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Gendered Spaces in James Joyce's Dubliners

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Gendered Spaces in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*

By

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A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Masters of Arts in English

January 2009

College  Humanities and Social Sciences

Department  English

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Abstract

This thesis paper, entitled *Gendered Spaces in James Joyce's Dubliners*, will explore Joyce's use of the special environment, both public and private. Joyce designed the built spaces in his stories to reflect the way space was gendered in his time. Each space, whether it was the home, the street, the pub, or a church, was indicative of a pattern of power relationships between men and women. Within these gendered spaces, power relationships were constructed, individual consciousness formed, and national identity debated.

In Joyce's stories, women occupy the space of the home in a way that suggests it is their expected place. However, it is also clear that they exercise the most power here. Conversely, the men have their spaces, too. The workplace and the pubs are where Joyce's male Dubliners can be found, but whether they have much power in these places is not always clear. The colonial trauma of the English presence in Ireland has had its negative effects on Joyce's characters, most notably the men. In many ways, it has caused a rift between the genders and a fierce debate on the Celtic Revival, as is shown most vividly in his final story, "The Dead." The separate spaces men and women occupy speaks also to the unromantic picture of love that Joyce paints.

The spaces that Joyce invites us into—the concert halls, the boarding houses, the dinner tables, the pubs—are all replete with an architectural structure that embodies much significance. The spaces of the built environment show how the amalgam of political, social, and economic conditions that affected the lives of middle class Dubliners are pieced together. Joyce explores the relationship between space and power by showing
precisely where characters have it, and where they lack it. He also draws attention to the spaces in between, where the holder of power is unclear, and boundaries between the genders and space are blurred.
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Introduction

James Joyce wrote the collection of stories *Dubliners* with a "scrupulous meanness" so that the Irish might have "one good look at themselves" in his "nicely polished looking-glass" (Scholes and Litz 262, 277). His stories, a veritable tour of the places and spaces that the men and women of Dublin occupied, are what he reflects in that mirror. Each space, whether it was the home, the street, the pub, or a church, was indicative of a pattern of power relationships between men and women. He designed the built spaces in his stories to reflect the way space was gendered in his time. Within these gendered spaces, power relationships were constructed, individual consciousness formed, and national identity debated.

In Joyce's stories, women occupy the space of the home in a way that suggests it is their expected place. However, it is also clear that they exercise the most power here. Conversely, the men have their spaces, too. The workplace and the pubs are where Joyce's male Dubliners can be found, but whether they have much power in these places is not always clear. The colonial trauma of the English presence in Ireland has had its negative effects on Joyce's characters, most notably the men. In many ways, it has caused a rift between the genders and a fierce debate on the Celtic Revival, as is shown most vividly in his final story, "The Dead." The separate spaces men and women occupy speaks also to the unromantic picture of love that Joyce paints.

Joyce explores the relationship between space and power by showing precisely where characters have it, and where they lack it. While women lose out more often than not in the public realm, men are usually subordinated in the home environment; it is this pattern
Joyce shows again and again. But as the men and women in *Dubliners* demonstrate, this was not a harmonious separation. The separation of the two spheres imposed a status differentiation, says Michael McKeon, which privileged the public sphere, that is the realm of male authority (McKeon 7). Joyce’s stories such as “A Mother” back up this notion, with Mrs. Kearney’s blatant exclusion from men’s affairs in the Antient Concert Rooms. Feminist scholar Joan B. Landes argues that the organization of the spheres in this way was an intentional and strategic move that allowed men to keep women on the periphery, and thus without voice. Male discourse came to be known as rational, reasonable, and “universal” (Landes 143), and this is what silences Mrs. Kearney and allows Gabriel Conroy the privileged position he carries. But while Joyce does show that women’s language was kept “in check,” they cannot be fully silenced. “Back answers” easily fly from the mouths of the women at the Morkan party, in the Flynn parlour, in the Kernan household, and elsewhere.

