in their marriage: 'So she would have left | As the soul leaves the body torn and bruised, | As the mind deserts the body it has used'.(15) The citation of Beatrice as the mind in their union is double-edged here in that it is one of the several hints that prefigure Beatrice's death and so her reduction to the status of a body. However, before her death Jamie is identified with the body. It signifies his failure to assume the privileges of the abstract male subject. Jamie suggests that Beatrice has taken his soul away and reduced him to a body which operates only to signify his loss of agency at her hands. More dramatically, the metaphor Jamie uses to stress his loss of authority suggests that Beatrice, the actress and ventriloquial site for other voices, has been able to reduce the Mangan poet to the status of an image:

Primitives fear the photograph, the shutter click, their image stolen, then given back to them as a lifeless souvenir, entombed in a piece of paper. Beatrice had snapped the shutter, stealing away the man he once had been, presenting him with himself as her useless husband. He took that husband figure into the bathroom, stripped it of its garments and stood it for a time under the shower [...] in the triptych mirror she had installed, he saw a face in stasis, eyes which had no light behind them, a waxwork countenance, lifelike, but not alive. (16)

Even after her death, Beatrice continues to play an important role in demonstrating Jamie Mangan's failure to exercise the privileges of the abstract male subject. Beatrice's funeral in particular helps to articulate Jamie's sense of voicelessness. The narrator exploits the coincidence between 'the absence of her body'(199) at the memorial service and Jamie's failure to exert a signifying presence at the ceremony. In the dramatic narrative surrounding the ceremony, Beatrice's absence in death stages his voicelessness: her very visible absence is correlative with Jamie's symbolic absence and his metaphorical silence among the other guests.

Although Jamie plans to arrive punctually at the service, a sudden heavy downpour of rain and a lack of taxi-cabs ensures that he is in fact very late. The suspense accumulates as the narrator carefully details the encounters which slow Jamie's progress. However, when Jamie arrives at the service that suspense is not released. He fails to make himself visible to the other guests and so refuses the anticipated resolution of the crisis and compounds the reader's sense of unease. Jamie insists on sitting at the back of the room where nobody can see him. While Beatrice's absence is being discussed at length by the mourners it is Jamie's metaphorical absence which is central. His

presence is never validated by the recognition of others and Moore emphasises this by making such recognition possible at several moments.

When Jamie scrapes the floor loudly with his chair as he leaves before the end: 'Those in front of him raised their heads, acknowledging the interruption, but no one looked directly at the leaver'(89). The use of an impersonal name for Jamie — 'the leaver' — exacerbates the sense of Jamie's virtual absence as it illustrates the protagonist's loss of self-worth and a socially-significant identity. Jamie has only been of any relevance to this community while Beatrice was alive and he was her husband. The reaction of the paparazzi photographers to Jamie as he leaves is indicative of his insignificance without her: 'Their eyes found his face and dismissed it; a tabula rasa'(90). Jamie's loss of identity is at its most critical here where the image represents him as someone to be written on rather than someone who can write.

However, the role of Beatrice's voice does change in the text in ways which allow Jamie to situate her as an image he can deploy to his own advantage. Beatrice's voice is restored to the service of the male author-protagonist after her death. Her body which has operated as the signifier of her notional agency over the words she ventriloquises is destroyed. After her car crash her lawyer informs Jamie that "'The cremation was, frankly, because of the condition of the body'"(76). Her already badly-burned corpse is reduced to ashes and becomes not only inanimate but genderless: 'the body'. Through her death Beatrice Abbot comes to resemble James Clarence's Rosaleen much more closely. She becomes a passive image that can be summoned and relinquished apparently at the will of the male poet:

Her only human remains [were] some ashes in an urn, the only evidence that she had walked on this earth some photographs, a heap of newspaper clippings, a few reels of film. No child, no continuance. From now on, she would live fitfully in the minds of those who had seen her act and of those who had known her. He would remember her most. Yet already he had begun to forget her.(73)

When Beatrice's death ends the level of control she has had over the use of her image, it finally allows Jamie to make Beatrice serve an analogous function to that played by James Clarence's Dark Rosaleen. Although, as an actress, Beatrice dissimulated the constructed and derivative nature of her performance, now her voice is much more obviously performed at the behest of others. When Beatrice first visited Jamie at the flat in Beekman Place, Jamie had to guess, apparently correctly, that her generosity was orchestrated by Sy Weinberg. When she appears to Jamie after her death she is still using the words of other people. Here though, in Ireland rather than America, her voice is comprised of famous literary quotations, quoted accurately and starkly, and these help to emphasise that her voice is derivative. For the first time, Jamie's voice is signalled as more resourceful than hers (He continues to quote poetry, but does so less obtrusively than Beatrice):

'So this is how the world ends,' she said. 'Not with a bang but a whimper.'
 'What do you mean?'
 'Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.'
 'Stop quoting lines [...] Don't you have any original thoughts?'(151)

Jamie seems to assume the privilege of agency after her death. He summons her image to mind. Her appearance is situated as an act of will on Jamie's part which at once instates and

demonstrates his new-found control over the ways that Beatrice signifies: 'It was not a hallucination. He knew that he was imagining her; that she was not really here'(151). Jamie makes flagrant use of his new control over her image when he orchestrates those elements of her behaviour which previously signalled his weakness: 'He willed her to pirouette [...]. He willed her to sit down [...] stretching out her legs as she had that day, like some youthful Regency buck'(151). Like Judith Hearne's pictures of her aunt and the Sacred Heart, or like the ghosts who appear to the protagonist in *Fergus* (1970), Beatrice's image now allows Jamie to ventriloquise and so to separate out his attitudes to his powerless roles in his marriage and in his poetic career.

However, Beatrice only facilitates this sort of dialogue of self and soul for Jamie after her death because only then can Jamie make use of her capacity to ventriloquise voices in his own interests. Their dialogue exposes Jamie's sense that he has been unable to construct a powerful identity through his poetry and that his marriage has only highlighted his lack of his failure to wield a powerful, agentive voice. Unlike Beatrice's voice, Jamie's voice has not constructed him as a coherent and controlling masculine agent. She has stood in for him in the powerful role he has failed to fulfil. Now, as he begins to explore the potentially enabling inheritance of James Clarence Mangan, he explains to her image that he has been unable to situate himself as an agent over language up to this point:

'You were a victor. You worked harder than I did. I think my trouble was, and is, that I don't have a real ambition. I wanted to be a poet, but I didn't work at it. I didn't work at anything.'

She stared at the fire.

'It must

Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may
Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman
Combing. The poem of the act of the mind.'

'That's it,' he said. 'Oh, I've thought that many times. Perhaps I'm not capable of the act of the mind.'(152)

Jamie's interest in his Mangan inheritance and his decision after the funeral to travel to Ireland marks the beginning of an attempt to find a history which will give him an identity and a voice. Beatrice's role has been essential in provoking Jamie's recourse to a patriarchal lineage which, he anticipates, will allow him to achieve a more fulfilling and powerful identity. Even when Jamie complained to his father about his lack of 'self,' the narrator held out some form of stable identity by attributing his speech to 'Mangan'. Jamie decides that 'His father might be the one who could help him. To his father he was his father's only son, continuance in a line which stretched back to Ireland and their grandfather's claim to be descended from the poet Mangan himself'(16). Jamie's humour as he waits for his father to answer the telephone aligns the Mangan tradition with a more impressive patrilineal chain of powerful men: 'Our Father Who art in Montreal, please be at home'(16). When Jamie leaves for Ireland the only identity he takes with him is vouchsafed as patrilineal. Shortly after his arrival in Ireland the narrator explains:

It was as though on that funeral day they had ended together she and he, and now, one week later, reborn but not renamed, searching a new identity, he had crossed the frontier of this land, carrying in his pocket like a passport a photograph of himself as a man long dead.(116)

However, although Jamie implies that his search for a powerful voice is enabled by his relationship to his male forebears, Jamie remains dependent on Beatrice Abbot as he travels to Ireland. Jamie's ability to explore his Mangan inheritance is only possible because of the money he inherits from Beatrice Abbot. This bequest received by a Mangan permits Jamie's exploration of his other, literary Mangan inheritance. Jamie explains to Beatrice's image: 'When I got your money I told myself this was my chance to try again, to really work at poetry, "to win the palm or oak, or bays"'(153). Jamie's practical debt to Beatrice for this opportunity is periodically acknowledged throughout the novel(210; 293). It helps to demonstrate that his search for a powerful voice is being enabled by women even as he attempts to situate that voice within a purely masculine tradition.

Kathleen Mangan: An Inherited Ventriloquial Site

Jamie Mangan travels to Ireland to establish his right to a powerful voice, located within a literary tradition in which men's voices are able to exert power beyond the text. His sexual involvement with his relatively distant cousin, Kathleen Mangan, seems set to empower him insofar as it repeats the power relations which operate between the narrator of James Clarence Mangan's poem, 'Dark Rosaleen,' and the colleen-nation. Kathleen Mangan repeats the image of the passive colleen-nation in many respects. When her voice repeats the kinds of language associated with the nationalist image of the colleen-nation, Jamie gives it his approval. Her repetition of songs which help to idealise her as an image of the nation helps to install Jamie Mangan as a powerful voice, located in a tradition in which men's voices are able to exert power beyond the text.

Kathleen Mangan resembles the traditional image of the colleen-nation in several respects which imply that she unproblematically repeats the passive and idealised role played by James Clarence's 'Dark Rosaleen'. When Kathleen deploys her voice in ways which restate the image of the colleen-nation, her voice is represented as powerful and wins the poet's approval. While Yeats's Cathleen notes approvingly that 'There have been many songs made for me,'²¹ Kathleen Mangan gives her own approval to songs written by men which idealise Irish women. Jamie praises those speech acts which construct Kathleen in an idealised performance of femininity. When Jamie asks her if she has ever heard of 'Dark Rosaleen', Kathleen claims never to have heard of it but cites another song in its place: "'The Rose of Tralee," the girl suddenly sang out. "That's the one I like." She began to sing'(141). Even when she talks about songs that idealise women her voice remains melodious for the poet: when Kathleen spoke about her song, her voice 'sang out'. Whenever she sings this type of song, Jamie praises the beauty and value of her voice. When, for example, she sings a lament, 'Oft in the Stilly Night' her 'soft haunting voice'(181) is praised by Jamie who is 'surprised at the beauty of her voice [...] small and pure'(182). Kathleen's singing voice provides a channel which is appropriate for the voices of idealised and iconised women(141).

²¹ Yeats, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, p.27.

When she sings Thomas Moore's 'Oft in the Stilly Night' her voice repeats words scripted by another man which situate her as vulnerable. In this circumstance, Jamie Mangan seems able to assume a position of control over a woman's voice which was unavailable to him during his marriage. When Kathleen sings, her agency over her voice is minimised —her voice is described as 'unself-conscious'(182) — and seems at harmony with the Irish landscape. As Jamie listens to the song, sung in this idealised way, he institutes his authority as a powerful subject enabled within a masculine literary tradition:

On either side was a landscape which seemed to suit her song, for they were driving in a turf bog, a lonely deserted place [...] Now he was a man who, improbably, was the lover of a very young girl, who felt excited and alive when he recited the poems of a poet long dead, a man who carried in his pocket an old photograph of a mysterious double, a man who knew nothing of his true past save that his ancestors were poets like himself. And so, as Kathleen ended her song and leaned close to him, he felt exultant and free and increased the car speed until they were flying along the lonely ribbon of road.(182-3)

Jamie Mangan also validates Kathleen's voice as powerful whenever it repeats the other voices traditionally allowed to the iconised, metaphorically silent Irish woman. When, for example, her voice situates her as victim in the traditional roles of the keening woman and the banshee in Irish tradition her voice, proclaiming her vulnerability, has a huge range. When Kathleen screams in terror her voice achieves an inhuman power: 'she continued to shriek, making a sound so loud that it filled the room, echoing off the mountain top, away to the distant sea'(230). It is not improbable that she should protest, without being an iconised woman, that "'I'd be afraid of snakes. There's none in Ireland, that's a well-known fact'"(318), but other comments reflect fairly anachronistic concerns which link her to other images of the woman as victimised nation. For example, she tells her brother: "'I hate soldiers. Taking orders and drilling and evicting people from their houses'"(134).

Like Yeats's Cathleen, Kathleen Mangan seeks support from the men she encounters. She asks Jamie "'Do you like me, Jim?'"(176), "'You like me don't you Jim?'"(188) and "'Sit by me. Tell me. Do you like me at all?'"(243). These demands for praise allow Jamie to take on the role of the narrator in James Clarence's most famous poem. When Jamie meets the last of these requests his response is consciously tempered by a Manganesque vision of Kathleen as a religious icon: 'He looked at her saint's profile. It seemed almost sacrilegious to answer with a simple yes'(243). He has already echoed the litanies used by James Clarence in 'Dark Rosaleen' in his formulaic responses to Kathleen's requests for reassurance: 'He said he was sorry. He said of course he cared about her. He said he hadn't meant to upset her. He said he loved her'(236). Jamie's account of Kathleen Mangan's appearance echoes several of the phrases in 'Dark Rosaleen'. That resemblance suggests that Jamie is repeating the strategies through which James Clarence Mangan constructed the ideal image of Dark Rosaleen in his allegorical project. Jamie's repetition of James Clarence's techniques gives him, in turn, some of the status with which the idealised James Clarence is credited.

Jamie's repetition of James Clarence's poetic strategies constructs the contemporary poet as a powerful narrator. When Jamie represents his admiration of the colleen-nation as illicit sexual attraction, he even seems to exacerbate the power relation which situates the colleen-nation as the

passive object of the narrator's dominating gaze. In Catharine MacKinnon's terms, Jamie Mangan's sexualised account of Kathleen's body at once repeats and makes visible the ways in which women are objectified and disenfranchised by the patriarchal poetic tradition. Pornographic words, MacKinnon argues

establish what women are said to exist as, are seen as, are treated as, constructing the social reality of what a woman is and can be in terms of what can be done to her, and what a man is in terms of doing it.²²

Jamie, even more vividly than James Clarence's narrator, focuses on the image of the colleen-nation in ways that emphasise his own wellbeing as a man outside the poem, rather than the wellbeing of the iconised woman. The phrases of praise framed by James Clarence are refigured as signs of the poet's desire to possess and objectify the colleen-nation. James Clarence's narrator claims that Rosaleen's 'beamy smile [...] would float like light between my toils and me' while Kathleen Mangan produces a smile which is described as having a similar practical effect. The narrator claims that 'Her features [...] were transformed by that smile'(122) and later describes it as 'that smile he could not resist'(128) and 'that smile which undid him.'(172) In James Clarence's poem, the narrator describes Rosaleen's hands as 'holy, delicate' and 'white'.²³ The beauty of her hands serves as a metaphor for her physical and spiritual purity and signal her appropriateness as a figure to be fought and died for. Kathleen Mangan's hands are figured in similar phrases but this time the colleen-nation is clearly being represented as an object of the narrator's self-gratifying desire rather than his selfless admiration: 'She put her hand on his thigh and mischievously slid her *long delicate, slightly dirty fingers* into the crook of his crotch.'(176; my italics)

By representing Kathleen Mangan as a repetition of the 'Dark Rosaleen' figure, Jamie Mangan is able to align himself with the male narrator of James Clarence's poem. Kathleen's voice and her body are only valuable to the poet insofar as they help to construct her as the ideal image that in turn signals his affiliation with patriarchal poetic voices. The emphasis on Kathleen's corporeality in Jamie's account actually denies her some of the significance attributed to other versions of the colleen-nation. The description of James Clarence's Rosaleen indicated her allegorical significance and, through its echoes of Catholic iconography of the Blessed Virgin, particularly in its structural debt to the Litany of Loreto, implied that the colleen-nation had a superhuman authority. Kathleen's resemblance to Catholic iconography only stresses her objectification by the male poet. She reminds Jamie of 'the vapid beauties of female saints in modern Catholic Church sculpture'(122) and 'some Madonna statue in a poor village church, the hair painted red, the white gown, the alabaster purity of the features'(190). Jamie is sexually aroused by exactly those aspects of Kathleen's appearance which align her with the image of the colleen-nation and he edits his response to Kathleen in order to restore her to that image: 'At once, despite her dirty clothes and slum pallor, he felt an overwhelming attraction towards her'(122). The

²² MacKinnon, p.17.

²³ Mangan, 'Dark Rosaleen', p.274.

accounts of sexual intercourse between Jamie and Kathleen establish his dominance over Kathleen and seem to facilitate his assumption of his role as the Mangan poet.

Using bodies to subvert the colleen-nation

However, the allocation of bodies to the colleen-nation does not simply expose the role of the colleen-nation in serving the interests of the poet. It also complicates the ethics of the male author's appropriation and objectification of that image. It potentially undermines rather than supports his attempt to establish a powerful poetic voice. Jamie's perceptions about and descriptions of Kathleen Mangan's appearance serve as a paradigm for the techniques through which the poet-observer idealises the woman as nation. However, here as in *The Pornographer*, the attribution of bodies to voices attributed to women has a number of effects, not all of which work to confirm the authority of the male voice.

The embodied Kathleen does not signify only as the product of the poet's controlling mind and as the figure of colleen-nation. In *The Mangan Inheritance*, the image of 'Dark Rosaleen' is situated outside the poem and attributed a body which implies that Kathleen is an agent who controls her own voice. Unlike the idealised colleen-nation, Kathleen Mangan operates within the social context of modern rural Ireland as a citizen rather than as the nation's symbol. The allegorical and innocent image of the nation as woman is a model which often misrepresents the lives of those who operate under the sign of Irishwoman. The sexualisation of the Irish woman in a text told from the perspective of the Irish male poet potentially threatens to continue the silencing of women's voices by representing them only in ways that enable the narrator to construct his ideal performance of ideal masculinity over and against their image. However, the image of the Irish woman as sexualised, embodied and located within social and economic matrices of power also potentially exposes the limitations of the nationalist economy of images of women in that it represents women as desiring subjects rather than as passive victims. The allocation of a body to Kathleen Mangan to some extent subverts conventional systems of representation which cite the Irish woman as nation.

The sexualisation of the representation of Irish women may help to expose the dynamics of patriarchal authority but it can also paradoxically, help to undermine the symbolic authority of the passive, pure and virginal ideal. Kathleen Mangan is a textual figure, but she has a physical form which is real to the male protagonist of the novel and this, in itself, already alters the dynamics of the most well-known colleen-nation texts. Dark Rosaleen's body is a tissue of allegory rather than a form the poet acknowledges as equal with his own body. While Yeats's Cathleen ní Houlihan appears on stage to exhort men to fight for Ireland she does so in the form of the Sean Bhean Bocht or Old Woman as Ireland rather than in the form of an embodied woman. The colleen-nation woman remains a figure of the imagination. Prior to the original production of the play, Maud Gonne wrote to Yeats that, when she was wearing her costume 'You would give me a

penny in the street if you saw me & I look sixty at least'.²⁴ Richard Cave suggests that Yeats *disapp*roved of versions of the play in which the actresses insisted on 'keeping their young faces'.²⁵ The status of the Sean Bhean Bocht as Cathleen has always been a transparent subtext — particularly in her initial incarnation as Maud Gonne — but the colleen-nation trope seems to work best as a deferred visual image which signifies all the more effectively because the allegorical reading of her physical attributes is foregrounded. The play concludes when Cathleen's true identity is revealed from evidence provided offstage. Patrick Gillane says that he did not see the Sean Bhean Bocht leave the house, instead "I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen".²⁶

Brian Moore is not alone in giving a body to the colleen-nation in an attempt to disrupt the idealised image of the colleen-nation. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill attributes a body to Cathleen ní Houlihan in her poem 'Caitlín'. The poem's narrator writes about a garrulous, old woman who was once the focus of poets' praise. Like Moore, Ní Dhomhnaill describes the colleen-nation through phrases borrowed from texts which endorse the image. For instance, she echoes and subverts the sentiments of Aogán Ó Rathaille²⁷ and Padraic Pearse²⁸ when Caitlín is described as 'of beauties most beautied [...] brightest of the bright'. Like Brian Moore, ní Dhomhnaill cites James Clarence Mangan's version as well. In Paul Muldoon's translation the narrator refers to 'the Erne running red with abundance and mountain-peaks I laid low'.²⁹ Whereas ní Dhomhnaill ages her colleen, Moore gives Kathleen enough control over her image to distance it from the allegorical ideal.

Kathleen Mangan has the ability to modulate her resemblance to the colleen-nation. When Jamie sees Kathleen Mangan first, her red hair (always described as 'red' after the initial dilution of the stereotype of the colleen here) and the blue colour of her cardigan reflect nationalist and Catholic icons of the nation and the Virgin Mary. However, other elements of her appearance modify her resemblance to the ideal and indicate that she constructs her image within economic limitations and the social and cultural circumstances of contemporary Ireland. Jamie's initial reaction to her is that her body fails to cohere with the rural Irish landscape rather than being synonymous with it:

She wore dirty blue jeans, tightly sculpted to her legs, and a baby-blue cardigan, unbuttoned in front, tucked into the jeans. Her reddish-blond hair fell to below her waist. Her eyes were a bright blue, her features pretty but insipid, her skin pale and unhealthy, a slum pallor at odds with this wild lonely place.(122)

Kathleen Mangan's voice also demonstrates that, rather than having a voice which is organised and elegantly deployed by the male poet, she makes use of those sociolects which help to

²⁴ Maud Gonne 'Letter to William Butler Yeats, Dublin, Saturday [no date] March 1902' [no.109] in *The Gonne - Yeats Letters*, p.151.

²⁵ Yeats. Cited in Richard Allen Cave, 'Commentaries and Notes' in *W. B. Yeats: Selected Plays*, p.279.

²⁶ Yeats, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, p.28.

²⁷ Aogán Ó Rathaille, 'Gile na Gile' or 'Brightness Most Bright' in *An Duanaire 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed*, ed. by Seán Ó Tuama, trans. by Thomas Kinsella (Mountrath: The Dolmen Press, 1981) pp.150-152.

²⁸ Padraic Pearse, 'Fornocht Do Chonac Thu' or 'Renunciation', pp.44-45.

²⁹ Ní Dhomhnaill, Nuala, 'Caitlín' in *The Astrakhan Cloak* trans. by Paul Muldoon (Meath: Gallery Books, 1991; 1992), pp.38-41, (p.39).

locate her within a certain community at a specific historical moment. Kathleen's Hiberno-English intonation is implied by phonetic spelling of the word 'film'. When she first meets Jamie she questions him about his involvement with cinema and insists "But you have to do with the fillims. Isn't that right, now?" (123). Her accented voice also uses Hiberno-English grammatical features. When she asks him "How could a person be shy and them in the fillims?" (124), she uses 'them' as a demonstrative plural pronoun and also employs a grammatical structure, similar to one used in the Irish, which allows her to suggest that two actions were concurrent.³⁰ Kathleen uses Hiberno-English colloquial phrases such as "Get away out of that!" (125) and she startles Jamie when she tells him "You're a gas man" (137). Conor Mangan has to explain that "A gas man is a man who is good gas. A man you can joke with. A man who can make you laugh" (137).

The use of dialect words — as Judith Hearne would be the first to acknowledge — is not socially prestigious. The subject matter associated with Kathleen's voice also signals her divergence from the idealised, silent and allegorical Rosaleen. Her interest in food highlights her humanity, her need to eat contrasting with the apparent abstemiousness of Rosaleen. Rather than requesting the poet to rescue the nation she begs him to buy her cake: "In Skull [sic]³¹ you can get Fuller's cakes, and grand sausages — the lot. Will you buy me a chocolate cake? Will you, Jim?" (173). The childish innocence implied here forms a contrast with the type of unworldly innocence which characterises James Clarence's Rosaleen.

Kathleen uses her limited control over her body and her voice to her own advantage, but does not exert total control over the way she signifies for her contemporaries. The problem of her bodily resemblance to, as well as her divergence from Rosaleen is highlighted on her shopping trip with Jamie. The responses she provokes in other people suggest that she continues to represent the ideals of the nationalist revival and an affront to its conservative aftermath. In Yeats's poem 'September 1913' the narrator criticises the bourgeoisie for their refusal to engage with an epic vision of Ireland. Instead they 'fumble in the greasy till | And add the half pence to the pence [...] for men were born to pray and save'.³² Kathleen's appearance remains in counterpoint to the prosaic lives and values of the townspeople she encounters.