The spaces that Joyce invites us into—the concert halls, the boarding houses, the dinner tables, the pubs—are all replete with an architectural structure that embodies much significance. The spaces of the built environment show how the amalgam of political, social, and economic conditions that affected the lives of middle class Dubliners are pieced together. In *Dubliners*, of great interest are the salon, or “drawing room,” the public houses, and the dining room. Reflecting the Victorian era’s use of “activity-specific” rooms that served as “physical templates for behavior” (Taylor 228), these rooms are inhabited and largely controlled by one gender. The newly expanding middle class constituted a restructuring of the home’s rooms, including the parlor, “meant to ‘civilize’ both children and the working class, and be an alternative to “the working-class
hovel and/or barroom” (Taylor 228). Women presided over the affairs in these rooms, while men made places of their own in pubs, at the races, and in male organizations such as the Gaelic League. By situating characters in the spaces associated with their genders, Joyce uses spatial design to probe relationships of power between the genders. The home, the streets, the bars, and parties are the settings in which gender politics are embedded, and space was often a place of performance, where femininity and masculinity were both enacted and challenged.

The home was where women could often find both authority and the oppressive expectations of married life. Sometimes, like Mrs. Kearney, they ventured outside the home, and began to challenge the laws of the male authority that resided there. Others, like Mrs. Mooney, even learned to capitalize on the authority they were granted in the domestic sphere and were able to enter into a male-dominated economy with more power than ever before. The women of “The Dead” transformed the space of the domestic into a place where politics could be debated. Joyce shows how the definition of gender roles can change, and power can often shift in a built environment where there is the perception of fixed rules. The borders between these spaces are sometimes fluid, and crossover between the two can occur both subtly and blatantly.

In any dichotomy, and especially in this classification of public and private realms, there is a blurring of boundaries. The basis upon which these dichotomies are constructed is, as Leonore Davidoff calls it, notoriously “complicated—and slippery” (Davidoff 164). Known for “instability and mutability,” it is an order that is “constantly shifting, being made and remade” (Davidoff 165). Even in the most “masculine of public places,” woman was present, “if in no other way as the shadow without which there can be no
image projected” (Davidoff 179). Therefore, as Gabriel regards his wife with a sense of ownership, as she stands on the Morkan stairs, there is a simultaneous opposite occurrence in which she defies his gender imperialism. It is moments like these, which occur in the built environments of Dublin, that Joyce probes most deeply the politics of his time, including the relationships between men and women, and what it means to be an Irish man or Irish woman. Within the spaces he creates, he is holding up that mirror for his fellow Dubliners to reflect on their very souls.
Chapter 1: The Home: Women in the Domestic Sphere

Joyce situates most of his female characters in the home environment, but it is clear that very different lives were being led in each. While some are able to harness the power of the home in varying degrees, others languish within its walls. For a young woman like Eveline, power in the home was quite limited, but for Mrs. Kearney in “A Mother,” power in the household is more extensive. Mrs. Mooney of “A Boarding House,” is a formerly married woman who is able to transform her power in the domestic space into a successful place of business. Joyce’s women interact with the structure of the domestic space, which traditionally placed women inside its walls, in various ways that both transformed and limited their power.

These three stories also highlight the importance of the relationship of mothers and daughters as it is played out in the home. Mothers often attempt to right the mistakes they have made in their own lives in their daughters’s lives, but they wind up repeated instead. As in Polly Mooney and Kathleen’s case, their mothers sought to secure some kind of future for their daughters; Mrs. Mooney directs her daughter into a disastrous marriage like her own, and Mrs. Kearney aims even higher, hoping to “get” Kathleen into the right circles so that she may be able to survive on her own. Eveline’s mother serves to keep her situated right in the home, acting as the glue that keeps the family together. Joyce chose to dramatize the power each mother exercises over her daughter, and did not include any stories about mothers and sons. In the homes Joyce creates, women are quite concerned
with their daughters and hope for a better and more prosperous lives for them within the
domestic space. It is only Mrs. Kearney who has any imaginings of her daughter exiting
the domestic space, and those are squashed by the end of her daughter’s first concert. It is
as if women in *Dubliners* are doomed to stay within the home. However, the way in
which they are able to utilize and transform the space, or in some instances are not able to
do this, affects the outcome of their lives.

Eveline is a prisoner in what she thinks of as her “home.” She is bound by both the
expectation of where her gender should be, and a promise she made to her mother to
“keep the home together for as long as she could” (D 40). She dreams of escape,
searching for another version of this “home” that will keep her secure and safe from the
growing violence of her father, so she contemplates escape with Frank, the sailor, who
she believes will “save her” through the act of marriage. However, as she thinks about the
world outside her home, she is frightened and hides within the familiarity of the house,
regardless of how little it offers her.