Kathleen's beauty and wild high spirits were as odd as a clown's costume [...] he became aware that the men who remained eyed her with sad lust, while the women shopkeepers [...] greeted her with the painful condescension of those who have denied themselves all sinful pleasures for the sake of a higher good. (177)

Kathleen excites the particular venom of the shopkeeper's wife, Una Feeley, against whose ideals of acceptable behaviour she fails to match. Una Feeley's name links her to Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Her anger highlights the connections between the idealised image of the iconic woman and the hegemonic religious and familist discourses which operate to restrict women in contemporary Irish society. It illustrates that Kathleen's subversion of the nationalist ideal is itself marginalised

³⁰ Loreto Todd, *The Language of Irish Literature*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.35; p.43.

³¹ In the novel 'Skull' appears to operate as a phonetic variant of 'Schull.'

³² Yeats, 'September 1913' in *Collected Poems*, pp.120-2, (p.120).

again through those hegemonic discourses which, less flamboyantly than nationalist poetry, limit the range of roles in which women can be practically imagined.

Mangan's response to Kathleen's body: his negation of agency

Kathleen's limited control over the ways her body and her voice are interpreted does not help her to make non-idealised identities for women more acceptable or easier to maintain. Jamie Mangan's own attempts to instate himself as a powerful subject are complicated by the ethical responsibilities attendant on his relationship to her body, within the law. Precisely in those scenes where the absolute authority of the poet seems to be being instated through the exploitation of the colleen-nation's body, Jamie Mangan's efforts to respect the ethical rights of Kathleen's body undercut his claims to a powerful voice. Kathleen Mangan's body signals her agency over that body within the limiting moral and legal parameters of the community to which she belongs. Its place within those matrices modulates Jamie Mangan's rights to appropriate it in his own interests. Jamie's attraction to Kathleen, particularly to the fact that she is so much younger than him, threatens to interpellate Jamie as subject to and victim of civil law rather than as an all-powerful, nation-building poet.

The legality of Jamie Mangan's relationship with Kathleen Mangan is complicated by the fact that he is related to her by birth. The exact distance between them in terms of consanguinity laws is never officially established and so their kinship remains an issue throughout their relationship. This becomes critical when the incestuous abuse of Kathleen by another Mangan poet is finally revealed but their kinship sets up a tension about the legality of their relationship from the outset. She is Jamie's cousin and although the parish priest guesses that Jamie and Kathleen are "not that close"(157) his admission that "I'm very weak on these consanguinity things"(157) leaves the matter unclear unless the reader is prepared to give the matter special thought. The tension is exacerbated by Jamie's lack of interest in clarifying his exact relationship with Kathleen. He tells the priest, "That's all right [...] don't bother [to investigate further]"(157). Legally, Jamie's relationship with Kathleen is not transgressive, but the idea of that transgression continues to excite Jamie's desire.

Jamie is also fascinated by the youth of Kathleen's body. Although Kathleen claims that she is not underage, so that again Jamie does not appear to be breaking the law, he finds her proximity to childhood erotic. He is attracted to 'her rounded childish breasts' and 'girlish buttocks' and suggests that 'This girl could be his daughter'(125). His response to learning her age makes the appeal of her youth clear: 'Eighteen. Half his age. With a moan of pleasure he penetrated her'(171). Jamie's emphasis on Kathleen's consent for their first kiss and his query as to whether 'she might *allow* him to do more'(132; my italics) stresses that his relationship with Kathleen is consensual. However, when he is criticised by Dinny Mangan, Jamie accepts that the relationship appears abusive to outsiders: 'Go away and stop molesting a young mad girl. That is what is being asked of me'(262).

Throughout their affair Jamie's paedophilic fantasies are clearly signified *as* fantasies. In fact, it is in the descriptions of their sexual encounters, told by the narrator from Jamie's

perspective, that Jamie establishes his only claims to manipulate language, metaphor and simile in the manner of a Mangan poet. Jamie increases his arousal by constructing his lover as a child. To help distinguish between the legal, consenting affair he conducts with a woman who is above the age of consent and his desire to establish a powerful identity based on his domination of a girl who is below that age, he uses literary devices to stress that his fantasy is purely language-based and has no consequences.

In order to avoid culpability for his abusive fantasies, Jamie differentiates clearly between the fantasy and the ethical reality of his relationship with Kathleen as he sees it. Rather than casting himself as the experienced lover who corrupts the innocent colleen, the narrator represents Kathleen as powerful. The ironic effect of this strategy is that Jamie's use of poetic devices helps to suggest that he is powerless. Once again, he is situated as the victim of a powerful woman: 'as Kathleen tightened her grip on his arm, urging him up the steep incline in the driving rain, it came to him that, unbeknown to his parents or to anyone else who knew him, he was again a woman's prisoner'(210).

Jamie claims that the unequal relationship which empowers him is actually staged. As Jeanne Flood notes, he emphasises that it is Kathleen who puts his fantasies into actions 'as if' she had intuited them.³³ Theatrical imagery recurs throughout their encounters to suggest that Kathleen is really not being oppressed despite her submissive behaviour:

In his fantasy he became her master, her body his to do with as he wished. But in reality he was quickly aware that this near-child was infinitely more skilled in vengery than Beatrice or any other woman he had known. It was she who — abandoned, naked, trembling yet cajoling — brought him again and again to the point of ejaculation, yet managed to prolong his pleasure. Roiling around in the bed, rearing up over her buttocks, which somehow seemed to tremble beneath him, he became aware that, without a word being said, she had divined his dream and was acting it out, playing the part of the young girl as victim, assigning to him the role of lustful tutor, older lover, occasion of her sin.(169)

This theatrical imagery has the unfortunate effect, for Jamie, of suggesting that his relationship with Kathleen Mangan replicates his relationship with Beatrice Abbot rather than repeating the power dynamic between James Clarence and Dark Rosaleen. In the final sex scene, Jamie's analogy for Kathleen's behaviour connects Kathleen Mangan directly with Beatrice. Kathleen is 'assuming again like an accomplished actress her role as his trembling compliant victim'(252). Jamie's loss of control seems to be becoming more acute. In contrast to the scene where he was her 'lustful tutor'(169) he is 'led back to lust by his youthful governess'(252).

One of the articles of faith in Jamie's affair with Kathleen is the belief, stated by the narrator and echoed by Jamie, that he is not abusing Kathleen. In Jamie's attempt to signal his lack of liability for his relationship with her, he signals her as the agent for their sexual encounters and so suggests that he is powerless again. He represents Kathleen as the one who controls their encounters. The very first time Jamie kisses Kathleen, he does so 'without thinking'(129). On another occasion the narrator tells us that 'he stared at her as though hypnotized'(142). He suspects that she may work as a prostitute but casts himself as the injured party who is offended at this

³³ Jeanne A. Flood, 'The Doctor's Wife and the Failure of Realism', *Éire-Ireland*, 18:2 (1983), 80-102, (p.97).

aspect of her behaviour. Although he has revelled in her supposed venery, he suggests that 'It did not bear to think of ugly old postmen drunken footballers, the bicycle brigade which pedaled up these roads to see her'(175).

Jamie contrasts his own non-agentive behaviour with that of Kathleen. She 'leaned against him provocatively'(128) and later 'daringly put out her hand'(142). Later again, she 'expertly unzipped his fly'(168). He is said to be 'like a voyeur' but Jamie Mangan is far from artful: "'I want a kiss," he said thickly and reached for her, taking her into his arms, his mouth blundering towards her face [...] He knelt clumsily on the bed beside her'(168). As she leads him to the big house for their last sexual encounter the narrator tells us that 'He felt dull, and brutish, a stumbling bull led on by the nose ring of his lust'(247).

Jamie's attraction to Kathleen's body actually helps to disempower his voice. He is so anxious to maintain their sexual relationship that he will agree to anything in order to maintain it. Kathleen's power over him is represented by her influence on the speech he uses. When the Gardaí arrive to arrest her brother she says "'Tell them you never saw me. Tell them you slept here on your own. Tell them we were in Skull all day yesterday'"(205). When she gives him instructions for the last time, the narrator writes that her dog obeyed her and 'Mangan also did as he was told'(320). She goes on to speak to him 'as though she were explaining to a very small child'(321). Her voice is reinforced by her body which she uses to persuade Jamie to obey her commands. The narrator and Jamie at least, characterise her speech and actions as part of the same strategy: 'as though to seal her power to make him do what she wanted, she came up to him and kissed him on the lips, a Judas kiss, bonding him as her accomplice'(209).

Kathleen Mangan's Body as a Speech Act

In *The Mangan Inheritance*, the body of the colleen-nation is made visible and ^{the} suggests that women are constructed and constrained by the nationalist discourse in which that image is mobilised. Although Kathleen Mangan's voice in the novel becomes increasingly less subversive, her body continues to signify in ways that indict the poet. Before Jamie goes to meet Michael Mangan, she exploits the power of her body over Jamie to persuade him to confirm and transact a financial agreement which will secure her future. The deal involves a promise that Jamie's 'word' will be traded for her body. She uses a handshake to confirm an oath between the couple, so that both her voice and her body are employed in a performative speech act that Kathleen rather than the poet orchestrates. Like Beatrice, who is described as a 'regency buck' when she is more powerful than Jamie, Kathleen is constructed as a man when he closes the deal. Kathleen offers to continue her sexual relationship with Jamie on the condition that he lends her the money to travel to America before he returns home. Jamie's attraction to her body is such that he will agree to anything that she says:

She made a mock gesture of spitting in the palm of her hand and held her hand out, palm upward, in the same gesture he had seen the cattle dealers use in Bantry when they struck a bargain. 'Put your hand on it,' she said. 'It's a fair bargain. You'll not regret it.'

He took her hand in his. 'But I mean it,' he said. 'We'll go to America together.'

'I don't want that. I made you an offer. You lend me the fare and give me say, fifty quid as a thank-you present. That's what I want. No more and no less.'

He laughed and kissed her. 'Whatever you want,' he said. 'I told you I'll do whatever you want.' (246)

When Kathleen Mangan strikes her deal with Jamie, she confirms her promise by using her body, first to reiterate that a conventional and binding agreement has been reached and then to carry out the deal through her continuing sexual relationship with him. Her speech is both guaranteed by and honoured by her body. After the deal has been struck and as Jamie starts to discover more about his resemblance to a Mangan poet who has sexually abused Kathleen, Kathleen's body enters into a new relationship with her voice and again operates as a kind of speech act. Even though Kathleen's voice is increasingly and pathologically pre-occupied with her experience of abuse, she is not entirely silenced. Instead her body starts to signify as an accusation which brings Jamie's pursuit of a powerful and abstract voice to a halt.

Before Jamie meets Michael Mangan, Kathleen's voice becomes less subversive. As Jamie's physical resemblance to Michael Mangan becomes more emphatic, Kathleen's responses to him increasingly repeat her responses to the earlier Mangan poet and the scene of his castration. During the time when these speech acts remains unexplained, they help to situate her as a vulnerable victim rather than as a subversive woman:

'We'll have to get a doctor' she moaned [...] 'We'll have to get a doctor.'

'Look it's me, Jim.'

But she did not seem to understand. 'You'll have to get a doctor. You'll bleed to death. O, God!' And she turned from him, huddled down in the corner her red hair falling over here face.

He got off the bed, pulled on his underpants and trousers, and careful not to frighten her, went toward her slowly, his hand raised in a gesture of conciliation.

'Kathleen, wake up. It's just a bad dream. This is Jim. Jim.'

But she rocked, keening, not looking up at him.

[...] He realized that he was afraid of her. She looked up at him, her mad eyes seeing him, not seeing him. (231)

Kathleen's physical echo of the vulnerable Rosaleen image is now augmented by speech acts which repeat the wordless cries of other iconic images of the Irish woman that register disaster. Like the banshee and the keening woman, Kathleen now has a voice which acknowledges rather than resists crises: 'Kathleen cowered away [...] her glorious hair spilling down over her back, uttering a senseless keening, which erupted suddenly into a high nightmare shriek' (252). Her voice is metaphorically silenced, unable to do anything other than repeat the circumstances of her oppression. However, her body, a little like that of Beatrice Abbot in 'Flight for Orleans', continues to signify on her behalf even when her voice is repeating words that situate her as a victim. This body has already given Kathleen's voice authority over Jamie during their affair. It has operated to silence Jamie's voice. He has even represented it as a powerful statement:

He stood, staring at her high small breasts, the delicate lines of her long legs, the down on her lower belly, the undulant thighs. It was as though she had decided to silence his questions [about her uncle] by invoking the ukase of her body, and as he looked he felt his penis rise, his inquisition forgotten.(201)

The *OED* defines 'ukase' as a 'decree or edict, having the force of law, issued by the Russian emperor or government'. Here, Kathleen's body acts as a decree which outranks Jamie's enquiries. Once Jamie has discovered that Kathleen has been sexually abused by a Mangan poet who is identical to himself, the status of her body as a statement which threatens to indict him becomes even more prominent. Kathleen's voice ceases to challenge her characterisation as a passive and iconic victim. However, Kathleen's body continues to operate as a site where the signs of the abuse attendant on her relationship with an earlier Mangan poet are coded. Jamie's involvement with Kathleen's body starts to complicate Jamie's attempt to distance himself from the Mangan role he has adopted, and it threatens to implicate Jamie in the appropriation and the abuse of women which emerges as the condition of the powerful Mangan voice.

Strike a Pose: Agency and the Mangan Poet

Jamie's loss of authority in his relationship with Kathleen Mangan compounds the sense that Jamie's Mangan inheritance does not offer him the powerful and independent voice he had anticipated. Jamie's claim to agency over his poetic voice has always been problematic. As I noted earlier, Jamie's career as a journalist was initiated and vouchsafed by his inheritance of his father's status. His claim to a poetic inheritance has likewise been dependent on his citation of a link to a powerful ancestor. However, the extent to which Jamie is reliant on repeating faithfully his ancestor's poetry in order to exercise that powerful voice demonstrates that his citation of that inheritance does not give him agency.

Jamie Mangan's powerful Mangan identity is constructed only through the careful repetition of speech acts which cite his link to the Mangan tradition. That repetition produces and limits his identity rather than giving him agency and autonomy. Jamie Mangan's physical resemblance to James Clarence demonstrates the extent to which his role is constrained by the citation that empowers him. Initially, he uses the daguerrotype of James Clarence Mangan as a validatory sign to justify his attempt to rediscover his poetic voice: 'searching a new identity, he had crossed the frontier of this land, carrying in his pocket like a passport a photograph of himself as a man long dead'(116). Yet as his quest goes on, he cannot control the process through which his physical resemblance to the Mangan poets increases. When the identity of the man in the picture is finally confirmed, Jamie seems less enabled by the daguerrotype than determined by his relationship to its image.

Jamie's voice remains metaphorically powerless after he travels to Ireland, unless he repeats James Clarence's poetry through which he is able temporarily to construct a socially-valid identity. His newly powerful poetic voice makes a considerable impact on its audiences, and gives Jamie a powerful role. When he cites 'Dark Rosaleen' his audience is 'Hanging on his words' while he is 'happy in his turn, at home as he had never been at home'(144). However, Jamie's ability to cite

poetry as a Mangan does not help him to assert an autonomous identity. His poetic voice is only powerful when he repeats the poems of his long-dead ancestor and his vocabulary seems to have been stocked without his volition with the poems written by his predecessor. Jamie explains to his cousin, Conor Mangan: “‘It’s amazing, but I just read them [James Clarence’s poems] once, some weeks ago and it was as if I’d written them myself. Without even trying, I know them by heart’”(143).

Jamie’s narrative voice is empowered only within a chain of citation which aligns him with other poets of the colleen-nation. The three uses of sentence-initial ‘He’ near the end of the extract below emphasise that his affair with Kathleen offers Jamie status. However, it is only as a Mangan poet, repeating the poetry of James Clarence Mangan, that he is given any authority:

All the time, like a child doing what she had been told to do, her delicate fingers slowly kneaded his penis to full size. His face flushed, he asked her to kiss his cock, and submissively lowering her head until all he could see below him were masses of red hair, she brought him deliciously to a second climax, an event rare enough in recent years for him to experience a sense of triumph. He laughed. He felt insatiable. He held her head against his chest and, staring out of the large window at the morning light on the cold mountain face, felt a rush of joy, and almost without thinking, as though he had composed it for the occasion, cried out one of Mangan’s stanzas.

‘Over dews, over sands
Will I fly for your weal.(169; my italics)

In the page of dialogue following this extract, Jamie’s voice only repeats his ancestor’s poetry and his dependence on a cited rather than individual authority is made clear. Jamie ventriloquises the words of his ancestor but does not control them. His powerful Mangan voice is clearly produced through a derivative performance. Kathleen laughs at his recitation and he protests:

‘No, it’s true. That’s what you’ve given me.’
‘What did I give you?’ she asked.
He struck a pose.

‘A second life, a soul anew,
My Dark Rosaleen!’(170)

Even the sexual empowerment which accompanies his pursuit of the Mangan inheritance turns out to be dependent on his fulfilment of the terms and conditions of the Mangan poet role. Jamie only ever exercises his sexual fantasies within the confines of the Mangan’s ‘ancestral house, Gorteen. The couple never have sex in the caravan. In the house, the historical circumstances in which James Clarence Mangan wrote about ‘Dark Rosaleen’ as a vulnerable victim are recreated: Gorteen is owned by an absentee English landlord. It is in the house that Kathleen’s memories of her uncle threaten her most.

However, Jamie also feels that the house fixes his identity in some way. When he approaches it for the first time ‘Its aspect was both minatory and compelling, as though it willed him to approach, yet intended to destroy him’(129). On his return to the house, ‘Again [...] he was seized with a feeling that the place willed him to approach yet intended to harm him’(166-7). Only on his last visit before he meets Michael Mangan does Jamie feel that he masters the house:

As always, he experienced the minatory presence of the building which faced him, but as [a] small cry echoed in his ears, he felt a new and strange sensation. It was as though the house feared him, feared his approach, feared his penetration of its secrets.(248)

Jamie's new sense of authority over the house is only achieved when his resemblance to the other Mangan poets has reached its greatest pitch. As he looks in a mirror during this visit to the house Jamie realises that he is now identical to the other Mangan poets:

In that moment he knew why this house resisted him. I am the ghost that haunts it. I am come back to these rooms where whatever deed that frightened Kathleen once took place [...] From framed photograph to framed mirror he consulted these identical images, and as he did, the elation which had filled him in the past when he looked at his unknown Doppelgänger changed to fear. It was as though the daguerr type was now a document sentencing him to some future doom.(250)

Kathleen's biggest breakdown occurs on the same evening as this recognition and it demonstrates that she too is finding it increasingly difficult to differentiate Jamie from the other Mangan poets. The narrator of *The Mangan Inheritance* has already ceased to refer to Jamie Mangan as 'Jamie', the name that signals his difference from the other Mangan poets. He refers to Jamie only through masculine pronouns or through the patronymic which identifies him with his literary forebears. Jamie's authority is produced and limited by the Mangan inheritance he plans to control. As the discussion of *The Dark* will illustrate in the final chapter of this thesis, the citation of discourses which construct a powerful role for the speaker also implicates them in matrices of power which delimit the authority of that speaker. As Judith Butler argues, the citation of any powerful name carries with it strictures as well as status:

Where there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus there is no 'I' who stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through discourse.³⁴

When Jamie Mangan encounters the older Mangan poet, Michael Mangan, who sexually abused Kathleen, Jamie's citation of his Mangan identity is translated by its place in the Mangan literary tradition in ways that Jamie cannot control.

The problems of differentiating words from acts

Jamie has aligned himself with the other Mangan poets in order to gain citational force for his poetic voice, and to construct himself in a powerful identity. Although such a transformation is predicated on the performative capacity of the language he uses, he insists that the language he uses in relation to Kathleen Mangan, the same language which installs him as a Mangan poet, is not performative. However, throughout the novel, there have been indications that the voice which empowers the poet is achieved through the assertion of authority over others. Jamie himself quotes Yeats's anxiety about the possibility that his play, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, provoked later nationalist deaths. The actor who makes a speech at Beatrice's funeral, Leo Davoren, bears the name of the protagonist in Sean O'Casey's, *The Shadow of A Gunman*(1925) whose role prefigures Jamie's in

³⁴ Butler, 'Critically Queer', p.18.

some important respects. In *The Mangan Inheritance*, Davoren's name is repeated eight times in quick succession, twice followed with exclamation marks(89), and although Jamie does not make a note of the name he does later claim to have read O'Casey's work(97). O'Casey's play concerns a poet who, having been mistaken for an IRA gunman on the run, allows people to believe the story in order to gain status and to attract a young woman, Minnie Powell. At the end of the first act, he asks himself 'what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?'³⁵ However, the difference between constructing a fictional and real identity becomes increasingly difficult to enforce during the play, and in a raid on Davoren's house, Minnie Powell is shot dead. Davoren is forced to reconsider the possible effects of language. In *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the performative powers of language that Davoren, like Jamie Mangan, tries to benefit from are shown to carry ethical responsibilities. Davoren suggests that 'We'll never again be able to lift up our heads if anything happens to Minnie Powell'.³⁶

Throughout his affair with Kathleen, Jamie's paedophilic fantasies about dominating her have been represented as 'only words'. Jamie and the narrator emphasise the status of Jamie's fantasies as fictions which do not reflect or affect the young woman. Jamie enjoys his illicit desires through the use of metaphors and similes which allow him to construct an imaginative version of their relationship which is differentiated from the real version of his affair with Kathleen.

When Jamie Mangan meets the previous poet in the Mangan tradition, he discovers that this poet has sexually abused Kathleen as well as his daughter, Kathleen Mangan's cousin, Maeve. The Mangan role which Jamie has cited now threatens to complicate the relationship that Jamie has sought to establish between words and actions. Jamie is horrified by Michael Mangan's behaviour towards the girls and works to establish his absolute difference from his physical and poetical double:

But surely I have never been this person, this foul old swill. And at that moment, as he looked again at his double, there entered into him a rage more powerful than any he had ever felt against another human being.(308)

However, Michael Mangan repeats the strategy of differentiating language and actions that Jamie has sought to construct. Jamie's behaviour threatens to be translated by its place in the Mangan tradition so that his affair with Kathleen does appear abusive. Michael Mangan's sexual abuse of Kathleen chronologically precedes Jamie's affair which can now be read, retrospectively, as a repetition of that abusive relationship.

Jamie's defence of his fantasies is echoed by Michael Mangan and threatens to set Jamie's own behaviour in a new light. The explanation that Michael Mangan provides to justify his behaviour repeats Jamie's own measures to assert that there is no connection between words and actions, and that words are more important than actions. As a result, Jamie's own defence seems culpable. Michael Mangan argues that he should be remembered, not for his abuse of the young women, but for the poetry he has written. The poetic voice, he suggests, transcends all moral or legal strictures. It is powerful and should construct a powerful role for the poet but is not bound by

³⁵ O'Casey, p.104.

³⁶ O'Casey, p.127.

responsibilities beyond the text. The only quotation provided from Michael Mangan's poetry expresses this sentiment and he goes on to elaborate on the poem's argument for Jamie's benefit:

The stanzas were filled with muffled hints about the sexual 'follies' of the poet's life and the poem ended with a denial that they weighed in the balance when set against the poems, his life's work [...]:

Alexander, Nero, Christ,
Are words on paper, at the world's end.

[...] 'Isn't that what all history comes down to in the end? Words on paper, words in books, a handful of books, isn't that it? The thing that matters about my life is there on the page. If it's no good, then I don't matter. And if it is good, it's *that* that is my life, not the troubles I've had or the good or bad I did to those around me.'(311)

Jamie's plan to punish Michael Mangan for the abuse he has committed complicates further Jamie's attempts to construct himself as distant and different from the older poet. Jamie believes that the only way to punish Michael Mangan for his misdemeanours is to argue that his poetry is ineffective, that it is 'only words' and so does not construct a powerful identity for the poet. As Jamie notes, in suggesting that poetry is not performative, he destroys his own attraction to the Mangan inheritance: '[Jamie] Mangan felt that he looked upon himself, a self he wanted to destroy. "It's a poem," he shouted suddenly. "Do you hear me? It's only a poem. Besides you've been reading the Symbolists and it shows"'(311). The poetic voice cannot construct a powerful, autonomous identity for its author nor can it create an original voice. He argues that Michael Mangan is culpable for actions which no amount of poetry can redress:

Even if it were a good poem, that doesn't get you off the hook. You're talking about two different things. All right, in the end, history comes down to words. But before that, it happened. And words that try to change what happened are lying words. You bastard.[...] What you did to Maeve can't be wiped out by a few lines you scribbled before you screwed her life up. And what you did to Kathleen won't earn you absolution because you sit here writing verse, imitating Yeats in his tower.'(311)

Here, as in his later novel, *The Statement*, Brian Moore implies that while language is performative and can construct people as victims, or, for example, command their deaths, that language cannot be countermanded by performative language after the fact. In *The Statement*, a French collaborator tries to decide whether the language of absolution in the Catholic sacrament of confession really countermands the performative statements through which he condemned people to their deaths during the Second World War. Like that later novel, *The Mangan Inheritance* suggests that the only language which can countermand language which materially affects human bodies, is the language of secular justice. Jamie Mangan argues here that language is not able to counteract the effects of the sexual abuse Michael Mangan has committed. He uses the language of the Catholic sacrament of confession mockingly to suggest that absolution cannot easily be secured through formulaic language.

In his attack on Michael Mangan, Jamie works to establish his difference from the older poet by citing discourses which construct him as a conventionally moral speaker by citing the language of justice and religion against the poet. Michael Mangan has suggested that his encounter with Jamie is 'poetic justice'(280; phrase repeated 304) and Michael Mangan points out that the

judgemental tone that Jamie adopts is facilitated through the use of language from the conventional performative discourses of the state and the Church:

So it's a little moral man we have here, a little priesteen giving out with his sermons and his penances [...] pretending to be a fit judge of poetry. To think that for a minute there, because you have my face and call yourself a poet, I was trembling before the judgement seat and cast down by your arsehole pronouncements.'(311)

However, Jamie is not simply able to establish his difference from the Mangan tradition he has cited throughout the novel as his destiny. Jamie's meeting with Michael Mangan raises questions about the status of his fantasies about Kathleen. His performance as the poetic judge of Michael Mangan does not necessarily succeed in differentiating him from the older poet. In *Lolita*, when Humbert Humbert attacks another man who has abused the young Lolita, he too claims to be administering 'poetical justice'.³⁷ Although Michael Mangan casts Jamie in the role of judge, Jamie approaches their meeting as if he were the one who was going to be indicted. As he walks towards the tower where he meets the other Mangan poet, the crows on the headland 'looked at him, heads sideways, reminding him of judges in an old French cartoon'(278).

The differentiation that Jamie tries to maintain between the performative effects of poetry on his own identity and the effects his fantasies have on Kathleen is not easily maintained after he meets Michael Mangan. One of the major effects of Jamie's discovery of Michael Mangan's actions is that it suggests that the metaphorical fantasies he has enjoyed about paedophilia leave their marks on the body of the object of his desires. Jamie's encounter echoes in several important respects one from Ralph Ellison's novel, *The Invisible Man*, in which a rich white man named Norton, who has had incestuous feelings for his daughter, meets Jim Trueblood, a poor African-American man who actually performed incestuous abuse. Norton feels that his identity will best be found through African-American people. He explains to his guide, the invisible man, that "I felt even as a young man that your people were somehow closely connected with my destiny [...] you are my fate, young man. Only you can tell me what it really is".³⁸ He is taken by the invisible man to meet Trueblood and when Norton hears his incestuous interest in his own daughter transformed into action by Trueblood he breaks down.

Like Norton, Jamie Mangan discovers that his fantasies have been performed by someone he regards as his destiny. Jamie Mangan can, less easily than Norton, assert his difference from the man who has enacted his fantasies. Jamie and Michael Mangan are physically identical and have both been sexually involved with the same young girl. Like Jamie, Trueblood problematises the line between fantasy and action. He claims that he is not guilty of the rape of his daughter because he thought he was only dreaming the assault.³⁹

Jamie discovers that when he takes his place within the Mangan tradition, he does not exercise control over the ways in which his utterances signify. Jamie's ethical performance of the Mangan role is effectively translated by its place within the chain of citation he mobilises. His

³⁷ Nabokov, p.298.

³⁸ Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, [1952] (London: Penguin, 1965), pp.32-33.

³⁹ Ellison, p.58.

fantasies are translated by their place within a chain of other citations of the Mangan role. In the light of Michael Mangan's revelations, the careful difference between Jamie's fantasies about dominating women and his affair with Kathleen are reassessed ('Let be be finale of seem ').

When Jamie realises that he will have to leave Ireland immediately to attend to his dying father, his 'gift' of money to Kathleen seems to repeat the dissolute pattern of his Mangan forebears because the money identifies Jamie's relationship with Kathleen with prostitution. The only way Jamie can move away from this implication is to repress his debt to his previous wife, Beatrice. This justification involves his renunciation of his claims to absolute agency and it establishes a chain of inheritances between the women who have controlled Jamie Mangan to counter the male line. Either way, Jamie cannot exert personal control over the ways in which his affair with Kathleen will be read by its witnesses. The second book of the novel closes as he presents Kathleen with the money:

'It's not a loan, it's a gift. You can do what you want with it. [...] You're not robbing me. I didn't earn it. It was given to me.'

'You're sure?'

'Of course, I'm sure.' With the old woman as audience, he took Kathleen in his arms and kissed her. 'I have to go now.'

'She hugged him. 'I hope all will go well for your father. And thanks, Jim. Thanks. God, aren't you the great fellow altogether.'

'I'm not. I wish I were.' (328)

Like Jamie Mangan, Michael has rehearsed the role of his famous ancestor, but he has also fostered his resemblance to Yeats. He shares a Christian name with Yeats's son and works, like Yeats, in an old Norman tower. Michael Mangan has an incestuous relationship with his daughter, Maeve, but he also has an incestuous relationship to Yeats's poetry.⁴⁰ Michael Mangan's sexual assaults on Maeve and Kathleen help to situate his career as a parodic repetition of that of Yeats. Maeve Mangan's name links her to Yeats's poem on 'The Old Age of Queen Maeve'.⁴¹

The references to Yeats demonstrate that the uncanny Mangan inheritance has a broader application than Jamie Mangan's search for identity. Apart from Michael Mangan's poem about Nero and Christ, the only other poem of his that is named is one that, as Jamie notes, repeats the sentiments of Yeats's 'Prayer for my Daughter':

FOR MAEVE
Michael James Mangan

Four stanzas, the poet as father writing wishes for his child's protection.(309)

Despite the apparent focus on the child, the emphasis of the poem rests on Michael Mangan's potential, his abilities to produce the poem and to protect his daughter. Just as Michael Mangan's career prompts a re-reading of Jamie Mangan's words and their impact, it potentially triggers the same type of retrospective reading of Yeats's use of images of women. Like the Mangan poets, Moore suggests, Yeats and other writers of the Irish revival have ventriloquised women's voices in various ways. In her reading of Yeats's poetry, C. L. Innes urges critics to take

⁴⁰ Thanks to Philip Quinn for making this observation.

⁴¹ Yeats, 'The Old Age of Queen Maeve' [1903] in *Collected Poems*, pp.449-57.

these voices into account. She asks readers of 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer' to set aside their interest in Robartes to ask what the consequences might be

if we identify with the woman speaker? What happens to the poem if we listen to the male speaker through her ears? At least we should remember that this poem is, after all, a dramatic dialogue, whose significance lies in its form and not just in the content of the male speaker's words. Viewed from outside, how do they come across?⁴²

Jamie Mangan's pursuit of a poetic inheritance which will distance him from his debt to women only reveals to him that other male poets are reliant on the colleen-nation in order to construct powerful poetic voice for themselves. Michael Mangan's citations of his Mangan inheritance and his Yeatsian heritage as an Irish male poet operate retrospectively to call other citations of those roles into question. It is the kind of parodic repetition which destabilises the assumptions which enable the traditional poetic voice.

Moore suggests that poetic abuse leaves its marks on the bodies and lives of the women objectified in the poetry. He also suggests that Jamie's reliance on women's voices is shared by the other Mangan poets. Their voices are only enabled through their citation or appropriation of voices attributed to women. Like Jamie's, Michael Mangan's poetic project has only been made possible through the financial support of women, and through the abuse of women who resemble colleen-nations. Jamie's trip to Ireland is funded by the inheritance he receives from Beatrice. Similarly, Michael has had his ambitions bankrolled by his wife, Eileen. She paid for him to study for a degree at University College, Cork, and then provided enough money for him to give up teaching and concentrate on writing poetry: 'she said she'd buy cattle like her father before her and she promised that I'd have plenty of time for my poetry'(298).

Jamie's attempt to establish a powerful poetic voice was interrupted by his marriage to a powerful colleen-nation. Similarly, Michael Mangan's attempt to establish a powerful poetic voice is interrupted by his encounter with a woman named after the most powerful of the traditional icons of Irish womanhood. Yeats' describes Queen Maeve as a powerful woman with a form unlike that of the allegorical Cathleen ní Houlihan. Maeve has been 'great-bodied and great-limbed, | Fashioned to be the mother of strong children'.⁴³ Maeve Mangan, in her one act of transgression against the social conventions of passivity and morality for women, takes revenge on the body of the poet by castrating him. During the attack, when her body is more powerful than his, she temporarily deploys powerful, embodied, unidealised voice. Michael Mangan understandably has a clear recollection of her attack on him:

I had her nightdress up and I had a cockstand and the next thing I knew she was holding it. She never did that before. She made me stiff as a board. And all of a sudden —she must have hidden it somewhere — she out with a big sharp kitchen knife in her other hand and made a chop and cut through it like she'd cut off a chicken's head. And then she said to me in a very quiet voice — I'll not forget that voice — "Now you won't be able to spoil Kathleen like you spoiled me."(301)

⁴² C. L. Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society: 1880-1935*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1993), p.80.

⁴³ Yeats, 'The Old Age of Queen Maeve' in *Collected Poems*, pp.449-57, (p.451).

Maeve's vocal power is voluntarily surrendered. Although she temporarily displaces the more passive images of femininity which have been iconised and idealised in poetry, she does not assert her power beyond one isolated act of violence. Instead, like Josephine in *The Pornographer*, she removes her transgressive behaviour from Ireland when she moves to Manchester to become a lay sister in a convent. Michael explains that 'it was an enclosed order of nuns and so the paper had a whole yarn about vows of eternal silence and so forth.' (303)

Beatrice Abbot, Kathleen Mangan and Maeve Mangan are all effectively silenced at the end of *The Mangan Inheritance* but without their assistance, or without repeating the abuse through which the Mangan voice is articulated, Jamie can neither remedy nor move beyond a discourse which is enabled by but always disempowers women. His voice is only powerful insofar as it repeats the discourse which situates him as powerful and, as it emerges, necessarily abuses women. Jamie Mangan's pursuit of his Mangan inheritance is provoked by the possibility that through his citation of Manganesque discourse, he will be able to re-cite himself in a powerful masculine role. His encounter with Michael Mangan suggests that citing performative discourse gives Jamie power only insofar as he repeats that discourse, inevitably reinforcing the patriarchal power relations it constructs.

Jamie cannot cite the Mangan inheritance without performatively appropriating and abusing women. As *The Mangan Inheritance* closes, Jamie Mangan's dying father bequeaths him the unborn child of his marriage to Margrethe for whom Jamie will be guardian. The bequest marks the third and final Mangan inheritance Jamie receives during the novel and marks the continuation of a line of men descended from James Clarence. These men, as Patrick Mangan's dying words painfully illustrate, are prone to a crippling inarticulacy unless they mobilise the Mangan inheritance that Jamie has discovered:

He added something which was so slurred Mangan could not hear it.

'Sorry, Dad? What was that?'

His father shook his head. 'Doesn't matter, This bloody . . . speech. Your grandfather died . . . just like this. Couldn't . . . speak. Anyway, we've . . . managed to talk. Thanks.' (335)

Jamie's experiences have suggested that Mangan voices are impossible or at least incapable of achieving lasting status where women fail to enable their voices, or are not used as ventriloquial sites for, or subjects to be addressed by, those voices. The forthcoming birth — "It will . . . be a son. I . . . feel it" (335) — suggests the Mangan legacy of inevitable abuse will continue and that Jamie will be unable to intervene to prevent it.

The Problem of Embodying Voices

In *The Mangan Inheritance* Brian Moore, like feminist critics of the colleen-nation, links voices attributed to women in nationalist fiction to voices and bodies 'outside the poem' to demonstrate the effects on women of a discourse which situates women as objects. He suggests that literary discourse constructs and constrains gendered identities. However, *The Mangan Inheritance* also demonstrates that in the critique of patriarchal conventions of representation

the strategy of exposing literary discourse by recourse to 'real' identities and sexed bodies can reify rather than displace the conventions that are being satirised.

Jamie Mangan discovers that he cannot articulate a poetic voice which will give him status without repeating the abuses that the other Mangan poets have committed and which take their effect on the 'real' bodies of women outside the poem. The novel quickly and quite disconcertingly diverts Jamie back to Canada after he has met Michael Mangan and re-emphasises his place within a tradition of inarticulate men before ending abruptly. Neither Jamie nor the narrator attempt to summarise *his* views on the Mangan inheritance that Jamie has uncovered. Perhaps this is because Brian Moore is not the most adept writer when it comes to closing his novels: several of his protagonists are only stopped by being shot dead on their respective last pages. However, the abrupt closure of *The Mangan Inheritance* is consistent with the ethical impasse the novel has constructed for male authors of literary texts like Jamie Mangan and Brian Moore himself.

Jamie Mangan cannot find a way out of the ethical dilemma that the Mangan inheritance constitutes. He fails to imagine a way of articulating a male voice which would signify against or displace the conventions related to writing through the voices of Irish women and the novel ends without resolving the problems with gender ventriloquism it has raised. Moore's own reputation relies on his ability to ventriloquise women's voices in literary texts. Where that practice has been stigmatised as abusive, there seems to be no way to move beyond Jamie Mangan's discoveries that would allow the articulation of non-abusive male voices.

Jamie Mangan and Brian Moore are constructed by the terms of the Mangan inheritance as authors for whom the citation of women's voices signifies as appropriation. Moore cannot disrupt the Mangan tradition when the novel is told from the perspective of a Mangan poet by a male writer. In order to disrupt the process of idealisation and iconisation and abuse he has identified with men's attempts to idealise Irish women, he has to approach the same subject from the perspective of the iconised woman. In Brian Moore's subsequent novel, *The Temptation of Eileen Hughes* (1981), Moore makes clear that the shy shop assistant, Eileen Hughes, does not match the pure and idealised image in which her employer constructs her. The novel's narratorial voice, aligned with the voices of three women, survives the exorcism of the tradition of idealising Irish women. The man who has idealised and iconised Eileen is killed off in a suicide. Only through the ventriloquism of Eileen Hughes and the other women in the novel is Brian Moore able to reassert his right to discuss women without seeming to appropriate or abuse them.

In *Cold Heaven* (1983) the protagonist, Marie Davenport, explores the same problems that Jamie encounters when, after a Marian apparition, she feels obliged to pass the Marian message on to the Church. Marie does not believe in God. She is a lapsed Catholic. Her dilemma arises because of the problems of registering that dissent in the act of delivering the message. If Marie does not repeat the words she attributes to the Blessed Virgin, her silence obviously fails to make an impact on the custom of mariolatry. If, however, she does repeat the words Mary has spoken to her, she has to try and make people believe she is sane and that the message, in which she does not believe, is the truth. Marie's faithful repetition of the Marian message would construct her in the idealised image of the submissive and pure woman.

In *Cold Heaven*, Moore demonstrates the ways in which gendered identities are constructed through discursive repetition. However, in *The Mangan Inheritance*, where voices are gendered through the invocation of bodies as the proofs of autonomous humanist identities, gender ventriloquism becomes both abusive and inevitable. Voices are represented as already and irretrievably gendered and texts by men that use voices attributed to, or rather 'belonging to' embodied women will always silence or appropriate women. Eavan Boland's powerful request for the proliferation of images of women raises these kinds of problems for anyone who articulates a response as a male Irish writer. Boland's narrator asks:

Help us to escape youth and beauty.
Write us out of the poem. Make us human
in cadences of change and mortal pain
and words we can grow old and die in.⁴⁴

If a male author is situated as the addressee here, even his most collaborative response situates him in a stereotypical role whereby he assumes superior force over women. Women would be the objects of his actions: written, made and helped. Boland asks that new literature should employ traditional structures, for example, the rhythmical and metrical constraints suggested by 'cadences.' But the repossession and reworking of symbols of women poses a formal challenge to the male author. Any modulation or reworking of traditional techniques and narrative voices is complicated *by* the possibilities of reiterating the strategies of patriarchal texts.

This raises questions as to how male authors can participate in the process of deconstructing idealised images of Irish women without being cited within other patriarchal discourses which signal their endorsement of patriarchy. I quoted earlier Catharine MacKinnon's view that pornographic representation helps expose the power relations which operate beyond the pornographic text itself. MacKinnon's view helped to suggest that Jamie's portrayal of his relationship with Kathleen Mangan exposed the dynamics of the traditional relation between the colleen-nation and the poet. In this sense, we could argue that Moore's representation of Jamie's relationship with Kathleen participates in the disruption of conventional icons of Irish women. The ideal colleen-nation is pure, innocent and allegorical. In an Irish context, the pornographisation of this image of Irish womanhood might be read as participating in a process where the idealised image is broken down to be replaced with images of women in their social and historical contexts, sexualised rather than virginal, amoral rather than caring. However, particularly after Jamie Mangan meets Michael Mangan, *The Mangan Inheritance* could be read as an automatically patriarchal and pornographic text. This reading of the poet's Mangan inheritance implicates Jamie and Brian Moore alike within a chain of citation which represents the women they focus on as always appropriated, abused and effectively silent.

Edna Longley suggests that Eavan Boland is, like this fictional male author, unproblematically repeating the image of 'woman-as-nation', and that her attempt to break down the images of the literary revival repeats rather than subverts the ideologies on which Boland

⁴⁴ Boland, 'Time and Violence' in Collected Poems, (Carcanet: Manchester, 1995), pp. 206-8, (p. 208).

focuses. Longley challenges Boland to “do without the idea of a nation”.⁴⁵ However, Boland argues convincingly that images which have gained hegemonic status have to be engaged with rather than left to enjoy this status. Eavan Boland cites Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* to point out the capacity of language to construct the poet’s role. She argues that just as language makes the African-American narrator of that novel, poems which idealise Irish women construct the terms Irish women poets’ identities. Boland writes:

As a friend and feminist scholar said to me, we ourselves are constructed by the construct. I might be the author of my poems; I was not the author of my past [...] ‘I am an invisible man ...’ begins the Prologue of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. ‘I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.’⁴⁶

Both Boland and Moore cite Ellison to demonstrate the ways in which poets are situated within and enabled by the discourses over which they appear to have agency. Brian Moore explores the particular problems of the male speaker whose voice is validated by a patriarchal and nationalist literary tradition, the problems of how to cite that tradition less hierarchically or parodically without appearing simply to repeat the strategies of earlier texts or without being heard. In the next chapter, which focuses on two novels by John McGahern — *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* — I will explore further the issues which are raised by *The Mangan Inheritance*. The chapter will explore in what ways the repetition of conservative discourses is encouraged or compelled and will question in what ways the speaker can intervene in discursive practices to disrupt and subvert them after the category of agency has been deconstructed.

⁴⁵ Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p.187-188.

⁴⁶ Boland, *Object Lessons*, 146.

Our Father, Amongst Women: Re-citing Patriarchy in John McGahern's *The Dark* and *Amongst Women*

The Dark (1965) and *Amongst Women* (1990) both focus on domestic patriarchs, who assert their authority over their families through the threat, and sometimes the exercise of violence. John McGahern's novels are renowned for their realistic portrayal of Irish domestic patriarchy. This chapter sets out to show how the authority of the father figures in these novels is constructed through the men's careful repetition of authoritative discourses. Mahoney and Moran use the hegemonic discourses of the Church, familism and education in particular to construct themselves as patriarchs. However, like Jamie Mangan, they find themselves unable to control the ways in which the discourses they cite will signify. *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* differ substantially from *The Mangan Inheritance* in their style and subject matter. However, the novels concentrate on many of the same problems that Jamie Mangan encounters as father figures attempt to cite popular patriarchal discourses in their own interests.

The first half of this chapter focuses on the issues that *The Mangan Inheritance* raises about the relationship between a speaker and the masculinist discourses he cites. *The Dark* exposes the mundane strategies through which conventional masculine identities are constructed and goes some way to explaining why a character might repeat the performance of an identity which frustrates him. The novel explores whether or not it is possible to intervene in and subvert hegemonic discourses.

The second half of the chapter will focus on the much later novel, *Amongst Women*, to show how the patriarch's second wife, Rose, intervenes in and disturbs the process through which the patrifocal family — the family focused emotionally as well as economically on the father — is constructed. I will argue that Moran's attempts to construct the family as focused on as well as dominated by the father are complicated by the lack of consistency among the discourses through which the family is constructed. This section of the chapter will mobilise the ideal of the Irish mammy against the best interests of the domestic patriarch to demonstrate that the authority of the father figure is instated only with difficulty over and against those discourses which idealise the mother as the centre of the Irish home.

Although *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* were published twenty-five years apart, they share much in common. Both have both been read as parts of narratives about the ways in which Irish society has developed in the twentieth century. Both texts focus on families who live in rural Ireland in the fifty years following the War of Independence. Like the colleen-nation, the rural

family is one of the tropes through which the Irish patriarchal State constructs an imagined community for its subjects. In Eamon De Valera's notorious St. Patrick's Day Broadcast of 1943, he imagines that 'the Ireland that we dreamed of' is:

a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age.¹

Both *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* have been implicated in the process through which Ireland is imagined as a community as well as in the processes through which the limits of that community are constructed and enforced. As I noted earlier, *The Dark* was banned by the State on moral grounds for containing images of adolescent sexuality. *The Dark* focuses on the ways in which the discourses of education and Catholic morality can reinforce each other in Irish society and the contemporary reaction to the novel exemplified the extent of their complicity. McGahern was forced out of his job as a teacher through the influence of the Church. He explains that 'It turned out that [the headmaster] was taking direct orders from the archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. The archbishop was behind the whole thing, and he had an absolute obsession with impure books'.²

Much more recently, *Amongst Women* has received an almost equally vigorous critical response. It has been praised as the most accurate realist account of how Irish patriarchy operates in a domestic context. Fintan O'Toole has described it as

this single beautiful narrative that has no interest in contradicting itself, that commands and expects to command the trust of the reader, and that yet is never ever false to this place, that is completely convincing as a story of modern Ireland.³

Anecdotal evidence from people who teach the novel suggests that it is, more specifically, being appropriated as a myth which validates individual experiences of domestic patriarchy. The novel situates those experiences within a narrative which helps to signal them as the product and shared circumstance of Irish society rather than as isolated and unspeakable.

This chapter suggests that, a little like the Mangan poets, *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* threaten to be translated by their places within narratives which render them as barometers of Ireland's conservatism and patriarchy. The novels are generally cited to demonstrate that Irish society is patriarchal and restrictive rather than explored as texts which interrupt the claims of domestic patriarchs to absolute authority. This chapter aims to consider the novels, not as texts which demonstrate the truth of Irish patriarchy, but as texts which expose the strategies through which the status of domestic patriarchy as truth is established. These novels will be read

¹ Eamon De Valera, 'The Ireland that we Dreamed of: St. Patrick's Day Broadcast, 17th March 1943' in *Speeches and Statements by Eamon De Valera: 1917-1973* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1980), pp.466-469, (p.466).

² McGahern in interview with Carlson, p.56.

³ Fintan O'Toole, 'Both Completely Irish and Completely Universal', *Irish Times*, Weekend Section, (Dublin), 15th September, 1990, p.5.

alongside more obviously conservative texts such as *Bunreacht na hÉireann* — the 1937 constitution — in an attempt to construct new and subversive strategies for reading those texts which apparently grant illimitable force to Irish patriarchy.

* * *

The discursive construction of authority in *The Dark*

The Dark focuses on a family which is dominated by the father figure, Mahoney, after his wife's death. That death has radically altered the ways in which power is distributed among the family. For the first page of the novel, while Mahoney is engaged in dialogue with his son, his identity either as a man, or as a father, is not confirmed. How then do we identify the speaker as a powerful agent of patriarchal authority with the power to enforce his will in the home?

Throughout the first three chapters of *The Dark*, Mahoney cites discourses which align him with patriarchal structures beyond the home — those validated by the Church, the State and the education system — in order to situate himself as a powerful man in a society where men appear to be automatically invested with authority. Through the citation of discourses used by powerful public men, Mahoney attempts to consolidate his authority in the home and to augment the authority he accumulates as a father in a domestic context.

The content of the utterances that Mahoney cites construct him as a man whose word is law. The Mahoney boy has sworn and his father is trying to punish him. In the process of that punishment, Mahoney uses clichés from an identifiably paternal or parental register to emphasise his authority over the child. He claims to have a traditionally God-like parental omniscience — “Say what you said because I know” (7) — and he accuses the boy of “Trying to sing dumb — as if butter wouldn't melt” (7). However, stereotypically-parental speech is just one of the registers he uses to construct himself as an authority figure.

At various times in these first pages, Mahoney speaks like a teacher or a soldier as he employs a number of discourses, separately or coterminously, to give citational force to his position as patriarch. As I noted earlier, citational force belongs to those discourses which have been repeated so insistently that they gain the status of palpable truths. Mahoney makes use of the citational force accruing to other discourses associated with men in order to ratify his right to unassailable authority in the home. For example, he acts as teacher in order to emphasise his right to demand certain patterns of behaviour from the young boy:

‘Come on with me. Upstairs. I'll teach you a lesson for once. I'll teach you a lesson for once,’ he said with horrible measured passion through his teeth, the blood mounted on his face. ‘I'll teach you a lesson you won't forget in a hurry.’ (8)

When the boy appeals to him on an emotional level by referring to him as ‘Daddy,’ Mahoney starts to mingle the teacherly register he has used with a more overtly formal patriarchal discourse which emphasises his dispassionate distance from the boy. Mahoney constructs

himself as a soldier and the boy as his enemy when he orders him “Up the stairs. March. I’m telling you. Up the stairs [...] March, march, march, [...] I’m going to teach this gent a lesson” (8).

Mahoney’s densely repetitive citations of the patriarchal registers used by fathers, priests, teachers and soldiers identify him as a man who takes up his authority alongside, and supported by, the men who exert authority beyond the home. Although clearly his authority is not constructed unilaterally, Mahoney identifies his son’s submissive actions as responses to his agentive voice:

‘Off with the trousers. Off with the trousers.’

‘No. No.’

‘Off with the trousers I said.’

He just moved closer. He didn’t lift a hand, as if the stripping compelled by his will alone gave him pleasure. (8)

Mahoney’s authority is an effect of his repetition of patriarchal discourses rather than the product of his individual will. Mahoney speaks with the force of a teacher, soldier and father when he addresses his son here and while he derives pleasure from his ability to control the boy through the citation of powerful discourses which situate the boy as inferior, Mahoney is himself situated and limited by the discourses which he employs to construct his authority in the home. Mahoney is frustrated by the limited remit of his authority compared to that offered by the public roles he cites: “‘March, march, march,’ he kept grinding out’ (8).

The novel is narrated from the perspective of the child ^{whom} Mahoney is punishing here and in a complex counter-citation, the narrator constructs the account of Mahoney’s attacks in such a way as to echo another text where a Mahoney boy is threatened with violence. This citation suggests that Mahoney is frustrated and impotent in his domestic role. McGahern’s Mahoney twitches like the man with the twitching forehead in Joyce’s ‘An Encounter’.⁴ Like McGahern’s Mahoney, the adult in Joyce’s short story threatens children through the insistent use of a clearly-cited patriarchal discourse to give ‘the impression that he was repeating something which he had learned by heart or that, magnetized by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit’.⁵

The narrator of *The Dark* has Mahoney replicate the onanistic use of male-oriented language that Joyce’s protagonist ^{deploys} and ^{uses} the sexual dimension of ‘Encounters’ to signal Mahoney’s frustration within the role which gives him authority. Mahoney is unable to cite the types of discourse he repeats where they would give him greater power. In *The Dark*, the final emphasis of this opening scene is on a beating which is mimed rather than carried out. The attack exposes the contrary ways in which Mahoney’s citations of powerful discourses operate at once to give him power and to frustrate him. For the boy, the differentiation between a mimed and a real beating is, as for Kathleen Mangan, immaterial. However, for Mahoney the attack

⁴ Joyce, ‘An Encounter’, in *Dubliners*, pp.18-28.

⁵ Joyce, ‘An Encounter’, in *Dubliners*, p. 26.

emblematises his sense of impotence in the role of the domestic father which, of all the roles he cites to discipline his son, accrues least social status. For Mahoney at least, the whipping scene is a kind of anti-climax:

'I'll teach you a lesson for once,' and then he cried out as the leather came, exploding on the leather of the armrest over his ear, his whole body stiff, sweat breaking and it was impossible to realize he hadn't actually been hit yet. [...] It came as it came before, a rifle crack on the armrest, the same hysterical struggle, and he hadn't been hit yet, it was unreal. [...] 'And you — you get your clothes, and waste no time getting downstairs,' he turned to the naked boy before he left for the room, his face still red and heated, the leather hanging dead in his hand.(9-10)

As the early chapters develop, McGahern demonstrates that the family is a discursive construct which is signalled as patriarchal and patrifocal only through careful acts of repetition. This discursive model of the family is vulnerable to change or mis-citation at the father figure's expense. In the second chapter, Mahoney again cites himself as a powerful patriarch. Stressing his frustration and suffering as a devoted father, he represents himself as Christ crucified. Like Christ, he has taken his followers on a fishing trip to lend him assistance. However, when he loses his temper he takes on the form of Christ on the cross: "Such a cross to have to live under," he complained back at the oars, and started to pull furiously'(14). Mahoney attempts to cite himself alongside the Godhead here in order to demonstrate his rights to authority and respect. At the same time he suggests that he is crucified by his family's failure to recognise his power.

When Mahoney later decides to resume the role of the benevolent father, his authority is further undermined as the children disrupt his attempts to dominate them. Without confronting Mahoney or overtly disobeying him, they refuse his requests that they should play cards with him. Instead they adopt the ideal and submissive roles he usually insists they perform. They cite the roles which secure their relative powerlessness against his best intentions and help to demonstrate that the patriarch cannot control all of the ways in which his orders are carried out.

After the fishing trip, he wants to 'change[...] again'(15) to gain companionship in the home:

'It was a good day's outing we had anyhow,' he enthused.
 'It was good,' they were utterly watchful.
 'We must go on the river oftener.'
 'It'd be nice to go.'
 'What about a game of cards?' he took the pack from the window.
 'We have to tidy up and get the dinner ready for tomorrow.'
 'But that won't take you all night. You can manage it later.'
 'We better scale and gut the pike too, they go bad quick this time. It won't take too long. Then we can play,' they evaded.(15)

The children subvert their father's plans for the evening by producing an ideal citation of the behaviour that he usually demands from them on the one occasion when he wants them to displace their performances as obedient, hard-working children. When they were fishing, he accused them of being "Too useless to do anything while I kill myself"(14). Now he cannot

prevent them from performing household tasks without making clear to them that, while he dominates them, he also relies on them for companionship as well as authority.

The fishing incident demonstrates that Mahoney can only instate and control the patriarchal family through careful repetition. Mahoney is dependent on his place within the family if he is to gain social status and the second chapter demonstrates that his children are aware of, and can exploit, this vulnerability. The children temporarily invert the biblical notion, that ^{God's} children should suffer in order to reach the father, to punish Mahoney for his cruelty: 'They all got beatings, often for no reason, because they laughed when he was in foul humour, but they learned to make him suffer — ^{to} close their life against him and to leave him to himself'(11).

The third chapter demonstrates the effects of his authority at their most extreme as it focuses on Mahoney's sexual abuse of his son. Yet even this scene helps to demonstrate the vulnerability of the discursively-constructed patrifocal family as the processes through which Mahoney instates the rights of the father are exposed and made vulnerable. Although the boy's mother dies before the novel begins, she signifies here as an alternative focus for the family and undermines Mahoney's claims to absolute and prediscursive authority. Already, in the first chapter, the boy has responded to his father's aggression through recourse to the memory of Mahoney's absent wife. Rather than acknowledging Mahoney's authority over him as a right, the young Mahoney has coped with the horror of the attack by recalling a version of the family, focused on the mother, which was better than the current regime:

The worst was the vapoury rush of thoughts, he couldn't get any grip on what had happened to him, he'd never known such a pit of horror as he'd touched, nothing seemed to matter any more. His mother had gone away years before and left him to this. Day of sunshine he'd picked wild strawberries for her on the railway she was dying. [sic](10)

The boy criticises his mother for not being there to protect him and to intercede on his behalf. The pre-verbal intimacy of his memories of his mother is captured in the boy's loss of narrative coherency. Michael J. Toolan argues that in the novel as a whole:

Her absence facilitates a grinding and remorseless emphasis on the petty viciousness, the frustrations and lovelessness in the relations between a man bereft of sexual love, and his children, bereft of maternal love.

There is, indeed, no good woman in the story — and there perhaps lies the trauma, the darkness. This narrow world is a peculiarly masculine one, but the masculinity is nowhere truly fulfilled, and is always subverted (in its representation in a widowed father, a masturbating adolescent, and a celibate priest).⁶

Toolan's response echoes the feminist strategy of suggesting that there is an ideal pre-patriarchal period which can be yearned for even if it can never be reclaimed. However, one of the dangers of reading the novel in this way is that the mother is idealised, and the stereotype of the Irish mammy is repeated.

⁶ Michael, J. Toolan, 'John McGahern: The Historian and the Pornographer,' *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 7:2 (1981), 39-55, (pp.41-42).

In a more productive feminist reading of the mother's role in the novel, the child's idealisation helps to expose Mahoney's patrifocal family as a construct which does not represent the only possible configuration of power in the home. The boy implies that the family centred around the father is only achieved through the displacement of a model of the family focused on the mother. Although the father is the word and the word is abstract law, the boy associates the matrifocal family — the family focused on the idealised mother — with natural justice and his memories of this other version of the family foster his sense of injustice under the current regime.

The third chapter of *The Dark* in which the boy is sexually abused is emotionally charged and the narrator's voice, structured by the limits of childish speech, heightens this effect. He explains that: 'The worst was to have to sleep with [Mahoney] the nights he wanted love'(16). The boy's horror and his inappropriate use of the word 'love' imply that the family without the mother is dislocated, characterised by dis-ease. When the child is sexually abused, she operates as a signifying absence, a representative of a configuration of the family which takes chronological and moral precedence over Mahoney's patriarchal and patrifocal version.

Reminders of the boy's mother help to demonstrate that the father's authority is discursively constructed and maintained. The maternal role does not disappear after the mother's death. Its functions get redistributed parodically and transgressively so that the matrifocal family continues to counterpoint and critique Mahoney's behaviour. When the boy takes his mother's place in the marital bed he also has to take on the other elements of the wife's role. Mahoney uses the performative language of the Catholic marriage service in order to legitimise his sexual advances on his new son/wife:

'Don't you know I love you no matter what happens?'

'I do.'

'And you love your father?'

'I do.'

'You'll give your father a kiss so?'(19-20)

J. L. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words*, uses the marriage ceremony as his staple example of performative language. Mahoney uses the ceremony to marry the subject in his wife's place, to secure his son's subordination and to legitimise his sexual advances on the child. Although the language of the wedding ceremony is misapplied, it helps to performatively ratify Mahoney's dominance over the reorganised family unit. Outside their religious context, the boy's words retain some of their performative force as Austin explains in his pseudo-religious 'doctrine of the *Infelicities*':

Two final words about being void or without effect. This does not mean, of course, to say that we won't have done anything: lots of things will have been done [...] but we shall not have done the purported act [...] Further, 'without effect' does not here mean 'without consequences, results, effects.'⁷

⁷ Austin, p.14.

Mahoney continues to normalise his attentions when he shifts from his performance as husband to that of parent. In order to gain sexual satisfaction, he takes on a caring role which is stereotypically associated with the mother. The Mahoney who plays the soldier in the first chapter, now plays the mammy 'winding' her baby:

'You don't have to worry about anything. Your father loves you. You like that — it's good for you — it relaxes you — it lets you sleep. Would you like me to rub you here? It'll ease wind. You like that? It'll let you sleep.'

Mahoney's performance in this feminised role potentially subverts his performance as the ideal and authoritative father. His parenting slips dangerously away from that of the conventional father and his mis-citation of parental roles, combined with his infelicitous citation of the marriage vows, potentially opens Mahoney's claims on the boy to parody. In fact the boy does move into a limbo of resistance, in which he refuses to acknowledge Mahoney as 'Daddy', a person deserving of respect and affection. The boy is clearly alienated from any normative sense of his father's identity: 'Lunatic hatred rose choking against the restless sleeping bulk in the ball of blankets, the stupid bulk that had no care for anything except itself'(22).

However, Mahoney re-cites his performance as father and patriarch effectively by realigning the marriage vows he and the boy have exchanged with a set of vows which traditionally affirm devotion and loyalty to a respected and beloved father. In the process he identifies himself once again with divine and immutable patriarchy. The boy's answers to his father's demands for love have recited not only the marriage ceremony, but also the baptismal vows he must renew periodically after his Confirmation. After the death of the mother, Mahoney is remodelling the family on the Holy Trinity to give the male-focused family some impressive and supportive precedents and to prise citational force away from the idealised matrifocal family unit.

Towards the end of the chapter, a second, symbolic consummation at once displaces the marital consummation that has just been parodied and replaces it with one which links the Mahoney family to the structure of the Godhead. In this, the third chapter of the novel, the father and son, like the Holy Trinity, become united in blood and Mahoney again assumes the role of God the father. Mahoney and the boy are attacked by the fleas which wake them in the marital bed. The mother who has provided a blood link and consummation of the relationships between father and son is replaced by the flea which bites them both. Citing John Donne's precedent, McGahern's flea provides a type of sexual union, consummating a parodic marriage between the men. Donne's speaker petitions:

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea more then maryed are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our mariage bed, and mariage temple is.⁸

⁸ John Donne, 'The Flea' in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* ed. by A. J. Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.58.

In *The Dark*, the flea also mingles the blood of father and son in an echo of the presence of the Trinity in the Blood of Christ. Mahoney provides a further repetition of the Trinitarian model when he cites his unity with the boy three times.

‘Your blood and mine,’ Mahoney said. ‘Those bastards feeding all the night on our blood. The quicker we get the DDT the better. Just think of it — those bastards feeding on your blood and mine.’(23)

The boy’s repulsion immediately abates. He restates his deference to his father by bidding him “‘Good night, Daddy’”(23). In these early scenes, Mahoney’s assaults on the child have been facilitated through his careful citation of a range of hegemonic identities which exert authority in Irish society. However, these first chapters also demonstrate Mahoney’s sense of constraint within the role of father. He is dependent on repeating discourses which endorse the authority, not just of the domestic father, but also of more powerful men beyond the home. The rest of the novel demonstrates more clearly the limits, responsibilities and consequences of these citations and the extent to which Mahoney’s attempts to establish his own authority indebted him to patriarchal structures he resents.

The Limits of Agency

Mahoney establishes his identity and authority as a father through the citation of a range of powerful discourses which ratify the authority of other men — priests and teachers, for example — in patriarchal Irish society. However, like Jamie Mangan, Mahoney is constrained to repeat those discourses faithfully and to endorse the authority of these other powerful men if his own citation of their power is to carry weight with his children. Mahoney’s relationship with his cousin, Father Gerald, demonstrates that Mahoney’s desire to gain personal status practically compels him to endorse the authority of other patriarchs who are more powerful than Mahoney himself. My aim is not to exonerate Mahoney from responsibility for the abuses he perpetrates but instead to demonstrate how various Irish patriarchal discourses are made to coalesce into an apparently coherent and seamless force.

Mahoney’s authority as a patriarch aligns him with other powerful men in Irish society. His cousin, Father Gerald, shares with Mahoney and the boy’s teachers, authority over Mahoney’s son. Father Gerald and Mahoney perform mutually reinforcing roles as they share access to patriarchal discourses which give authority to men in the roles of domestic and spiritual fathers. Not only does Mahoney cite the Holy Trinity to bolster his authority, but the Church mobilises the discourse of the family — the titles ‘father’ and ‘brother,’ for example — to stress the intimacy of its involvement in people’s lives.

Like Mahoney’s family, the Church is patrifocal. There are no religious women in the novel so that the links between the family and Church as patriarchal, patrifocal institutions is stressed. However, Father Gerald, as a priest, can exert more authority than can Mahoney. As Edmund Epstein argues in his discussion of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,

'Once a father has become a father, either in the flesh, or in the spirit, or perhaps just in the name [...] he is symbolically the father of every "son"'.⁹ The Mahoney boy has to refer to the priest as 'father'(24) and Father Gerald's encouragement leads the boy to study hard so that he wins 'a scholarship to the Brothers' College'(25). Father Gerald is entitled to cite, not only the young Mahoney boy, but also the boy's father as his son. Although Father Gerald is 'a cousin'(24), the discourse of the family as deployed by the Catholic Church implies the priest's paternal influence over the entire Mahoney household.

Mahoney cannot refuse to show deference to Father Gerald unless he is to undermine his argument that fathers are naturally powerful and, without exception, deserve respect. Mahoney's role as a domestic father has been shown in the early chapters to be a performance which installs him as dominant in the home. In his relationship with Father Gerald, Mahoney's role emerges as one constrained by its inferior place in an Irish patriarchal hierarchy which he nevertheless has to validate if he is to secure his own status. Mahoney aspires to increase his authority, but can only do so if he improves his relationship with the priesthood. If his son were to become a priest, Mahoney's role as a domestic father would situate him as inferior in status to the boy whose only deference would be owed to a divine father: Mahoney explains that when you are a priest, "God's your boss"(45).

If the boy is no longer under his jurisdiction, Mahoney's social status will diminish because he will no longer signify as the head of a large family unit. In anticipation of these developments, Mahoney imagines moving beyond the home to assume a role which, while traditionally adopted by women, gives such proximity to the priest that it will allow Mahoney to retain a reasonable amount of status. He petitions his son for the role of priest's housekeeper: "I could sell the land and come and live with you. I could open the door for those calling and find out what they wanted and not have them annoying you about everything"(45). The son's failure to respond to the request reflects his inability to locate a response to so improbable a suggestion. The boy helps to demonstrate that Mahoney only gains his significance through the continual repetition of the relatively-limited role of domestic father. Mahoney's voice is silenced as he realises that his proposal is impossible:

That was his dream, but there was no response. He grew aware of his own voice and stopped. He'd be given nothing. The dream was not the other's dream. Perhaps too much had happened or lives were never meant to meet. The eagerness left his walk, he was let seem foolish to himself, and broken. No response came. Not even when he placed his hand on the shoulder that was now almost as tall as his own.(46)

In *The Dark*, Mahoney's jurisdiction over the child is compromised when Father Gerald assumes a parental role in relation to the Mahoney boy. Mahoney, as a Catholic nationalist, is obliged to show deference to the Church in a way that, for example, Simon Dedalus in *A Portrait*

⁹ Edmund Epstein, *The Ordeal of Stephen Dedalus: the Conflict of the Generations in James Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale and Edwardsville: Arcturus Books, 1971), p.2.

was not. Simon Dedalus and his friends argue volubly about the ways in which the forces of the State, Church, family and nationalism ought to be aligned at a time when their advocates fail to support each other or instead operate in competing versions of alignment.¹⁰ Mahoney has little option but to align the family with the State and the Church and to show them deference.

In a letter to Father Gerald, in which he asks the priest to use his influence beyond the presbytery to find Joan a job, Mahoney demonstrates his inferior role in the letter's address: 'he had to write in chagrin to Father Gerald'(48). When he says 'We'll leave the lad and yourself together, father'(48) he concedes that children's custody is the responsibility of all fathers in the extended, social family and that the priest has greater rank than the domestic father. After this visit, Mahoney expresses his sense of his powerlessness and entrapment in the role of domestic father as he repeats the card game 'Patience' which he plays on a board placed over the arms of his chair. The chair — an 'old Morris car seat'(50) — emphasises his immobility within patriarchal society. The narrator compounds his powerlessness when he observes of Mahoney that 'he looked suddenly an infant enclosed in its pen chair'(50).

For the priest's visit, the domestic scene is altered in a show of deference: 'Mahoney hated it, but because of his fear of a priest's power he made sure to give the appearance of a welcome'(24). Mahoney does expose his dissent at one point when 'he'd no care left whether he concealed his hatred or not any more'(25). However, like his children, who mock Mahoney by mimicking him in his absence when their disobedience can have no disruptive consequences, Mahoney only criticises the priest overtly when that criticism will not affect the priest's patronage of the Mahoney family:

'Don't worry. Work at your books at school and we'll see what happens,' the priest said as he shook hands at the gate.

'Work at your books,' the father mimicked as his car left. 'They're free with plans for other people's money, not their own. There he goes. Christmas comes but once a year.'(25)

Mahoney's conformist performance is redeployed when the priest visits again: the narrator writes that 'the conversation people make to avoid each other went shuttlecock for two agonized hours, before Mahoney made excuse to get out'(48).

Mahoney's boots come to figure as a symbol of the ways in which he is constrained by the role which gives him power. The boy, who is fascinated by his father's boots as if they were an emblem of his own potential entrapment in a role like his father's, remembers that they are part of the apparatus of Mahoney's power: 'The same boots could kick and trample'(132). However, when the priest calls to visit the family, Mahoney's boots represent the discomfort of the performance of identity he is obliged to provide. After the visit, Mahoney unlaces 'the new boots he'd worn for the priest'(51) and as he voices his resentment of the role he has played in the meeting, the less restrictive covering on his feet seems to voice its own anger in concert with the vociferous tone Mahoney uses to deliver advice to his son:

¹⁰ Joyce, *A Portrait*, pp.25-39.

'It's not what people say that counts, it's what they think. If you ever want to get on in the world don't heed what they say but find out what's going on in their numbskulls. That's what'll get you on.

'Think what you say but don't say what you think and then you have some chance but what do I care. They can think themselves into the Sligo madhouse for all I care,' he shouted.

The wool of his socks whispered on the cement as he went to the door.(51-52)

Mahoney's advice here is an extemporisation on the theme of the Irish proverb which advises 'Whatever you say, say nothing'. However, the riddle-like explanation starts to suggest that 'saying' and 'thinking' are indistinguishable from each other and this complicates the status of Mahoney's dissent from the deferential role he adopts towards Father Gerald. Mahoney's performance of deference towards the priest mostly conceals the frustration inherent in that performance and so conventional relations are maintained between the two men. Mahoney's behaviour, and that of his son if he follows this advice, will be to repeat a performance of identity which endorses rather than subverts the unsatisfactory power relations which exist between patriarchs in this society. Mahoney only voices his anger after the priest's departure. His subversive thoughts are concealed by deferential speech in the priest's presence and so they are effectively voiceless, validating the hierarchy he resents.

McGahern demonstrates that it is only through the painful repetition of normative behaviour that Mahoney is able to secure his limited status. Mahoney manages to temporarily increase his status when he pays for an expensive meal at the Royal Hotel to celebrate his son's success in the Leaving Certificate, but his lack of familiarity with the conventions of the scene leads him to reassert the value of the frustrating domestic role he occupies over this unsustainable performance of largesse. He complains that "'You pay for the silver and the 'Sir', and the view of the river as if you never saw a river before. Think of all the loaves of bread you could buy for the price of them two meals'"(159). This particularly blatant attempt to situate his domestic role as the height of social achievement moves the boy to a compassionate realisation that his father's identity is not entirely accounted for by the mundanities of the paternal role. On the way home from the hotel, Mahoney makes his customary remark to the boy on passing the graveyard:

'It gives me the creeps, that place! No matter what happens it winds up there. And you wouldn't mind only there's people dying to get into it,' everybody repeated themselves but suddenly at the old joke he wanted to laugh with him and say, 'You are marvellous my father.'(160)

The Limits of Agency

Mahoney suggests that a priest has greater power than a domestic father is able to mobilise because the priest does not have to show deference to any other person within the earthly matrices of Irish patriarchy. However, as his son observes when he attends Benediction on the road outside Oakport, the priest is implicated within and subject to the same discourses which limit the autonomy of the domestic father. The narrator notes that all of the signs of the parish's connection with the rest of Ireland and the world are inflected by their connection with

the Church. The guards who represent the State are present to affirm rather than police the ceremony so that Church and State reinforce each other's presence: 'banners of red and gold stretched overhead from the telegraph poles with "O Sacred Heart of Jesus"; [...] At the bridges and crossroads the police stood to salute. Before the post office the people knelt in the dry dust of the road for Benediction'(58).

At this point in the novel the boy is contemplating a vocation for the priesthood but as he watches the Benediction he realises that the role of priest will not offer the freedom his father has implied it would. If he were to become a priest, the boy would remain implicated within the community which reaffirms its unity here through the medium of the Church ceremony. He uses the Irish idiom which refers to family members as 'those belonging to you' to argue that he is 'linked' to the people around him but that linkage becomes more sinister when he suggests that he is imprisoned by the bonds of a community which seems to mimic the behaviour of a slave chain gang:

That was the way your life was, you belonged to these people, as they to you, you were linked together. One day that Sacred Host would be your burden to uphold for them while the bell rang, but it was still impossible to join in the singing as the procession resumed its way, only listen to the shuffle of boots through the dust. *Wash me ye waters streaming from His side*, it was strange all strange, and the candles burning against the yew trees in the day.(58)

The boy senses that a priest is, like the domestic father, repeating an orthodox and limited performance of a masculine identity in order to secure a certain amount of status. For the priest, just as for Mahoney, that status is only achieved through the faithful repetition of mundane discourses without which the speaker would have no intelligible role in this male-dominated society. When the boy visits the home of his spiritual father, Father Gerald, the encounter only emphasises that every kind of father he encounters is mobilising aspects of the same performance and versions of the same discourses to influence the young man. In the presbytery, the priest has the same jurisdiction that Mahoney enjoys in the boy's home. When the priest climbs into bed with the boy to talk to him, the narrator angrily notes that the scene threatens to repeat the abuse his father inflicted on him in the third chapter: 'What right had he to come and lie with you in bed, his body hot against yours, his arm about your shoulders. Almost as the cursed nights when your father used stroke your thighs'(74).

The priest, like Mahoney, forestalls the boy's protests by constructing a relationship between them which situates him as being concerned with the boy's well-being rather than as an abuser. He constructs himself in the role of a confessor and so the boy is disconcertingly cast in the role of a sinner. In this situation, when Father Gerald's status as a priest gives his infelicitous citation of the confessional sacrament some citational force, the boy is not in a position to contradict the priest's good intentions. When the priest employs the inquisitorial formulae of the Catholic confession, the boy is practically silenced by the performance of obedience he is expected to produce. The narrator claims that the language the priest is using restricts the boy

more than the priest's physical grip on him. The use of the accusative form for the boy's identity here increases the sense that he lacks control in the scene:¹¹

'No, father. I don't mind,' what else was there to say [...] You wanted to curse or wrench yourself free but you had to lie stiff as a board, [...] You could think of nothing to say. The roving fingers touched your throat. You couldn't do or say anything. [...] You felt cornered and desperate, wanting to struggle far more free by this of the questions than the body and the encircling arm.(70-71)

When the boy attempts to reverse the relations between the pair by adopting for himself the role of confessor he receives no response. Just as Mahoney was isolated after offering to serve as his son's housekeeper, the boy finds that his question operates outside the parameters of acceptable, even intelligible speech. There is no acceptable way in which the young boy can ask the priest the question that the priest has asked him, about whether or not he masturbates. The boy asks Father Gerald:

'Had you ever to fight that sin when you were my age, father?' you asked, everything was open, you could share your lives, both of you fellow-passengers in the same rocked boat.

There was such silence that you winced, you had committed an impertinence, you were by no means in the same boat, you were out there alone with your sins.(73)

The boy might forge some kind of answer out of the priest's later philosophical observation that 'You'll have yourself on your hands at the end of all change'(100).

Father Gerald's position as a priest gives him authority over the young Mahoney, and it gives him much greater status than the boy's father enjoys. However, Father Gerald, like Mahoney, complains that he is constrained by a role which only offers status when it is carefully and faithfully repeated. He explains that a priest's freedom is illusory: "There are far greater stresses, greater responsibilities, greater temptations than in the ordinary or natural way of life. You stand on a height. And heights were never safe places for humans"(99). As a priest, he dominates the social scene but is also expected to serve the people. Father Gerald complains that his role is subject to validation by the very people his word should control. He explains that

'A priest who ministers to the *bourgeoisie* becomes more a builder of churches, bigger and more comfortable churches, and schools than a preacher of the Word of God. The Society influences the Word far more than the Word influences Society. If you are a good priest you have to walk a dangerous plank between committees on one hand and Truth or Justice on the other. I often don't know. I often don't know.'(101)

The priest argues that the performative language which constructed him as a priest neither completed that construction nor secured his position. He suggests that performative language has to be repeated carefully if his rights as a priest are to be maintained:

'There's a notion that once you've taken your ordination vows that there's no trouble. People have the same charming illusion about marriage too. They'll stay happily married by saying a few words one morning at an altar, but everything has to be struggled for.'(100)

¹¹ For a full discussion of the shifting point-of-view in the novel see Paul Devine, 'Style and Structure in John McGahern's *The Dark*', *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction*, 21:1 (1979), 49-58.

Like Mahoney, when the priest exposes his status-conferring identity as a performance he mobilises his dissent from the status quo in ways which do not radically endanger his status. He criticises the matrix of acceptable identities in conversation with the Mahoney boy but retains the dominant role in the discussion: he articulates his theory on the performance of identities pedagogically and the conversation takes place outside the Church and presbytery so that the priest's outburst will not compromise his current position. His status is temporarily made vulnerable when his views move dangerously from the genre of sermon towards the confessional language which he has previously resisted. Father Gerald tells the boy "I'd deny it [this outburst] in public. It'd only cause trouble for me and everyone"(101). However, like other subversive speech acts in the novel, it provokes a response which minimises its effects. It seems to offer possibilities which are too distant from social convention to be intelligible in conventional discourse. The priest himself tries to suggest that these words will have no impact:

'Strange how uneasy people get when they've really spoken,' his own pace had quickened. 'All the things we say. And how little of all the words even touch reality. Or perhaps they do if we knew it,' he changed to laugh lightly.(102)

The conversation is so unfamiliar to the boy that when the priest stops speaking, the boy can only respond by resorting to a conventional form of closing a conversation which fails in this new circumstance:

You'd never heard talk of this kind before. Everything seemed to grow more complicated.

"Thank you, father," you said, mechanical.

"For what?" he reacted sharply.

"For telling me," you fumbled, out of depth.'(101)

The priest facilitates that closure when he returns to habitual discourse, prompting the boy to tell him "My father says that too."(102)

Father Gerald repeats the strategies that Mahoney employs for justifying his painful performance in a role which endorses restrictive, conventional social practices. Earlier on in the novel, Mahoney maintains a difference between the acts of 'saying' and 'thinking' which, although practically indistinguishable, helps him to justify to himself his deference towards Father Gerald. This differentiation allows Mahoney to claim that he is an agent who chooses to appear to collaborate in a hierarchical patriarchal system which limits his autonomy. Father Gerald justifies his own orthodox performance of identity by very similar means. He delineates an economy of language in which the formulaic structure of conventional speech acts conceals the wide range of significances 'behind' them. He tells the boy:

'Remember your life is a great mystery in Christ and that nothing but your state of mind can change. And pray. It's not merely repetition of words. It's a simple act of turning the mind on God, the contemplation of the mystery, the Son of God going by way of Palm Sunday to Calvary and on to Easter.'(101)

Whereas Mahoney cites proverbial wisdom in his defence of performing a conventional role, Father Gerald's advice is an almost verbatim citation from T. S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' where 'prayer is more | than an order of words, the conscious occupation | of the praying mind,

or the sound of the voice praying'.¹² For Father Gerald, thought retains a notional flexibility. However, it is brought to closure within the terms of the religious metaphor the priest employs and remains unsubversive when it dies in the hope of rising again. The boy senses that 'somewhere you'd felt or known that before though you couldn't say how or when'(101).

Neither Mahoney nor Father Gerald are prepared to sacrifice the limited status they gain through the roles which frustrate them. Their attempts to move beyond these roles are met by the young boy with silence and incomprehension whereas their performance of recognisable identities at least give them some authority over him. As Father Gerald explains: "Security, that's what everyone is after, security"(102). The sentence structure acts as a paradigm of the priest's argument — security works as a framing device which circumscribes individual ambition with compensatory stability. Although Father Gerald has stressed his sincere attempt to be a good priest, who deplors the influence of 'Society' on the 'Word', he explains to the boy that he cannot intervene to rescue Joan Mahoney from her sexually-abusive employer because he needs to retain his status and his apparent role as a powerful agent: "I can't seem to get involved. I have to remain in the parish. I'm their priest"(103).

In order to retain both his sense of integrity and his limited status, Father Gerald suggests that consciousness of performativity is all that is needed to allow him to transcend his entrapment in his social role: "even the most stupid and mean are visited many times by consciousness of the mystery. [...] That it's safely killed doesn't matter"(101-102). These moments of consciousness have a parallel in Beckett's theory of habit in *Proust*¹³ where they help to register the self as, temporarily at least, consciously in excess of its normative identity. The priest's reluctance to use these moments to subvert the identity he performs is based on his fear of losing the level of status which is offered in that role. Denis Sampson is, I think, right to argue that McGahern's ideas on habit are '[...] certainly more anchored than Beckett's in the social world of customs and conventions and in the material world of recognizable objects and landscapes'¹⁴.

Father Gerald's motivation for refusing to parody or subvert his role is justified by the young Mahoney's reaction to even his momentary disavowal of religious, patriarchal discourse. The boy's perception of him has been constructed through the normative performance of 'priest'. When this fragments, the narrator's account reflects the boy's confusion. The boy makes recourse to the visual signifiers of the priest's identity for reassurance and proof that the priest is still the unitary, agentive subject he has previously thought him to be:

¹² Eliot, 'Little Gidding', p.215.

¹³ Samuel Beckett, 'Proust' in *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder Publishers Ltd., 1931; 1987), pp.9-93.

¹⁴ Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p19.

What he [Father Gerald] said didn't matter. He'd moved deeps within you that you could not follow. He was so changed: was this the same man that had showed you scars on his belly, the arm and voice of the night before, he who'd been resentful of you over the meal because you'd left the house to see Joan. Yet it must be. It must be that something had broken, a total generosity flowing.(102)

The Mahoney boy is not, however, liberated by this temporary destabilisation of the range of orthodox identities. The narrator continues to fix his identity with the accusative 'you', ironising his notion that those identities will no longer be so strictly regulated. The boy's tentatively-modulated intentions are shown as already impossible:

You wished you could tell Father Gerald that you wanted to stay here for the rest of the holidays. You wished you could tell him that you were on your way to be a priest. You'd stay here in the long summers from Maynooth. But that was changed, it was lost.(103)

Like his father and now the priest, the boy will only parody the social matrix when that parody can provide what Judith Butler terms a 'ritualistic release' which can assist the existing social matrix 'in its self-perpetuating task.'¹⁵ When he frightens Joan by shouting at her after saving her from her employer, Mahoney recognises his potential to repeat the abusive and patriarchal roles that his father and Father Gerald endorse. He discovers that, like the other men, 'it was only with someone simple and weak you were able to be violent or in your own walled head but you weren't very violent with the priest two nights before'(105). He restores her confidence in him only by re-citing his role as a child, resentful of his father, whose allegiance is shared with her rather than with the other men. As his father has done before, he mimics his oppressor in order to stress his difference from him:

'Only for ye have your eejit of a father to come home to what would ye do? Then such thankless bastards the sun never saw.'

'The poor-house, the poor-house, the poor-house,' the girl was suddenly mimicking with real gaiety, taken out of herself, rocking with laughter when you took up where she stopped.(105)

Constructing an Orthodox Irish Man

Education appears to offer to the young Mahoney a way of moving outside the static social matrix in which his father and the priest participate. The name of the exam that the boy aims to pass is capitalised to emphasise the possibility of escape that success in the Leaving Certificate might facilitate. The boy refers to it as 'the LEAVING'(61). However, the education system is, like the family and the Church, implicated within the processes through which normative identities are produced. Eamon De Valera, in his speech to the Irish National Teachers' Organisation in 1940 argues that schools are only valid where they repeat the homogenous structure of the imagined Ireland beyond them:

¹⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.126.

The schools above all other centres of life can keep us in unity with our past while shaping the present and through the present, the future, but they can only do this if they are not merely collections of pupils and teachers but real communities, each a little Éire in itself in which the principles of citizenship are practised as well as taught.¹⁶

Education potentially offers the boy a way of challenging the authority of his father. However, he does not employ education to displace his father's authority and remains, symbolically as well as literally, contained in his father's house when he studies. He escapes from the kitchen which is his father's domain to a bedroom on the other side of the house but although he distances himself from Mahoney in order to gain knowledge, he does not, like Lucifer and Stephen Dedalus, utter the words 'non serviam'. He feels the 'diabolical pride of drawing the mind to the boundaries of what it could take,' but this is accompanied by 'the shiver of the nerves as it trembled back from the edges'(117).

Education situates the boy in the double movement occupied by the priest and his father. Like them he performs a role which validates the existing social matrix while insisting that his conformity actually codes his rebellion. The narrator reasons that 'Life was the attraction, every instinct straining its way, and it was whether to be blind and follow, and work was a way out. Pass the exam. Learn the formula. Things would come out that way'(113). However, this 'way out' is prone to failure. If the boy learns to repeat the formula correctly then he will, like his father and the priest, repeat an identity constructed through careful acts of repetition which will signal him as an ideal subject within contemporary Irish society. De Valera urges teachers that 'the stress should be on memorising, forming a body of the most necessary and fundamental information in the child's mind [...] for habit is the foundation of character and the training of the child is your greatest task'.¹⁷

The young Mahoney deliberately achieves competence in the discourses associated with education in order to win one of the two university scholarships allocated annually to each county. He learns to repeat: 'One-two-three-four the reasons Napoleon failed at Waterloo'(113-4). He also learns where certain types of repetition are appropriate in order for him to gain credit:

Learn how to praise the sensuous mysticism, the haunting lyricism of *Ode to the Nightingale* if they asked for an appreciation: how Keats' imagination was befogged by too much heavy sensuousness if a criticism was the order of the day. On and on, further rubbish by the ton, cram it into the skull, get a high place in the Exam, play up and play the game well, ride down the slowcoaches.(114)

Like Mahoney and Father Gerald, the young man tries to dissociate himself from oppressive systems by situating himself as a purely nominal participant or disinterested observer, redeemed by his consciousness of performativity:

¹⁶ De Valera, 'The Primary School: Annual Congress of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Killarney, 6 March 1940' in *Speeches and Statements*, pp.425-434, (pp.432-3).

¹⁷ De Valera, 'The Primary School', pp.425-434, (p.431).

What happened didn't matter, you had to go on, that was all. You had to look it in the face. That was the way your life was happening, that was the way you were. There was no time for sadness and self-pity. The show of your life would be always moving on to the next moment. The best was to dress up and bow to it and smile or just look on but it was easier to say than do.(116)

However, the boy's attempt to identify his role as a temporary and clearly-staged construct which is clearly different from a pre-existing identity is ironised when his father demonstrates that it is the performance of a normative role rather than silent resistance that registers in social practices. He unconsciously repeats the boy's use of a theatrical metaphor to express his own sense of alienation from the role he performs: "This is my life, and this kitchen in the townland of Cloone is my stage, and I am playing my life out here on," and he stood, the eyes wild, as if grappling for his lines"(128). Mahoney's outburst is unintelligible for his children who only relate to him through the aggressive, repetitive performance of the paternal role that he conventionally produces.

'What are ye gaping at? Have you nothing to do but stand there with your mouths open. Such a useless pack,' and they instinctively scattered, years of habit, before he could single any one of them out.'(128)

Habit here operates in the sense established by Beckett in *Proust* where Beckett argues that habit accommodates the self within the parameters of a normative identity: its 'fundamental duty [...] consists in a perpetual adjustment and readjustment of our organic sensibility to the conditions of its worlds'.¹⁸ McGahern suggests that the habitual repetition of normative behaviour is the only means through which identity and status in society are secured.

When the young Mahoney takes up his scholarship at University College, Galway, he quickly realises that the life of a student does not offer him any more satisfaction than his life at home. His landlady's name — 'Mrs. Ridge of Prospect Hill'(163) — as Jürgen Kamm points out, offers him new horizons.¹⁹ However, the boy soon has to try to 'break the obsession that there was never possibility of possession or realization, only the confusion of all these scattered images'(167-8). He realises that professors, just like his father and Father Gerald are preoccupied with security and status: 'The dream was torn piecemeal from the university before the week was over. Everyone wanted as much security and money as they could get'(172). The boy discovers that he too, like his father, the priest and the professors, values the security of a limiting and habitual role. He is only able to lessen his sense of dis-ease in his new circumstances and deaden his sense of dissatisfaction if he repeats the familiar discourses of the family and the Church which construct for him a stable and conventional identity. When he writes a letter home, undresses and says his prayers, his 'sense of the shocking space and silence of the world about your own perishing life in the room [is] lessened by the habitual words and the old smell of camphor from the sheets in which your face was buried'(171).

¹⁸ Beckett, p.28.

¹⁹ Jürgen Kamm, 'John McGahern' in *Contemporary Irish Novelists* ed. Rudiger Imhof (Tubingen: Narr, 1990), pp. 175-91, (p.182).

The boy, just like his father and the priest, refuses to see himself as identical to the role he habitually produces and sets as his aim the achievement of a kind of artistic stasis, which will allow him to maintain his dignity behind the facade of conformity. The boy argues that consciousness of performativity is enough to redeem the self from complete identification with the performed role. The narrator imagines that:

One day, one day, you'd come perhaps to more real authority than all this, an authority that had need of neither vast buildings nor professorial chairs nor robes nor solemn organ tones, an authority that was simply a state of mind, a calmness in the face of the turmoil of your own passing.(188)

Although this philosophy recalls Stephen Dedalus' ideal of artistic stasis,²⁰ the young Mahoney formulates this ethos while walking, not with a friend like Lynch, but with his father. His ambition is translated by its place in a chain of citation which aligns his ambition for stasis, not with Dedalus' artistic ideals, but with the desire for security shared by his father and Father Gerald. When the novel's penultimate chapter closes, the young Mahoney boy has relinquished his place at the university and has accepted a clerkship with the E.S.B., the national electricity board, which offers him security rather than independence. The narrator suggests that his decision gives him a sense of freedom which is indistinguishable from the habitual patterns of 'the sodden leaves falling in this day, or any cliché'[sic](188).

When he takes up the clerkship, the young man will be taking part in a process through which Irish society is modernised and modified. However, he will achieve these changes within the limits of a long-running government-controlled electrification scheme which will only sedately introduce light and modernity into Irish rural areas. Mrs Ridge suggests that the boy will be rewarded for his work with a secure place in the social matrix: 'The E.S.B. is the same as a government job, it can't go down [...] In no time he'd be able to settle down and have his own little home'(185).

Where Joyce's *Portrait* ends with a departure from Dublin, McGahern's novel closes with a planned departure which has Dublin as its terminus. The boy's escape from the home does not signal his disruption of the Irish social matrix. The young Mahoney concedes that his engagement with other institutions and individuals will always be structured through discourses similar or identical to those he has encountered in his childhood. He suggests that it will make little difference whether he chooses to leave his home, leave rural Ireland or even Ireland itself. The habitual deployment of those discourses he knows already will at least assist him in the 'perpetual adjustment and readjustment' to the conditions of his world'.²¹ His acceptance of convention at the end of the novel resembles the pornographer's, more optimistic, appropriation of conventional rituals and ceremonies in the later novel.

In the final chapter of *The Dark*, the repetition of conventional discourses is represented as an arid rather than enabling means of constructing an identity. The authority of the patrifocal

²⁰ Joyce, *A Portrait*, p.222-223.

²¹ Beckett, p.28.

family, and the patterns through which it is established, are deliberately restated so that the boy's subjectivication within a patriarchal hierarchy is reaffirmed. Mahoney joins his son in the guest-house bed to complete a trinity of these bed scenes in the novel. The repetition emphasises the boy's failure to actively resist or the habitual patterns which construct normative identities and relationships within patriarchal society.

That *at university he shares his bed* with his father suggests his reluctance to fight for autonomy from the family. The young man recognises his collusion in the construction of a patrifocal family and so his collusion in the patriarchy which the novel exposes when he sarcastically but silently notes the family's Godhead-like structure. When he speaks it is to repeat the deference he showed to his father in the third chapter. In the exchange which closes the text he recasts himself as the same little boy he was in Chapter Three. The pair repeat their parodic use of marriage and baptismal vows after Mahoney briefly alludes to the effect that his wife's absence has had on the family. Mahoney suggests that:

'It might have been better if your mother had to live. A father doesn't know much in a house. But you know that no matter what happened your father loves you. And that no matter what happens in the future he'll love you still.'
'And I'll always love you too. You know that.'
'I do.'(191)

The dominance of the father, and the son's participation in the ritualistic repetitions which confirm patrifocality and patriarchy as foundational is made clear in the final words of the novel which echo the words that close the patrifocal Catholic Mass:

It seemed that the whole world must turn over in the night and howl in its boredom, for the father and for the son and for the whole shoot, but it did not. [...]
'Good night so, Daddy.'
'Good night, my son. God bless you.'(191)

Women in *The Dark*

Throughout the novel, the introduction of women has fleetingly offered possibilities for the disruption or at least the adaptation of patrifocal, patriarchal model of society. The young Mahoney has only acted to disrupt existing configurations of power when provoked by real or idealised images of young women. Their limited incursion into the text means that any provocation to action has been temporary, always contained by the discourses it threatens. Nonetheless, the significance of women for the young Mahoney differentiates him from his father and from Father Gerald. Both Mahoney and Father Gerald make homosexual advances on the young Mahoney. Father Gerald also has an intense relationship with his young housekeeper, John, who is represented as stereotypically effeminate.²² John has an interest in housework which is "Unusual for a boy"(64) and his appearance is also feminised: 'A quick flash showed in the

²² The narrator's stress on the unorthodoxy of the male housekeeper's role and on his effeminacy reflects back onto Mahoney who has also entertained ambitions to take act as a priest's housekeeper.

eyes, and the pale face flushed'(86). The association of both Mahoney and Father Gerald with homo-eroticism might, in another text signal their potential to disrupt the heterosexual, patriarchal matrix of identities which is premised on the idea of presumptive heterosexuality. However, in *The Dark* that homo-eroticism operates to signal the men's complete investment in homosocial networks of power.

From the outset, the young Mahoney's heterosexual desires have been concealed and curtailed by the two older men who argue that they are immoral and demonstrate a lack of restraint. The punishment which opens the novel is blamed on the fact that the boy has used a sexual swear word: "F-U-C-K is what you said, isn't it? That profane and ugly word?"(7) The men's sexual advances on the boys are always represented as demonstrations of affection or concern. Sexual interest is always signalled as both heterosexual and subversive. The sacrament of confession allows priests in the novel to stigmatise and condemn the boy's masturbatory practices. He masturbates into a sock to prevent his father from discovering and punishing him, and his lack of freedom to pursue his interest in women is made comic by his reliance on a 'superfluous' hair advert from 'the *Independent*'(30) to provoke his arousal. His potentially subversive interest in Mary Moran is contained, first by his sock and then by the only conventional narratives available in which the boy can imagine their relationship taking place. The narrator imagines 'Mary and you together, and married'(57).

The boy's sexual fantasies are also partly limited by his guilty memories of his idealised mother who, he suggests, promoted the suppression of heterosexual desire in the interests of filial and social duty: 'I'd promised her that one day I'd say Mass for her'(33). Once McGahern's novel is published these scenes are contained again, through the banning of the novel which was prompted by the scenes of masturbation, and through the removal of McGahern from his position of influence over children as a National School teacher.

The young Mahoney's affection for his favourite sister, Joan, more obviously disrupts the patrifocal model of power than do his masturbatory practices. His one threat to his father is provoked when Mahoney swings Joan round by her hair. The image of her terrified face breaks the boy's 'habit'(35) of ignoring Mahoney's abuse. Even here though, the boy's threat of retaliation more readily repeats the performance of masculine violence than disrupts it: "Get her a drink of water," you asked and one of the girls obeyed as decisively as if you were Mahoney and you didn't care or know'(37). The boy later rescues Joan from her abusive employer only to restore her to the family home.

The disruption offered in scenes which contain women does not produce subversion. When he reaches university, the boy positively resists the challenge of contact with women and the chance to pursue 'the dream you'd left the stern and certain world of the priesthood to follow after'(177). However, his rejection constitutes a fear that the opportunities of other futures and choices offered by women will be absolutely curtailed if, in the 'Ladies Choice [...] every woman in the place casually inspected and rejected you'(175). The young man's failure to attend the university dance at least keeps the option of relationships with women open and Dublin, his

destination at the end of the novel, is advertised by his acquaintance, O'Donnell, as a place characterised by the presence of women: "Always more women than men. They say Dublin is the best place in the world for women" (169). The means by which the narrator comes to narrate his own story after his departure to Dublin — the changes which permit him to manipulate the discourses his young self is manipulated by — are concealed, but McGahern's dedication of this patrifocal novel to his first wife, Annikki Laaksi at least implies that women might provide the narrator of *The Dark* like McGahern with an audience different to the exclusively homosocial world he has known.

In my discussion of *Amongst Women* I want to show that the more sustained presence of women in that novel complicates the father figure's attempt to construct a patriarchal hierarchy in the home. The disjunctions between patriarchs in Irish society, and the problems they face in making sure that hegemonic discourses always endorse their authority and recite it faithfully, are multiplied in a novel where the mother figure's position is bolstered by those discourses which idealise the mother. In the second section of this final chapter then, this thesis will explore the ways in which the presence of an ideal mother figure in the Irish patriarch's home helps to expose his authority as discursive and open to disruption.

* * *

Patriarchy in Amongst Women

Amongst Women is often cited as John McGahern's most successful exposure of Irish patriarchy. Antoinette Quinn argues that the novel 'offers an astute analysis of power relations in a closed community, it asks disturbing questions about the mystique of home and family and, in particular, it subjects the institution of patriarchy to remorseless scrutiny.'²³ Eamonn Wall suggests that 'McGahern's portrait of the father-dominated world of the rural West of Ireland reaches its climax in *Amongst Women*'.²⁴ The novel focuses on a family presided over by Michael Moran, a father figure, who, like Mahoney in *The Dark*, is almost always named by the family's patronymic: the shared identity of the family is guaranteed by a name that is synonymous with the father in a society where, the narrator claims, the family is the only source of power and identity:

²³ Antoinette Quinn, 'A Prayer for my Daughters: Patriarchy in *Amongst Women*', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 79-90, (p.79).

²⁴ Eamonn W. Wall, 'Brian Moore, John McGahern, Aidan Higgins: An Introduction to the New Irish Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, City University of New York, 1992), p.183.

Beneath all differences was the belief that the whole house was essentially one. Together they were one world and could take on the world. Deprived of this sense they were nothing, scattered, individual things. They would put up with anything in order to have this sense of belonging. They would never let it go.(145)²⁵

In these terms, Moran, as the head of the family appears to occupy a position of supreme authority in his community and in the novel. However, in *Amongst Women*, as in *The Dark*, the performance of the paternal role is figured as a problematic strategy for winning power in Irish society. The family is only secured as patriarchal and patrifocal through continual citation and Moran, like Mahoney, has to reiterate persistently his claim to power. As Richard J. Watts maintains, families are constructed performatively and repetitively through discursive means. It is through discourse that power relations between family members are instated. Watts argues that:

It is through discourse that individuals are able to project a self-image and identify the terms for in-group membership. It is thus through discourse that the web of interpersonal relationships among the members is constructed and affirmed.²⁶

I want to expose the authority of the father figure in *Amongst Women* as a construct, produced and maintained through the careful reiteration of mundane conversational strategies. I will argue that Moran's attempt to construct the family as automatically and unswervingly patriarchal in *Amongst Women* is interrupted and undermined by popular, religious and constitutional discourses which construct the idealised mother figure as the natural focus of the home. Although the mother figure, Rose Moran, does not displace the father figure as the focus of authority during his lifetime, Moran is shown to be dependent on her presence and co-operation if he is to exert authority. Her presence helps to challenge patriarchy's status as the natural basis for the distribution of power in the home.

In *The Dark*, Mahoney is able to quote the idealised mother as a symbol to help bolster his authority as the sole parent. When he scolds his son he complains that "'You'd think there'd be some respect for your dead mother left in the house'".²⁷ Mahoney is also able to use his wife's absence as a way of justifying his aggression towards his family: "'It might have been better if your mother had to live. A father doesn't know much in a house'".²⁸ Rose Moran's performance of the maternal role in *Amongst Women* is not so easily subsumed to the interests of the patriarch. Her assumption of the maternal role does not prevent Moran from exercising control while he has the strength to do so: Rose is involved in producing Moran's centrality in the home through a relation of service.

However, through her performance of the maternal role she also claims rights which Moran sees as impinging on, and in competition with, his carefully-constructed authority. When Rose enters the marital home on her wedding day, she immediately acts on her rights, as a

²⁵ John McGahern, *Amongst Women*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1990). All further references are to this text unless specified. Pagination in the paperback edition (1991) is identical.

²⁶ Richard J. Watts, *Power in Family Discourse* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), p.23.

²⁷ McGahern, *The Dark*, p.7.

²⁸ McGahern, *The Dark*, p.191.

mother figure, to initiate action and issue domestic orders. These have previously been Moran's sole rights, and Moran is immediately wary of Rose's claims on his position: "I don't know about anybody else but I'd love a nice hot cup of tea," Rose said as soon as they were all in the house. At once she set a tone that would not easily be wrested from her. Moran watched in silence'(45).

John McGahern has suggested that in writing *Amongst Women* he was interested to consider how women in the home might be able to cite their roles to alter power relations with the patriarch. He explains:

Amongst Women is [...] a novel about power. You know, people like myself in Dublin, that belonged to a tight intellectual society that didn't care much about Church or State.[sic] We were all right, but I think it was very difficult for a woman to be in that society then, and I think women were very badly off in that society. And *Amongst Women* is also about how women in a paternalistic society create room and power for themselves, and in a way they take over the world of Moran, it's the women rather than the men, what they'll do with it we don't know, but they have the power now.²⁹

Amongst Women is not a novel about matriarchy. However, it does suggest that the construction of patrifocal patriarchy can be complicated and obstructed by the presence of women, and particularly of the mother figure, in the home. The novel locates some of the strategies through which women work to transcend their limited and limiting roles by deploying those roles tactically to their own advantage. It also demonstrates that Moran — if he is to instate the father figure's right to absolute domestic power — has to displace the mother whose focality is endorsed in literary and constitutional discourses about the Irish home.

This chapter will focus on many of the same scenes discussed by Antoinette Quinn and Denis Sampson in their readings of the novel and it will draw many similar conclusions. Where, for example, Sampson notes that Rose's tact 'is used to enhance the small possibilities for living in pleasure and freedom'³⁰ and Quinn observes Rose's 'shrewd tactical campaign to flush [Moran's] interest in her into the open',³¹ these arguments will be extended and politicised rather than disputed. However, the conclusions drawn from these patterns in the relationship between Moran and Rose will be used to different effect, where the father figure's authority, like that of the mother, will be shown to be established through the manipulation of conventional, discursively-established power relations rather than stated as his easily achieved or automatic right.

The citational force of religious and constitutional discourses which idealise the Irish mother usually renders them unhelpful to feminist critics of Irish culture. However, in *Amongst Women*, matrifocal discourses — those discourses which idealise the mother figure's authority — function as obstacles which complicate the patriarch's attempts to construct his own authority

²⁹ McGahern in interview with Gonzales Casademont, p.19.

³⁰ Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p.233.

³¹ Quinn, p.84.

as foundational. Michael Moran has three daughters and he marries Rose Brady who acts as mother figure to them. Rose provides an alternative focus for the family and her presence functions to proliferate the number of ways in which patrifocal patriarchy can be marginalised or mis-cited. Irish matriarchy is a debilitating cultural myth. However, in *Amongst Women*,¹⁵ where Moran accepts the domestic authority of the mother figure as in competition with his attempt to rule, that myth helps to put pressures on his attempts to claim domestic authority as indisputably his own. Although Moran tries to establish his right to power as traditional, he also accepts that the idealised authority of the mother is an “old story” (156) which has powerful citational force. In his decision to marry and his use of the Rosary, he attempts to lease that force to benefit the patrifocal family with varying, and not always predictable effects.

Moran's youngest son, Michael, inherits both his father's 'contempt for women and his dependence on them' (90) and it is this dependence on women and the problems it creates for the patriarch on which I will concentrate here. This discussion will re-envision the home as a contested space, where Moran fights for his independence in a post-Independence State. The analysis of Moran's use of the Rosary towards the end of this chapter will serve as paradigmatic of Moran's dependence on, and vulnerability to, the women he tries to dominate. As this thesis moves towards its close, I also want to discuss more generally whether or not the exposure of the dissimulated strategies through which patriarchy is established can create the circumstances for its subversion.

The family and the constitution

Some of the authoritative discourses which promote Irish patriarchy might be expected to support Moran's claim to focality in the home. Quinn argues that 'patriarchy and patria in *Amongst Women* are [...] conjoined when Moran's creation of a family mystique is shown to be consonant with prevailing Irish ideology'.³² However, several major authoritative discourses endorse the mother figure as the imaginative focus of the family. For example, although the State ratifies patriarchy outside the home, when it refers to the home itself it collaborates in the idealisation of the domestic maternal role and helps to give citational force, the weight of validation, to matrifocality. The home which is centred around the mother is made essential to the project of the Irish State in Article Forty-One of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, De Valera's 1937 Irish constitution:

41 1.1 The State recognises the Family as the natural, primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

41 2.1 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.

³² Quinn, p.85.

The constitution's voice is cited in a tradition of transcendent and performative male voices. It is ratified 'In the name of the Most Holy Trinity from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred'. However, once the constitution is ratified as law, the matrifocality of the home is also given legal status alongside the document's patriarchal objectives. Patrick Hanafin observes that where the common good is cited 'the good is common only to men',³³ but in this predominantly patriarchal document, the mother figure is idealised as the figure without whose co-operation that common good cannot be achieved. This complicates the apparently simple patriarchal hierarchy of the Irish home and problematises attempts by father figures to give citational force to the focality of their own position. The patriarch's control is represented as dependent on the mother figure's provision of an ideal performance of co-operation in the production of his authority.

The constitution ratifies patriarchal values. The idealisation and iconisation of women offers them no practical authority in the home and restricts their rights to exercise power beyond the domestic space. De Valera rejected a constitutional amendment that would have acknowledged the work a woman provided 'for the home' as separable from the home itself.³⁴ A woman's labour is not allowed to have value in other areas and therefore she is restricted to gaining status in a domestic role. Article Forty-One was attacked in the Dáil debates on the constitution not only for its sexism, but also for its rhetorical and idealistic tone. Deputy James McGuire claimed that the social objectives noted in the article were 'pious resolutions' which had no place in *Bunreacht na hÉireann* and suggested that De Valera should have them appended to the Book of Proverbs instead.³⁵

However, once the constitution is ratified, these ideals are made performative and sections of the article can be read as potentially subverting the automatic and absolute rights of the Irish patriarchy that the constitution instates and ratifies. The document functions to signal the contradictions and inconsistencies between the ideals proposed in the hegemonic discourses through which the Irish patriarchal family is constructed. It enshrines what Hanafin sees as 'a rather bizarre tendency in Irish society to accommodate simultaneously antithetical views on gender'.³⁶ As a performative document which instates the new nation, it gives at least two contradictorily gendered ideals further weight.

In *Amongst Women*, where the father figure attempts to cite his primacy in the family, he has to work to displace the idealised mother figure whose centrality in the home is ratified as

³³ Patrick Hanafin, 'Defying the female: the Irish Constitutional Text as Phallic Manifesto', *Textual Practice*, 11:2 (1997), 249-273, (p.260).

³⁴ Eamon De Valera, 'Dréacht — Recommittal', in *Dáil Eireann Díosbóireachtaí Páirliminte: Tuairisg Oifigiúil* [Parliamentary Debates: Official Report] vol.LXVII-LXVIII pp.215-227 (p.219).

³⁵ Deputy James Ivan McGuire, Fine Gael (Dublin City South), Fine Gael, 'The Second Reading Debate on the Draft Constitution: 11th May 1937' in *Speeches and Statements by Eamon De Valera 1917-1973* ed. by Maurice Moynihan, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1980), pp.302-329, (p.326).

³⁶ Hanafin, p.259.

'antecedent and superior to all positive law'. He is also forced to rely on the mother figure in order to engineer the patriarchal good. The presence of the mother figure operates at various times to support or complicate the discursive strategies which construct the authority of a domestic Irish patriarch. The novel represents the home as a contested space where the father figure does not have control over the family scene and where alternative distributions of power, and different configurations of identity, not always dependent on either the father or the traditional family unit, can be envisaged through the medium of already conventional discourses about the family.

The role of domestic patriarch: constructing patrilocality

Although the families of the father figures in *The Dark* and *Amongst Women* regard the domestic space as the site of patriarchal tyranny, the father figures themselves read it as the sign of their limited status. During Moran's time as a guerrilla leader in the War of Independence, he fostered expectations of power and status which are now frustrated. While the war seems to promise autonomy to Irish men like Moran, it leaves them subject to a new patriarchal order which disenfranchises them. Neither Reegan in McGahern's *The Barracks* nor Moran can bear to assume junior positions in a patriarchal hierarchy after the war and so Reegan resigns from the position of police sergeant in the Gardaí and Moran is forced out of the army.³⁷ Moran explains that "In an army in peacetime you have to arse-lick and know the right people if you want to get on. I was never any good at getting on with people. You should all know that by now"(6). Moran represents his war as a triumph of will frustrated in a hierarchy where other, less deserving, or less masculine men are given power. He warns his daughters:

'Don't let them pull wool over your eyes. The war was the cold, the wet, standing to your neck in a drain for a whole night with bloodhounds on your trail, not knowing how you could manage the next step toward the end of a long march. That was the war: not when the band played and a bloody politician stepped forward to put flowers on the ground.

'What did we get for it? A country, if you'd believe them. Some of our own johnnies in the top jobs instead of a few Englishmen. More than half of my own family work in England. What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod.'(5)

Throughout *Amongst Women*, Moran's role as a domestic father is described through the metaphor of a limiting and inescapable 'shape'. This shape correlates with Moran's body, a body which operates as a guarantee of his rights as a natural parent to the children, with authority over them. However, Moran's shape also signifies his absolute reliance on the identity which his role as domestic patriarch provides. When he tells Rose about his success at school before 'the Troubles started'(74), she suggests other careers he might have been able to pursue, but these other identities are no more imaginable or possible for Moran than the idea of adopting another physical form:

³⁷ John McGahern, *The Barracks* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963; 1983), pp.230-232.

'If it had been a different time you'd have been a doctor or an engineer,' Rose said. 'I wouldn't have been a doctor,' he shivered with tiredness, ill at ease by the very suggestion of a shape other than his own. 'These lassies will be worn out with all this study,' Moran changed.(74)

Moran's attempt to stop the girls from studying at this point reflects his fear that they might inherit the authority which he sees as his masculine prerogative. When Moran's daughter, Sheila, suggests that she may take up a scholarship to study medicine shortly after this discussion, Moran's withdrawal of support leads her to reject the offer of a university place. His ability to force her decision demonstrates that he does exercise power over other people in the family home. However, his resentment also illustrates his frustration in the only identity through which he is able to exert authority. Sheila's choice of career provokes Moran's sense that his domestic role is comparatively weak and unrewarded. The narrator explains that:

Sheila could not have desired a worse profession. It was the priest and doctor and not the guerrilla fighters who had emerged as the bigwigs in the country Moran had fought for. For his own daughter to lay claim to such a position was an intolerable affront. At least the priest had to pay for his position with celibacy and prayer. The doctor took the full brunt of Moran's frustration.(88)

The limited authority available to Moran in the paternal role is only available to him when he has the physical strength to underwrite his authoritative performance with the threat of violence. As his strength fades he is in danger of losing the 'shape' which gives him his intelligible identity in society. Just as the young Mahoney cannot imagine his father or the priest in different roles in *The Dark*, Moran's daughters make clear to him that they regard his performance as domestic father as the sum of his identity. For them, Moran is unthinkable outside the terms of his role as father. His daughters warn him that "'You'll have to shape up, Daddy. You can't go on like this'"(1). This warning which is offered to Moran on the opening page of the novel emphasises not only Moran's reliance on his role as a powerful father for the limited status available to him, but also the need for him to continually and painfully re-cite his claim to that authority if he is to retain his primacy in the home.

Reading the mother radically

Moran's reliance on the family in itself marks a retrenchment of his ambitions to achieve authority. His desire to exert authority over the family — *Amongst Women* — is a concession on his claims to power outside it. His decision to marry Rose Brady is clearly structured as a response to his increasing loss of control over men both in and beyond the home. It immediately follows on Moran's desertion by McQuaid, his comrade from the War of Independence. McQuaid suspends his annual visits in response to 'a growing irritation at Moran's compulsion to dominate, to have everything on his own terms or not at all'(21). His desertion at once demonstrates and reinforces Moran's lack of authority over other men.

Moran's decision to marry Rose is also affected by the desertion of his son, Luke, who leaves the family before the time span of the novel. Luke Moran's persistent refusal to rely on the

family in order to construct an identity threatens Moran's emphasis on it as the natural locus of power and the only grounds of identity. When Maggie protests at Luke's refusal to visit Great Meadow, Luke explains that the familial relationship that Moran constructs as 'natural' has no force for him. Maggie protests:

'It's not natural.'

'I know. I didn't choose my father. He didn't choose me. If I'd known, I certainly would have refused to meet the man. No doubt he'd have done likewise with me, [...] It may not be natural but it's true.'(144-5)

For Luke, nature is a discursive means that Moran uses to maintain the family rather than an inescapable link between the Morans which indebts them to each other. When Moran writes a letter to Luke, his son writes back, not out of filial forgiveness, but because 'he felt the same for Moran as he would for any mortal'(176). Luke's behaviour represents the potential of the family, which gives Moran status, to disintegrate. It indicates that Moran cannot rely on the family as a stable and automatically-cohesive power base. Luke also makes clear that the family is the only constituency that Moran has any chance of controlling. He suggests that Moran would never be able to prevent men from rebellion and desertion and that to dominate a family of women is the only way that Moran can exert power. Young Michael reports Luke's opinion that "'only women could live with Daddy'"(133).

Although Moran's decision to marry is part of an attempt to consolidate his threatened authority, in marrying Rose Brady Moran compromises his authority still further. Angry after McQuaid's departure and annoyed, as Denis Sampson has noted, particularly because of McQuaid's respect for Luke,³⁸ Moran makes his decision on the grounds that without the presence of a mother figure he will be unable to enforce his authority over the family on which he relies for his identity and status:

After years he had lost his oldest and best friend but in a way he had always despised friendship; families were what mattered, more particularly that larger version of himself — his family; and while seated in that same scheming fury he saw each individual member slipping out of his reach. Yes, they would eventually all go. He would be alone. That he could not stand. He saw with bitter lucidity that he would marry Rose Brady now. As with so many things, no sooner had he taken the idea to himself than he began to resent it passionately.(22)

Moran implies that the presence of a mother figure will increase the stability of the family he wants to control. Rose will provide the 'centripetal attraction' that Antoinette Quinn attributes to Moran himself.³⁹ Theoretically Rose's co-option into the patrifocal family as a second wife and a stepmother should still bolster the authority of the father figure unproblematically. When Moran gives Rose his name and brings her to his home, the language of the wedding ceremony should performatively initiate Moran's complete control over her in the domestic hierarchy. The wedding

* Sampson, p.226.

³⁹ Quinn, p.89.

ceremony carries the citational force of the patriarchal Church and State and it is, after all, J. L. Austin's primary example of effective, performative language.⁴⁰

However, the wedding does not satisfy Moran's desire to subjugate Rose to his service. Moran feels that the language which installs his domestic authority is, in Austin's terms, infelicitous, failing to bring into being the patriarchal order to which it refers:

During the entire day he felt a violent, dissatisfied feeling that his whole life was taking place in front of his eyes without anything at all taking place. Distances were walked. Words were said. Rings were exchanged. The party moved from church to house. All seemed a kind of mockery. It was as if nothing at all had happened. He was tired of wrestling with it, brooding about it, sometimes looking at his bride's back with violent puzzlement.(45-46)

Moran leases the citational force of the idealised mother figure to bolster the unity of the patrifocal family, but in the process of arranging the marriage he has already, inadvertently, helped to give status to the mother as an alternative and ideal focus of the home. In order to convince his daughter, Maggie, that his remarriage is a good idea, Moran refuses to differentiate Rose Brady's performance of the maternal role from that of the conventionally-idealised birth mother. He allows Rose all of the attributes associated with the birth mother when he represents her as a straight substitution who will easily take up her predecessor's place in the family's affections. Moran's sentiments accord with Mahoney's in *The Dark* when he explains to his daughter that a mother figure's contribution is essential if the household is to qualify as an ideal and cohesive Irish home:

'A woman would be able to help you in ways that I can't,' he said. 'There's only so much a man can do on his own, [...] I wouldn't even think of it for a minute if it wasn't the best for everybody. After all these years it'll be a real house and home again. It'll be a place that will always be there for you to come back to.'(27)

Moran imagines that Rose Brady will foster the authority and security of the father. He hopes that 'his life could glow again in the concentration of her affection'(27). However, in her provision of that affection, Rose actually threatens Moran's claim to absolute and indissoluble power over the family she helps him to construct.

Differentiating care and tact

Moran does not establish his authority solely through aggressive behaviour, though clearly the fear that Moran generates helps to establish his power as Antoinette Quinn has shown. He also employs the more subtle violence of sentimentality to gain purchase on the women though this, like his aggressive attempts to secure his family's loyalty, emphasises his reliance on the women he dominates. As I noted earlier, McGahern sees 'sentimentality and violence [as]

⁴⁰ Austin, pp.5-6.

closely connected because they are both excesses and they are both really escaping from the facts of the truth, you know, that we live in ourselves and we live in other people'.⁴¹

Moran uses sentiment to bolster his authority in several ways. Sampson notes that the term 'Daddy', used by all the family in reference to Moran, is part of 'the play of authoritarian power that may be disguised by sentimental and clichéd gestures'.⁴² At several junctures in *Amongst Women* and several times in the opening pages, Moran demands that the women who surround him should 'care' for him. His demands and their responses performatively and reiteratively instate his authority and signal the women's collaboration in its production. As Moran weakens and he becomes less able to assert his authority in more aggressive ways, his demands for care continue to establish his authority over the women whose responses construct them as willing providers of affectionate service:

'Who cares? Who cares anyhow?'

'We care. We all care very much.' (1; see also p.4)

Susan Moller Okin argues that the notion of care can be used to maintain and dissimulate the installation of patriarchal power relations. Okin notes that families are among those social units where individuals do not necessarily make their own just treatment their sole and constant priority and that this is in many ways positive, but she warns that affection can also be cited to justify unjust power relations as 'natural or [...] it is assumed that, in the family, altruism and the harmony of interests make power an insignificant factor'.⁴³ Pat O'Connor usefully summarises the relevance of care in the discussion of Irish domestic patriarchy when she argues that care does not operate simply to affirm emotional bonds in the family but also sets up gendered power relations. O'Connor suggests that

Robert Parker's and Hilary Graham's distinction between 'caring for' another person in the sense of tending them, and 'caring about' them in the sense of 'feeling for' them is useful. Gillian Dalley has argued that at an ideological level these are indissolubly linked in the case of women, but not in the case of men. Dalley argues that it is possible for men to care about someone, without being expected to care for them; while this is not so in the case of women, since day-to-day tending is interwoven with definitions of femininity and embedded in ideological concepts of mothering.⁴⁴

In *Amongst Women*, the provision of care for Moran constructs his authority as the head of the family and helps to naturalise and sentimentalise his patriarchal claims on the other family members. It also consolidates the gendered division of labour. However, when Rose provides care for the Moran family she is not simply consolidating Moran's power or reinforcing her own marginalisation in the clearly-gendered pattern that O'Connor's argument constructs. Rose Moran provides care tactically in order to maximise her own status in the home. She manipulates

⁴¹ John McGahern in interview with Gonzales Casademont, p.20.

⁴² Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p.218.

⁴³ Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family* (New York:: Basic Books, 1989), p.128.

⁴⁴ Pat O'Connor, 'Defining Irish Women: Dominant Discourses and Sites of Resistance', *Éire-Ireland*, 30:3 (1995), 177-187, (pp.178-9).

her performance of care in her own best interests when, as a mother figure in the Irish rural home, she works to capitalise on the citational force of the 'mammy' stereotype. When Rose cares, she does so to increase her own status, sometimes, inadvertently, at the expense of the cared-for patriarch.

Rose has chosen to marry because the decision offers her the opportunity to increase her status: 'From a given and confident position she would now be able to move outwards'(30). Earlier, I suggested that the role of married mother provides a woman with the greatest possible status she can achieve in a State where the constitution denies currency to women's labour beyond the home. Marriage provides Rose with the greatest level of security and authority available to her and she plans to capitalise further on these benefits after her wedding:

Out of the many false starts her life had made she felt they were witnessing the pure beginning that she would seize and make true. No longer, exposed and vulnerable, would she have to chase and harry after happiness. From a given and confident position she would now be able to move outwards.(30)

The vocabulary of military manoeuvre associated with Rose here — the language of pursuit, vulnerability and defence — situates her decision to marry as strategic and contests the perception of her as a sentimentalised vehicle for the idealised maternal role. Sampson suggests that Rose's 'tactful management of relationships with the intention of finding as much independence and joy for each person as circumstances allow' signals her 'moral supremacy' in the novel rather than a politicised intervention into the patrifocal family.⁴⁵

Rose defends and advances her position by capitalising on the idealised and limited role she is co-opted to perform in Moran's patrifocal family. When Rose provides care, she deploys it 'tactfully' in order to advance and secure her own position. Like the act of caring, tact involves Rose in prioritising and placating the patriarch. Similarly, tactful behaviour is modulated to cater for the needs of the cared-for subject. Unlike caring though, it is far less oriented on the status of the Other. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines tact as a

Ready and delicate sense of what is fitting and proper in dealing with others, so as to avoid giving offence, or win good will; skill or judgement in dealing with men or negotiating difficult or delicate situations; the faculty of saying or doing the right thing at the right time.

Tact manifests in *Amongst Women* as an advanced form of the communicative skills that Judith Hearne so painfully cultivates as Rose manipulates the conventions of verbal interaction at once to conceal and promote the advancement of her own interests.

In this respect, Rose resembles the Mahoney children in Chapter Two of *The Dark* who deploy compulsory performances of familial roles both tactically and tactfully. Like them she aims to benefit through the strategic but covert management of the conventions which limit her authority. When the Mahoney children deploy idealised performances in order to avoid submitting to Mahoney's desire for their company, their limited gains are achieved through the

⁴⁵ Sampson, *Outstaring Nature's Eye*, p.234.

careful re-signification of *those* performances rather than through overt acts of punishable transgression. In their dealings with Mahoney and Moran, Rose and these children deploy validated forms of behaviour and conventional forms of speech against the avowed interests of dominant men.

Much more efficiently than either these children or the men in *The Dark*, Rose deploys to her own best advantage the role she is obliged to play to win social and economic status. Rose's tact is not idealised as stereotypically feminine intuition. Her instinct is an instinct for power, and where it is identified, it is situated at odds with conventional roles rather than being accounted for by them. Her skills as a homemaker are clearly linked to her need for economic security as well as social status rather than innate femininity. It is made clear that Rose has learnt to deploy domestic skills to financial advantage, during her time as housekeeper for the Rosenbloom family in Glasgow. Exactly how far Rose makes use of her tactical skills in that home seems ambivalent. Mr. Rosenbloom buys roses for his wife in order to placate her for the extent to which he takes up Rose's time, though no affair is mentioned. At any rate, the position as housekeeper in Glasgow did not offer Rose the permanent security offered by the role of married mother. She refers to it as one of the 'false starts' of her adult life which taught her that she needed to manipulate the knowledge of social conventions and domestic discourses learned in Glasgow to maximise her limited status:

Her true instinct was always to work behind the usual social frameworks: family, connections, position, conventions, those established forms that can be used like weapons when they are mastered. Behind them she could work with a charm and singleness of attention that became so smooth as to be chilling, except for the friendliness of her large grey eyes. The Rosenblooms had long known that they could take her with them anywhere in society.(24)

Rose is here attributed the 'mastery' which emerges as a characteristic of women in *The Pornographer*. As I suggested earlier, 'mastery' in McGahern's novels involves the manipulation, rather than the transcendence of the circumstances of oppression. Mastery never offers women the abstract privileges of traditional agency but it does potentially challenge and undermine men's attempts to claim absolute authority for themselves. The masculinist connotations of the word signal Rose's encroachment on the authority which Moran has established as his male prerogative. The location of power becomes unclear when the narrator puts Rose's mastery in competition with that of Moran himself but it remains clear that Moran's power is being contested by Rose's skills. Under Rose's guidance, the Moran women 'were already conspirators. They were mastered and yet they were controlling together what they were mastered by'(46). Rose's ability to master conventions, and to use them 'like weapons' against the patriarch further highlights her ability to challenge Moran on his own, masculinist, terms.

at first Rose's skills in manipulating conventional matrices of power to her own advantage are, it set aside as soon as they are announced. The 'weapons' she uses to advance her status are declared useless in her attempt to win over Michael Moran:

These skills she could not use with Moran. Her interest was too great. She had too little time. There was too much of the outlaw about him that held its own fascination. Painfully, and in the open she had to make all the running.(24-25)

However, Rose does not so much abandon her masterful tactical skills as adopt covert operations. Her behaviour is described in the language of a military operation which pits her against Moran, the former guerrilla leader. When she pursues him to the post office, her military tactics are as defensive as possible so that she can better advance on her prey: 'She kept to the grass margin'(25) to minimise her exposure to the 'cheers that echoed like firing'(25).

Her performance of ideal femininity functions as one of the weapons she employs in order to advance her campaign. Ordinarily, literary roses in full bloom signal decay and Rose's age, similar to that of Josephine in *The Pornographer*, limits the time she has left to gain the authority and stability of the married mother's role. Her desire for that stability, together with her desire for Moran, urge Rose out from behind the protective colouring of social convention. Yet Rose makes her campaign overt only while she is able to use what remains of her 'bloom' to conceal her stereotypically masculine ambition for more status. She bids to win Moran while she can still use signs of physical attractiveness to promote and dissimulate her desire for self-advancement.

Her body helps to signal Rose's guilelessness. The gentleness of her 'large grey eyes' seems to contradict her ability to 'chill' the people she encounters. Meanwhile, her feminine smile conceals the extent of her determination to marry. When her mother tries to dissuade her from her interest in Moran, Rose denies the extent of her ambition: "'We're just friends, Mother," she gave that little laugh and smiled the charming smile that hid the pure will'(26). The ability to chill and the exercise of will are both usually associated with Moran as patriarch (see 7 and 137 for examples), Rose dissimulates her bid to win power through strategies which are conventionally masculine when she uses her knowledge of conventional assumptions about femininity 'like weapons' to promote her self-advancement.

Having gained access to Moran's family, Rose once again exploits her knowledge of 'established forms' to advance her attack, but having ^{briefly} made visible her campaign — 'he would never risk exposing himself as Rose had'(26) — she reverts to concealed forms of the offensive. She strategically re-articulates her tactful performance of selfless femininity to distance herself from the stereotypically unattractive image of the manipulative woman. For example, she secures the approval of Moran's children by virtue of a display of kindness which seems guileless. She diverts the attention, due to her as an outsider, towards the children who are used to all attention focusing on the father. The ambiguity over who feels enclosed in attention after Rose's meeting with the Morans seems significant because Rose benefits from the attention she gives away as much as do the children. Although the scene has helped to construct Rose as ideally feminine, it represents another of her strategic victories. Moran has invited her to meet 'my troops for the first time'(31) and she has responded by winning them over.

As she said goodnight to them in turn she managed by some technique of charm or pure personality to convey to each of them that they were important to her in their own light. They left her enclosed in a warm glow of attention and to Moran's repeated questions over the next days were able to say genuinely how much they liked her. In fact, the response was so uniform and repetitious that it started to irritate him before long.(33)

Rose's apparently selfless behaviour seems to dissociate her from any accusations of unseemly self-interest. The status of her femininity as a performance rather than as an essential attribute is discussed and plotted by the narrator rather than revealed to other characters. Even the narrator here seems unsure whether or not Rose's performance can have been constructed for her own advantage when he debates whether she is maternal by some self-conscious and learned 'technique of charm' or whether instead her behaviour is the product of 'pure' — and by implication, innate and unpremeditated — personality. Rose benefits precisely because she so successfully dissimulates the status of her motherly femininity which is quickly re-established as being a learned performance. When nobody can trace Rose's influence in the conciliation between her family and the Moran children, nobody can accuse her of having tried to make her passage into the Moran family easier. Through tactfulness — the careful negotiation of the usual social frameworks and the dissimulation of her tactics — Rose advances her position more safely than through the use of overtly tactical techniques:

No one was ever able to see quite how it had all been managed. Rose's tact was so masterful that she resembled certain people who are so deeply read that they can play with all ideas without ever listing books.(34)

Tact, as I have outlined its operations so far, emerges as a self-conscious and relatively subversive activity, but tact also involves the strategic validation of the conventions of dominant discourses and remains a politically-precarious method of self-advancement. It depends on the speaker's careful imitation of acquiescent behaviour and on the assiduous construction of a performance which does not appear to subvert dominant matrices of power at any point. Tactful behaviour is arguably more likely to contribute to the construction of the dominant order than to its subversion. If Rose demonstrates 'the faculty of saying or doing the right thing at the right time' in the Moran household, she effectively participates in the construction of patrifocal patriarchy. As Quinn argues, '[Rose's] unfailing supportiveness and her loyalty, her refusal to entertain his children's criticism of [Moran's] petulant behaviour, her benign interpretation of his ugliest moods, reinforce his despotic authority.'⁴⁶ The tactful subject increases her status only if she helps to focalise authority away from herself, and so tact manifests non-subversively as co-operation.

Any benefits Rose might derive from the given and confident position of married mother are contingent on her faithful performance of the idealised maternal role. Rose's first two speech acts in the novel highlight the limited possibilities that tactful behaviour provides for the redistribution of power in the patrifocal family. Rose's tactful use of language necessarily

⁴⁶ Quinn, p.84.

involves a careful rearticulation of vocabulary which endorses patriarchal order. In her first speech act, Rose seeks to win Moran's goodwill for Monaghan Day in order to please his daughters. Any ill-feeling would threaten the myth of Moran family unity and dispel any connection between that unity and the presence of the mother figure.

Rose secures Moran's co-operation by deploying speech acts which register her contributions as supportive rather than authoritative. She conceals the level of organisation involved in the day so that Moran can retain his sense of his automatic authority and she arranges for the girls to see a visible improvement in Moran's appearance as a supposed result of their visit. When she supercedes their plans in order to bring about the type of reunion they are hoping for, she allows the women to retain their own sense of achievement by refusing to reveal that she has overruled their wishes: 'In spite of their wish to make the visit a surprise, Rose had told Moran they were arriving'(3). Rose reassures Moran rather than ordering his co-operation, and asks indirect questions rather than making suggestions. He then chooses to participate and registers his symbolically retained agency in his 'who cares' response:

'They must think I'm on the way out.'

'The opposite.' she reassured 'But they think you should be getting far better.'

'How can they all manage to get away together like that?'

'It must have fallen that way. Isn't it worth getting dressed up for once?'

'Who cares now anyhow?' he said automatically but changed into his brown suit.

His face was flushed with excitement when they came.(3)

Rose's second attributed speech act is designed to distract Moran from the critical tone he has taken in his discussion of McQuaid, but this time Rose's attempt to affect Moran's behaviour is problematised by her failure to significantly disguise her criticism as supportive and subordinate. Although she modifies the content of the speech act by using a gentle tone of voice to imply submissiveness, and tries to forestall Moran's criticism of McQuaid by citing clichés which provide conventional formulas for the closure of all discussions of the dead, Rose's attempt to influence Moran is not fully concealed and prompts Moran to vigorously assert his independence:

'They've come all this way to see you and is that all the welcome they get,' Rose chided gently. 'Who cares about poor McQuaid, God rest him, he's long gone.'

'Who cares about anything now anyhow?' he demanded.

'We care. We care very much. we love you.'

'God help your wits then. Pay no attention to me [...]'

He went silent and dark and withdrew into himself, the two thumbs rotating about one another as he sat in the car chair by the fire.(4)

Rose's success in influencing Moran's behaviour is proportionate to her apparently selfless conformity to the stereotype of the ideal Irish wife. Rose has to appear to implicate herself in the construction of patriarchy in order to win the status ascribed to the ideal Irish wife and to a great extent she does just that, helping to enhance Moran's authority as the patriarch and focus of the home. The limits on tactful behaviour, on balance, prevent the disestablishment of patrilocality in the family. However, Rose's failure to ^{visible} make the performativity of her motherhood

in the novel consolidates her resemblance to the idealised image of the mother and thus, ironically, enhances the threat she poses to Moran's authority.

The Moran family, as Moran himself has predicted, is made cohesive through Rose's performance in the maternal role. It is Rose who constructs the family as stable and benevolent. She helps to stabilise Moran's performance of the paternal role with her apologist explanations for his behaviour and her assertion that "“that's the way Daddy is, [...] He probably thought that's what would please you most””(87). She also idealises him as an expansive and powerful character: ““Daddy can never do anything by halves,” Rose laughed’(95). She encourages and maintains mundane conversations which operate to conceal or resolve resentments between family members. Without Rose's intervention, those conversational practices lapse and family members disperse. When, for example, Rose leaves the Moran women during one conversation ‘the heart of the talk was broken’(97).

Rose uses her communicative skills to facilitate easier relations between the girls and their father. When, for example, they have to deal with Michael's flight from home, she helps to recite their lives within everyday routines:

Rose made a big fry for tea as if it were a special Sunday. She kept chatting and laughing all through the meal and afterwards relayed fresh scraps of news as she washed up with the girls — new dresses and new styles worn to Mass by those who had come home from England or America and how they had thought the scissors were lost and they would have to buy a new pair, but only the day before yesterday she came on them in an old boot of Daddy's; they must have fallen into the boot ...

‘There are none more blind than those who will not see,’ Moran said humorously. ‘Now Daddy. You know I looked day and night,’ Rose protested while joining in the laughter.(126)

Rose also helps Moran to articulate needs he cannot express within his performance as indomitable patriarch: ‘Moran couldn't bring himself to ask the girls [about Luke]. She brought to him all she knew’(132).

Increasingly, in the process of defending Moran, Rose also exposes his role as a limited and performative construct, vulnerable to change. She explains to the girls that ‘Daddy would love it if Luke came home though he cannot say it’(132). After Michael and Moran have fought — a turning point in Moran's ability to control the family — she inadvertently demonstrates the mechanisms she uses to instate and bolster his authority when she advises Michael that ““He'll not change now. All you have to do is appear to give in to him and he'd do anything for you after that. He wants nothing but good for the whole house””(122). Although such a performance of acquiescence would effectively repeat Moran's claim to power, her plan exposes the constructedness of Moran's authority and his indebtedness to Rose. It is Rose who will engineer the ‘good’ she refers to here:

She was sure everything would be all right again. She would have a word with Moran about [Michael's] early morning contriteness as soon as he got up and make certain that everything moved towards the reconciliation that she herself felt with her whole heart.(122)

In justifying Moran to Luke later on in the novel, Michael explains that “‘He can’t do feck-all any more. You don’t have to heed him. Only for Rose I don’t know how he’d manage’”(147). It is through Rose’s continual efforts that Moran is constructed and maintained as the focus of the family and Moran is dependent on, and constrained by her support. When, for example, she over-anticipates his abilities to mend a piece of equipment on the farm, Moran is compromised by his potential failure to produce the paternal performance she idealises:

‘If you can’t do it, Daddy, nobody can,’ Rose said but her encouragement only earned her a testy look.[...]

In a way it was a relief to him that the pins had finally broken. He had no confidence that he could row the hay on uneven ground. Now at least his dread was at an end.

Rose watched carefully. ‘If Daddy can’t get it to work nobody can.’

He looked at her angrily, as if the statement itself was deeply compromising; yet it was one he could not reject.(162-3)

Where Moran accepts the idealised authority of the Irish mother as being based on more than citation and as potentially more powerful than his own role, Rose’s performance helps to put pressure on and expose the fictions of ontological patriarchy Moran tries to instate. After their second battle he reassures her by stressing her absolute importance to the happiness of the home. She threatens to leave and he forestalls the move by protesting that “‘A blind man could see that the children think the earth of you’”(71). As Moran’s dependence on Rose increases, references to this blindness increase and are explicitly linked to the retrenchments and disappointments of Moran’s own bids for power in the home.

Tact and tactics

In *The Dark*, the home was the territory of the father, but in *Amongst Women* that territory becomes a more contested space. When Maggie’s future husband, Mark, visits the home he notices Rose’s ‘furtive watchfulness [...] Everybody was watchful here. It was like moving about in a war area’(135). Moran’s attempt to assert authority in the home is a battle which is never fully won because while Rose is an accessory to patriarchy in the home she also claims residual rights which conflict with Moran’s desire for complete control. Moran has to secure his own authority through a series of tactical manoeuvres. Moran responds to Rose’s tact through the increasingly overt use of the tactics which he learned as the leader of flying column during the war. Tactics has a different etymological root to ‘tact’ and stresses not concealment but the deployment of learned strategies in combat with the enemy.⁴⁷

When Rose deploys her tactful skills, she engages in a tactical war with Moran in which she contests as well as consolidates his power. The scene on Moran’s wedding evening when the women serve him his meal demonstrates that Rose will continue to work tactically after her

⁴⁷ The OED defines ‘tactical’ as ‘of or relating to arrangement esp. the arrangement of procedure with a view to ends,’ (sense 2a).

marriage. The women's collective performance of ideal roles orchestrated by Rose here makes the distribution of power newly ambivalent. Although Quinn quotes the scene to demonstrate Rose's acquiescence to Moran she acknowledges that 'subservience is here an unobtrusive form of power'.⁴⁸ Moran is constructed as a military quarry trapped by the women's care:

Was there milk enough or a little too much in his tea? They could add more tea once he had taken a few sips. He didn't take sugar any more. Would he have the plain bread or the bread with the blackcurrant jam or a piece of the apple tart? 'The tea was all right,' he protested and they knew he was far from displeased. 'It'll do for the man it is for. I've already eaten enough today to do a man for a week. I'd explode if I was to put as much as one morsel more in my mouth.' Rose and the girls smiled as the tea and the plates circled around him. They were already conspirators. They were mastered and yet they were controlling together what they were mastered by.'(46)

The house becomes a disputed territory in which Moran deploys guerrilla tactics to minimise the advances made through Rose's tactful performance as woman of the house. Both of the arguments between Rose and Moran are prompted by Moran's fears about the dissolution of the family focused on the father and the potential slippage of power towards Rose. In their first dispute, Moran's anger is provoked by Luke's refusal to engage in battle on Moran's own terms. Luke responds to a letter from Moran with a terse telegram. Moran turns on Rose because he feels that she has brought about his vulnerability. He has written to Luke at Rose's suggestion and Rose's benevolent assessment of the telegram seems to depreciate further Moran's role as the executive decision-maker in the home. When she continues to counsel him about Luke, he fiercely asserts his authority over her. Rose works to consolidate Moran's position as a powerful father figure in the scene by referring to him as 'Daddy', Moran reduces her from the status of mother figure to that of the prestigeless 'woman':

'No letter will come. It leaves me like a right fool out in the bloody open.'
'I don't know how you can say that, Daddy. You did everything decent,' Rose said.

'Why in the name of the Saviour do you have to put your ignorance on full display,' he turned on her. 'You don't know the first thing about the business, woman.'

That the telegram was formally polite and completely ignored his own attack infuriated Moran.(52)

Rose's decision to continue serving Moran's tea after this first attack exemplifies that her co-operation in the production of Moran's authority is — rather than a simple capitulation — still part of her own complex claim to independence:

She had chosen Moran, had married him against convention and her family. All her vanity was in question. The violence Moran had turned on her she chose to ignore, to let her own resentment drop and to join the girls as they stole about so that their presences would never challenge his.(53)

Rose has a huge investment in producing Moran's pleasure if she is to maximise the authority accorded to wife and mother, and part of her role as the idealised mother is to produce peace and

⁴⁸ Quinn, p.85.

reconciliation. However, in her bid to retain the status she gains through those roles, Rose sets limits on the basic rights she is willing to accept and forces Moran to accept the redistribution of power brought about in the family since her marriage.

Their second battle is provoked by Moran's fear that Rose is not entirely devoted to constructing the Moran family as the focal point of her attention and that she is undermining its status as the only basis of her identity, setting a bad example for the rest of his troops. She continues to visit her mother's house after her wedding and Moran objects on the grounds that 'Any constant going out to another house was a threat'(68). The argument this provokes between Rose and Moran, following fairly swiftly on the first dispute, is figured as a continued fight over Moran's authority and centrality in the home. Moran constructs Rose's attention to her mother's home as a desertion of her duties in the patrifocal unit. He asks:

'Has a whole army to be sent out to search for you whenever you're needed? She did not try to defend herself [...] She seemed willing to go to almost any length to appease, lull his irritation to rest, contain all the exasperation by taking it within herself. This usually redoubled it. He seemed intent on pushing to see how far he could go and she appeared willing to give way in everything in order to pacify.(69)

Rose maintains her ideal performance as the peaceful mother in the dispute until that performance no longer gains her any status at which point she assumes the offensive to defend her rights within the home. Moran questions the need for the maternal figure in the home in a tactically aggressive move, designed to limit Rose's significance and highlight the patriarch's supremacy. He uses the techniques he learnt as a guerrilla leader to perpetrate the attack, firing and then retreating 'under cover of reading the newspaper'(69):

Then one evening as she was tidying up the room he said as quietly as if he were taking rifle aim, 'There's no need for you to go turning the whole place upside down. We managed well enough before you ever came round the place.'(69)⁴⁹

Rose explains to Moran that either her status and significance in that role are guaranteed or she will leave to retake her position as housekeeper for the Rosenblooms. Although the married role potentially offers Rose more status than that of housekeeper, she will only remain a wife where that increase in status is available to her: "I was told I was no use in the house. I couldn't go on living in a place where I was no use," she spoke with the quiet authority of someone who had discovered they could give up no more room and live'(71). Moran's challenge threatens Rose's position in the family and undermines her attempt to win status from the maternal role.

However, Moran's metaphoric ambush is also an attempt to regain custody over the home that Rose has joined. After her arrival in the home, Rose has colonised the house. She has used her own money to fund a redecoration project: 'When it was done the whole house had acquired a new pleasantness and comfort'(49). Although Moran has regained the initiative by

⁴⁹ The charge is ritual in McGahern's family fictions. Willie Reagan in *The Barracks* also implies that the mother figure makes no impact on the operations of the patrifocal home and that her contributions are both insignificant and irrelevant: 'It fell as natural as a blessing, "Didn't we manage for ages before you ever came?" And they'd manage, too, if she was gone. She stood with the shock'. McGahern, *The Barracks*, p.35.

insisting on paying for the redecoration himself, after this second dispute, Rose's redesignation of the home as her own territory is reasserted. She resumes her idealised performance, which has now been acknowledged as crucial for the common good of the patriarchal family, and uses it to confirm her rights to territory in the home. '[The children] were taken back to find her smiling and totally at ease. The room was already warm and the furniture shone as if all the pieces had been gone over with a damp cloth'(72). Throughout the novel, the house is used as a metaphor for the family, but after this dispute it can be figured as a symbol which represents divine motherhood rather than transcendent masculine power. The narrator later refers to 'the inviolability of the house, its true virginity'(166).

After the second battle, Moran can no longer assert his authority without taking Rose's position in the home into account. He returns to the house, now confirmed as territory shared with the Irish mother, after several days predominantly spent working on the land. On his return, he restages his aggression as benevolent in order to renew his authority in the home and to reconfigure patriarchy as positive and desirable. He is covered in lime after his work:

The theatrical paleness of his face and hands pleased him. 'I'm a boody man,' he pretended to chase Rose and the children with his old charm. Rose was delighted, the clowning bringing relief back into the house after the hidden battle. It would never be over but Rose's place in the house could never be attacked or threatened again. 'I'm a boody man. I'm a boody man,' he made playful sallies to left and right while everybody pretended to back away, shouting and laughing.(73)

Here and throughout the novel, Moran moves onto the land to reassess or re-invent his authority when he feels it has been challenged or checked by women. Several times, he re-invents himself as a man in a more powerful patriarchal tradition through his connection with the land. For example, after his wedding meal, he cites himself as an American frontiersman: "'This man and me are after slaughtering a few trees out there'"(47). After Moran mends the broken tedder that has threatened his performance as an all-powerful patriarch, Michael mocks Moran with another American comparison: "'Henry Ford seems to be going great guns now,'" Michael teased Rose [...] she looked at him reproachfully and turned away'(164).

Moran has attempted to construct the land as an unproblematically masculine domain. He spent the money he gained from his contribution to the War of Independence on the land in an attempt to secure an independent position within the new State. However, the land increasingly reinforces the failure of his authority rather than its permanence. It represents his inability to construct for himself an identity as an autonomous and self-made man:

He had not grown up on these fields but they felt to him as if he had. He had bought them with the money he had been given on leaving the army. The small pension wasn't enough to live on but with working the fields he had turned it into a living. He'd be his own man here, he had thought, and for the first time in his life he'd be away from people. Now he went from field to field, no longer kept as well as they once were, the hedges ragged [...] It was like grasping water to think how quickly the years had passed here. They were nearly gone. It was in the nature of things and yet it brought a sense of betrayal and anger, of never having understood anything much. Instead of using the fields he sometimes felt as if the fields had used him. Soon they would be using someone else in his place. It was unlikely to be one of his sons.(130)

Moran's link with the land comes to represent his failure to exert authority over the family, which throughout the novel is equated with the house. As his dependence on women becomes more obvious and extreme the land becomes the only place left where Moran might be able to assert his authority:

'You'll have to shape up, Daddy. You'll just have to pull yourself together and get better.'

'Who cares? Who cares anyhow?'

All they felt he had to do was turn his life over to them and they would will him back to health again. He had never in all his life bowed in anything to a mere Other. Now he wanted to escape, to escape the house, the room, their insistence that he get better, his illness. The first time he went missing there was panic. They found him leaning in exhaustion on a wooden post at the back of the house, staring into the emptiness of the meadow. He did not speak as they led him back to the house.(178)

The problematics of Moran's attempt to assert his authority over the home, as a powerful father, reaches its crisis point in a scene situated at the outset of the novel, which falls near his death. The scene, in which Moran shoots at a bird in the garden from inside the house helps to establish Moran's attempt to dominate the home as problematically threatened by the women who dominate the house. It also highlights the difficulties Moran faces in making official patriarchal discourses support his domestic authority.

On the morning after the Monaghan Day revival, the women are eating breakfast in the kitchen and Moran is absent. Although the kitchen provides the focus for the women's socio-economic contributions to the upkeep of Moran's home, they have invested it further as a centre for comfort and communication *Amongst Women*, 'chatting' while they are 'idling in the luxury of a long breakfast'(6), regardless of Moran's absence. They are interrupted when Moran fires a 'single shotgun blast'(7) from inside the house to kill a jackdaw in the garden. The unity and sense of wholeness they have established in his absence is only emphasised as they move to respond to the gunshot, 'quickly as one person to the room'(7).

Moran's shot comes from the front room, the area of the house where outsiders can witness a formalised performance of family life, one which conceals the role of the focal and feminised kitchen. However, Moran's attempt to use the room as a base from which to mobilise patriarchal authority remains problematic. He shoots into the land he owns, away from the house, in order to secure his authority within it: 'He was standing at the open window in his pyjamas, the shotgun in his hand'(7). His attempt to capitalise on his military experience is parodied: his

pyjamas, a sign of convalescence, not only mock a military uniform but also signal his restriction to the interior of the house where the women exercise custodial control over him. When Rose intervenes, she closes the window to protect Moran from the patriarchal world outside and restores him to the feminised space of the kitchen.

The presence of the gun in the kitchen marks the continued threat of Moran's violence. Just the idea that he might use it is enough to frighten his son, Michael, to the point of leaving the house later in the text and as the novel progresses, moving back chronologically to the days of Moran's physical strength, that threat gives Moran's authority the support it lacks from institutionalised patriarchy. However, in the opening pages of the novel this scene already makes clear that Moran's violence stems partly from an attempt to win power away from the maternal role and to displace the mother from the focal position in the family that is endorsed for her by popular and Constitutional discourses. The violence signified by the presence of Moran's gun is always being contested by other, less obvious types of force in the text. Rose defuses the aggression of the shooting incident by marginalising the signs of violence within the domestic space and refusing to allow the incident to take precedence over familiar, domestic routines:

He allowed Rose to take the gun away but not before he had removed the empty shell. He dressed and had breakfast with them at the table. The gun was returned to its usual place in the corner of the room and no more mention was made of the dead jackdaw.

'Tired again,' he said simply after an hour and went back to his room.(7)

Matrifocality: contested and employed

Moran argues that the Irish family is traditionally patriarchal and that any failures on his own behalf to exert absolute authority are aberrant. However, even as he asserts this, his centrality in the family emerges as dependent on the women's collaboration in the construction of his failing authority. He has been trying to extract information from the girls about Luke:

'I don't know,' he said as he sat to the table. 'I don't know what I did to deserve it. I don't know why things can't be the same in this house as in every other house in the country. I don't know why it is always me that has to be singled out.'

Rose fussed discreetly around him but he could not remain the centre of attention for long. Maggie was going to a dance and she was taking Mona and Sheila. All three girls were dressing and their youthful excitement pulsed through the house. Rose too was caught up in the preparations.(82)

Moran relies on the idealised mother figure in order to instate his authority and facilitate his centrality in the home. Moran regards the family as the foundational unit of society. He agrees with Sheila's boyfriend, Sean Flynn, 'that the family was the basis of all society and the basis of every civilization' (117). However, Moran's ambition to establish a family based on the father and passed down from son to son is undermined, partly through his inability to force or persuade either Luke or Michael to assume the mantle of his inheritance, but also because the alternative idealised image of the family focused on the mother figure competes with the version of the family he tries to establish.

When Sean Flynn refers to the family he is endorsing a model focused around the idealised mother rather than on the father. At Sheila's wedding, the Flynn family provide a comic version of the stereotype of the matrifocal family. Sean's mother, like the idealised mother in McGahern's earlier novel, *The Leavetaking* (1974; rev.ed. 1984), wants her son to go on to the priesthood. Mrs Flynn realises that 'Now she was losing him to another woman and he was taking on the mere life of any man with a woman [...] When he took her in his arms — "Mind yourself, Mother!" — at last she broke into the relief of tears' (154). When the Moran family reflect on the behaviour of the Flynn family at the wedding, Moran's comment is cryptic: "'I suppose it is the old story," Moran said but he did not say what the story was' (156).

Moran soon hints at what that story might be when he quarrels with Sheila about her tendency to adopt the dominant role over her husband. Sheila's domination in her marriage does not end with Moran's attack. The narrator explains that 'Sheila had governed the relationship from the beginning' (150). Having sacrificed her medical career, Sheila refuses any more to submit to her father. She continues to make the decisions in her marriage, and if necessary to defy Moran in the process. Moran makes it clear that he regards women's authority in family relationships as an unnatural citation of men's automatic authority. He characterises power as masculine and situates Sheila's attack on him as a parodic and implausible repetition of his own authority when he criticises Sheila for intervening to defend Sean rather than letting Sean stand up for himself:

He did not respect Sean. Now he despised him for running to a woman with his story. He was furious with his daughter's defiance of his authority. [...] 'I have meadows to cut,' he ground out. 'Go and trim that poor husband of yours if you want something to trim. I'd say you were the man for the job all right.' Before she had a chance to answer he had gone into the fields. (158)

It is this argument which precedes the scene in which Moran kills the hen pheasant in the field, cutting off her legs with the tractor and although this violence undoubtedly serves as a metaphor for Moran's violence towards women in the home, it also illustrates his frustration at his failure to displace them. The hen pheasant might, in addition, signify Moran's sense of his restriction and powerlessness as a domestic patriarch:

As Rose and the girls were crossing the swards to the tractor they almost stumbled over a hen pheasant sitting on her nest. They were startled that she didn't fly until they saw feathers on the swards. The legs had been cut from under her while she sat. Her eyes were shining and alive, a taut stillness over the neck and body, petrified in her instinct.

'The poor thing,' Rose said. 'Still sitting there.' Neither could bring themselves to look again. (159)

Throughout the novel, Moran has relied on women to construct him in a powerful role. As he nears his death, he becomes increasingly less able to displace them and to insist on his authority over theirs. In particular, his loss of control over the ways in which the Rosary signifies in the family highlights the difficulty with which he has established the father figure as the focus of the home.

Re-citing the Rosary

Moran's use of the Rosary to bolster his claim to power is paradigmatic of the complications involved in his attempt to co-opt the maternal figure into the service of the patrifocal family. Antoinette Quinn argues that:

As in many Irish homes, the Rosary in the Moran household is a public prayer that reinforces a hierarchical social structure: it is presided over by the head of the family and the five decades are allocated from oldest to youngest in descending order of importance. The internal structure of the prayer [...] emphasizes Divine fatherhood. Though the Rosary repeatedly pronounces Mary as 'blessed ... Amongst Women,' because she was chosen to be the mother of Christ, in the Moran household, the character, blessed Amongst Women, is Moran himself. So the paternal ousts the maternal. Ironically, the misogynistic Moran pays daily lip service to motherhood.⁵⁰

Moran uses the Rosary to assert his primacy and stabilise the patrifocal family, and the structure of the prayer endorses that aim in that the order of prayers in the Rosary prioritises the 'Our Father' over the 'Hail Mary'. However, the irony Quinn identifies is much more endemic in the Moran household than she suggests. In assuming the role of the character 'amongst women', Moran displaces Our Lady as the focus of the prayer and the devotion it articulates in a bid to win the power which is associated with the figure of the Irish as well as Catholic idealised mother. However, that displacement is only achieved through repetitive acts which potentially contribute to the idealisation of the mother figure that Moran is attempting to displace. Although in *The Dark*, Mahoney uses the language of baptism and the Mass to assert the natural patrifocality of the family and its alignment with patriarchal structures beyond the home, Moran's use of the Rosary in a household where a mother figure operates makes his authority much more vulnerable to mis-citation and disruption.

The Rosary is not easily made to serve Moran's interests. He has to exert force to keep the attention on him. As he explains to Maggie's boyfriend Mark, he has re-nuanced Father Peyton's motto to ensure that through the recitation of the Rosary, the father's will will be done: "They say the family that prays together stays together even if they're scattered if there's a will to do so. The will is the important thing" (137). Moran's use of the Rosary functions to highlight the difficulty with which he asserts his authority over the family. The Rosary does not simply confirm Moran's authority. It is frequently clear that he is using it ^{to} avert the loss of attention on himself. When, for example, Maggie visits the family after she has moved to London, the attention she attracts gives Moran the sense that he is no longer the focus of the family's concern. She becomes the focus of the family's attention when she arrives with gifts and news: 'She was the centre of the table' (79). Rose works to endorse his importance at the same time as creating

⁵⁰ Quinn, p.86.

space for Maggie but 'in spite of Rose's care to draw him into the conversation Moran began to feel out of it and grew bored'(79).

Moran asserts his importance by starting the Rosary 'earlier than usual'(79). He uses the prayer to reassert his position in the family hierarchy and to regain the limelight Maggie has appropriated. However, when he emphasises that the family hierarchy is the sole source of power, and as he stresses the magnificent sacrifice that patriarchs make in providing for their dependants, his success is limited by the lack of enthusiasm this vision provokes:

This night Moran enunciated each repetitious word with a slow clarity and force as if the very dwelling on suffering, death and human supplication would scatter all flimsy vanities of a greater world; and the muted responses giving back their acceptance of human servitude did not improve his humour.(79)

On the night that Sheila and Mona leave for Dublin, Moran moves to performatively reaffirm his authority over the household, again through the recitation of the Rosary, but on this occasion, his use of the prayer to assert his primacy is threatened by the loss of some of its participants. The loss of numbers interrupts the prayer's solid renewal of his status. Until this point, Moran has always been the initiator and primary speaker but in order to complete the prayer on this occasion, the family has to recite it cyclically rather than hierarchically. The recitation of the Mysteries necessitates that Moran and Rose recite prayers for a second time after Michael has spoken and so the Rosary endorses less effectively than before Moran's absolute authority over a cohesive group of subjects. The house seems threatened, made more flimsy and more obviously a discursive construct, by this parodic repetition of Moran's authority :

Moran erect at the table, Rose and Michael bent at the chairs looked scattered and far apart. There was an uneasy pause, as if waiting for Mona at the beginning of the Third Mystery. Moran hurried into the Fourth. Rose was hesitant as she started the Fifth Mystery. A wind was swirling round the house, sometimes gusting up the chimney, and there was an increasing sense of fear as the trees stirred in the storm outside when the prayers ended. For the first time the house seemed a frail defence against all that beat around it.(90)

This infelicitious citation of the family's hierarchy demonstrates the ways in which Moran founds his sense of his own identity through the careful repetition of acts which performatively instate his authority as father and patriarch. When Moran fails to repeat these acts faithfully, he loses the identity which he constructs through his relationship with the family: 'When he did get up to go to the room he looked like someone who had lost the train of thought he had set out on and had emptied himself into blankness, aware only that he was still somehow present'(91).

As Moran weakens further, and once he can no longer control the deployment of the prayer to promote its focus on him through an act of will, its association with blessed and adored mothers is asserted. Rose replaces Moran as the Moran amongst women, and her name helps to suggest that the focalisation of the prayer on a mother figure is a re-focalisation and a restoration of order. When Rose initiates the Rosary as Moran lies on his deathbed, Moran tries to reject it

for the first time. The prayers help to construct and idealise a matrifocal family now that he has lost the will to control their deployment:

'Why aren't you praying?' he demanded as if he knew he was slipping away. They immediately dropped to their knees around the bed. 'Thou, O Lord, wilt open my lips,' Rose began. Tears slipped down their faces as they repeated the 'Our Fathers' and 'Hail Marys.' Maggie had begun her mystery when it grew clear that Moran was trying to speak. She stopped and the room was still. The low whisper was unmistakable: 'Shut up!' They looked at one another in fear and confusion but Rose nodded vigorously to Maggie to ignore the whispered command and to continue. She managed to struggle back into the rhythm of the prayers when Mona cried out 'Daddy's gone!' (180)

Moran's use of the Rosary, like his decision to marry Rose, is cited as part of the apparatus of Moran's power, yet both the prayer and his marriage endorse the myth of the powerful and benevolent mother who successfully brokers power on behalf of her intercessors. In this novel, far more than in his earlier work, McGahern represents patriarchy, not only as a limited and limiting discourse, but as an unstable and vulnerable configuration of discursive practices in a society where gendered ideologies of power compete rather than support each other in their endorsement of patriarchy.

Towards the end of *Amongst Women*, the Moran women appropriate discourses which idealise the powerful mother and the patriarch for their own ends. In the first place, they frighten Moran because of their belief that they can deploy their collective power to counter Moran's depleted will. Like the women in *The Pornographer*, the Moran women validate a natural cycle of life and death as an alternative and a remedy to the pursuit of absolute power:

They were so bound by the illness that they felt close to being powerful together. Such was the strength of the instinct that they felt that they could force their beloved to remain in life if only they could, together, turn his will around. Since they had the power of birth there was no reason why they couldn't will this life free of death. For the first time in his life Moran began to fear them.(178)

In *Amongst Women*, the women also encroach on the absolute power Moran has claimed for himself. Where the women re-cite Moran's authority after his death, they cite it in such a way that they themselves, as his descendants, inherit his power. They suggest that power is the prerogative of all Morans, not just of Morans who are father figures. Together the women offer the possibility of new configurations of non-patriarchal power, which capitalise on Moran's authority as well as Rose's example. After his death Rose fully replaces Moran as the idealised figure 'amongst women'. Her assumption of the role offers a resumption of the idealised model of women's power which Moran has sought to displace:

As the small tight group of stricken women slowly left the graveyard they seemed with every step to be gaining in strength. It was as if their first love and allegiance had been pledged uncompromisingly to this one house and man and that he had always been at the very living centre of all their lives. Now, not only had they never broken that pledge but they were renewing it a second time with this other woman who had come in amongst them and married him. Their continual homecomings had been an affirmation of its unbroken presence, and now, as they left him under the yew, it was as if each of them in their different ways had become Daddy.'(183)

The women's appropriation of power remains complex. McGahern has claimed that theirs is an 'uncertain triumph'.⁵¹ Their conceptualisation of power is shaped by their father, and in order to signal the men as powerless they construct them as "a crowd of women [...] The way Michael, the skit, is getting Sean and Mark to laugh you'd think they were coming from a dance"(184). Quinn argues that the women demonstrate their 'assimilation of patriarchal values'.⁵² 'Woman' remains a signifier for powerlessness for Moran's daughters who are unable to displace the gendered vocabulary of power that Moran has worked to construct and they continue to regard the family as the domain in which they can exercise authority. However, in what is the novel's final sentence, the women's use of the idea of 'Daddy' also holds out more disruptive possibilities. Their redesignation of gender roles exposes gendered identities as the effects of mundane discourses about power rather than as their foundation. The Morans look set to reconfigure masculinist assumptions by citing the patriarchal discourses which have limited them against Moran's best intentions.

Amongst Women does not provide a sympathetic portrayal of patriarchy in the home. None of the women are powerful matriarchs, but as the novel constantly implies, the construction of the family is a contested, discursive process in which family members employ discourses with citational force to situate their own roles as secure and natural. Moran's attempt to endorse patrifocal patriarchy as the natural form of the family is complicated and exposed here because of the primacy of Irish and Catholic discourses which idealise the position of the mother. The Irish feminist project has in many ways been disrupted by the citational force of those popular and official constitutional discourses which idealise and iconise Irish women but it should be possible, as it sometimes is in *Amongst Women*, to appropriate these discourses and re-cite them against patriarchal intentions in order to radically destabilise the claims of domestic patriarchy to ontology and permanence.

⁵¹ John McGahern, 'The Solitary Reader', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 19-23, (p.23).

⁵² Quinn, p.89.

Conclusion: Questioning Voices

The metaphor of voice has proved a useful device for raising consciousness about the ways in which women are represented in Irish cultural texts. It draws attention to the extent to which women have been idealised and iconised in constitutional and popular discourses without having been able to intervene in political and cultural debates on equal terms with men. The metaphor of voice highlights the connections between personal and public uses of language and it raises questions about the dynamic relationships between language, bodies, gender and power. However, as the critical discourse about voice has gained citational force, it has accumulated its own assumptions and exclusions which potentially conceal or undermine the usefulness of the metaphor as a disruptive intervention in identity politics.

The construction of a category of women's voices participates in an oppositional politics which demands that women should be able to exercise the rights and privileges which are available to men as powerful subjects in patriarchal society. However, in the articulation of this type of claim for women's power, the category of men's voices is also invoked and given force. Such a category dissimulates the inconsistencies and failures within and among those discourses which endorse patriarchy as a coherent and stable locus of power and so, paradoxically, the presumption that gendered voices are constructed on an oppositional axis participates in the construction of patriarchy as univocal and secure. A patriarchy in which all men's voices automatically and uniformly participate with every speech act is a patriarchy which is made almost impossible to deconstruct.

As this thesis has shown, agency is an effect of humanist discourses about identity rather than their enabling condition. In *The Pornographer* and *The Mangan Inheritance*, the male voice which will express and enact the settled will of the speaker — a voice that both the pornographer and Jamie Mangan believe they can exercise — is shown to be an illusion. Those voices attributed to the poets, fathers and priests who are generally seen as colluding in the socio-cultural disenfranchisement of Irish women are constructed through the continual citation of patriarchal discourses, a process which often incompletely endorses and sometimes contradicts their rights to authority.

An oppositional politics which reifies the distinction between men's voices and women's voices endorses the humanist formulations of subjectivity which construct men as agentive subjects. The attempt to claim absolute agency for women to equal that possessed by men is a strategy which, in the short term at least, potentially idealises men's voices as automatically and unproblematically performative. It fails to capitalise on the lack of coherence among patriarchal discourses and reinforces the validity of a hierarchical gendered binary of identities.

The refusal to countenance voices attributed to women as metaphorically 'voiced' unless those voices are independent and subversive is also problematic, for several reasons. The

opportunities for disruptive voices to intervene in public discourses, to secure a publishing contract or an audience, for example, remain limited. Pressure needs to be exerted to remedy these practical problems which silence many groups in Irish society. In the meantime, we also need to mobilise all of the voices attributed to women which are available to us in ways that challenge the representational paradigms that have prevailed in canonical Irish texts.

Rather than suggesting that those voices attributed to women in Irish texts which iconise or idealise Irish women as irretrievably silent, we might instead attempt to find ways to make the voices attributed to women signify in ways which expose and possibly disrupt the stability of gendered hierarchical binaries in Irish culture and which ultimately disrupt the category of 'Irish women' in favour of a more plural range of identities.

Those discourses which validate patriarchy are not always mutually reinforcing and not always enabling for the individuals and institutions which are conventionally assumed to be its beneficiaries. We need to explore ways of reading them against each other, as this thesis has attempted to do, in order to expose the contradictions and gaps they reveal among themselves. The contradictory range of discourses about gender and power in Ireland which Patrick Hanafin dismisses as 'bizarre'¹ provides the opportunity for critics to complicate and disrupt the rights to power of those voices which currently exercise authority in an Irish context.

As Eavan Boland has convincingly argued, it is unrealistic to imagine that we can slip the identities and customs to which we object but through which we become intelligible to others. As I noted in my discussion of *The Mangan Inheritance*, Boland suggests that the task of deconstructing hegemonic patriarchal discourses is best pursued through the re-citation and redeployment of hegemonic discourses against the interests they serve. Judith Butler accords with Boland when she challenges us to reconsider our relationships to those discourses through which we articulate our identities. She asks:

If one comes into discursive life through being called in injurious terms, how might one occupy the interpellation by which one is already occupied to direct the possibilities of resignification against the aims of violation? [...] precisely because such terms have been produced and constrained within such regimes, they ought to be repeated in directions that reverse and displace their originating aims.²

In *Amongst Women*, McGahern similarly exposes the gaps and inconsistencies among discourses in Irish society through which limiting identities are constructed and proposes, perhaps less dynamically, some ways in which they might be resignified and appropriated in the interests of those people they disempower. *At the end of Amongst Women*, this type of process seems to be in place as the Moran women begin to capitalise on the various idealising discourses about Irish parents in order to resituate themselves as powerful.

In the novels discussed in this thesis, both Moore and McGahern represent gendered identities as discursive constructs which gain the appearance of stability only through their

¹ Hanafin, p.260

² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.123.

continual reiteration and which remain vulnerable to mis-citation and displacement. However, like Boland and Butler, they make it clear that the process of subverting conventions is never simple. In their novels, the exposure of gendered voices as constructs is never the easy precursor for the process of dismantling gendered hierarchies of power. In *The Dark*, for example, and in *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne*, voices which fail to endorse conventional gendered identities are metaphorically silenced. As Mahoney's performance as domestic patriarch in *The Dark* demonstrates, consciousness of performativity and frustration with the limits of a conventional role are not in themselves enough to displace existing matrices of power.

In the novels discussed in this thesis, characters attempt to forge powerful voices through which they can each express a sense of self. However, they are frustrated by their inability to speak outside of conventional discourses in ways that impact on cultural practices. The novels of Moore and McGahern, in their very different ways, complicate the relationship between voices and identities. They explore the ways in which speakers implicate themselves within matrices of power which enable and disenfranchise them. They consider the difficulties involved in a speaker controlling the effects that their speech acts will have once they have been uttered. The voices that characters produce and their subsequent significations are never fully or easily controlled by those speakers. McGahern touches on this issue in an interview with Denis Sampson. After he has been thanked for talking about his work he clearly remains ambivalent about the ways in which his words will be interpreted after the interview has been published and he comments:

You know that lovely thing that Beckett said, that he would prefer silence than speech, but what quality would my silence have. I think that exactly.³

McGahern's inability to control the effects of the answers he has provided for Sampson allows the critic to interpret his remarks in any number of different ways and to use them in ways that McGahern could never have anticipated. It is precisely his lack of agency over his voice which enables the critic to mobilise his comments to disrupt contemporary gendered binaries for example. I have argued in this thesis that gendered voices can be read in ways which disrupt those cultural discourses which have hegemonic force. I strongly believe that voices attributed to women in texts by Irish men can contribute to the process of fracturing the range of images which have idealised Irish women and which construct the gendered binary in which women are constructed as silent. Our aim should be, not only to raise voices, but to pose voice as a powerful and potentially subversive question.

³ Denis Sampson, 'A Conversation with John McGahern', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 17:1 (1991), 13-18, (p.19).

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