The house she lives in dominates her, just as her own mind is dominated by the
thoughts and wishes of others. As she looks out of the window of her house, “watching
the evening invade the avenue” (Joyce 36), the choice of the word “invade” is perfectly
placed here, because Eveline has no real agency or authority in her home, but is the
victim of several conflicting discourses that “invade” her—from her father’s demands to
her hopes in escaping with Frank to her mother’s insane ramblings, which keep her
trapped in domestic servitude to her father and brothers. It is not ever certain what
Eveline really thinks or believes. She parrots the language of those around her in her
thoughts of escape. The window she sits before, looking out of her house into the world
outside, reminds her that she does have a choice. There may be a way out of the oppressive life she lives within this house. But sadly, too much holds her inside, and she is afraid to venture into the world outside.

Eveline moves through her surroundings like an embodiment of her mother’s failed life and resulting destruction. Her mind is so deeply connected with this building that it is as if the structure itself represents her conscious thoughts. Like the open window, through which she searches for something better, she is easily penetrable, impressionable to the directives of others. She takes up where her mother left off, and it is inevitable the she, too, will suffer the same fate—as a broken women, hidden away from the world in a “sick room” at the end of the hall, with death as her only escape. Even the dust that comes back each time she clears it away is, in a way, suffocating her. It denies her control as it continues to cover everything. She gazes out of the window as if it is a portal to a new life. “Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home” (D 37) she thinks, as she envisions herself outside of the window of her home, interacting with another, more foreign world. She wants to believe that the promises Frank makes to her will be enough to keep her safe in this outside world, but it is evident from the beginning that this belief is shaky. Like the breeze that comes through that window, it could blow away at any minute. Her goodbye letters, which sit in her lap as she gazes, are hardly believable.

What’s more believable and concrete is the sick room at the end of the hall, where her mother spent her days. The room stands as a symbol of her mother’s exclusion from the world, her unhappiness. The hidden, forgotten room in which she spent her last days seems to wait for Eveline to occupy it next. As she sits in the parlour, a room used by
Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Kearney for their own benefit, Eveline is buried in images that show her lack of ownership and power. One photo on the wall is of a man she doesn’t even know, her father’s friend, and the other is a picture of Mary Alacoque. The paralytic saint, whose “twelve promises” were “exhaustively interpreted” by the church as a paradigm for women’s sacrifices, is a perfect reminder to Eveline of her mother’s insistence that she keep the home together (Leonard 36). This room, which reflects personal taste in Mrs. Kearney’s house, and economic success in Mrs. Mooney’s, here reflects Eveline’s lack of individuality. The rest of the house and its surrounding areas also show she is under someone else’s control. The field in which she used to play as a child has been bought out by a man in Belfast, her playmates have all gone, and she is left alone with her father’s abusive rage. She doesn’t go far from her home, but if she does, it is only to buy groceries for feed the family, or to work so that she can hand over her wages to her father. Her life is completely scripted by what her father wants from her, and the home is a physical and figurative representation of this subjugation. Even in the story, she does not move from this room until the very end, during which she is frozen in fear. She looks out the window, but that is as far as she will go. She thinks romantic thoughts about another life, but in reality, she sits in the parlour, completely paralyzed with inaction.

Eveline’s ideas about leaving her home are vague while the reality of what will most likely be her fate is as solid as the walls of her father’s house. The window suggests a crossable boundary line between the inside and outside, but Eveline is overpowered by her own inertia. In her fancy, she is able to leave the home, but it isn’t something she is capable of in actuality. Kathleen Mullin explores Eveline’s fanciful thoughts, noting that,
for women like Eveline, “home” and “house” are two different concepts and the “tension between the two loosely synonymous terms articulates the difference between a physical and ideological space” (Mullin 180). Eveline is searching for a “home” which is not physical, but a space where she will be appreciated, and she will have some control. But as she ponders a new life with Frank, it is unclear exactly what will happen to her. It may be a way out of her house, but it is a way that is filled with the unknown.

Her father’s house, no matter how oppressive, is where Eveline feels safe. She is not used to being in control of her own movements; she is used to being escorted by men. Leaving this life would necessitate her taking more charge of her own life. It is clear as she enters the station at the North Wall that she will not be able to do this. She is already confused and looks for others to lead her, “praying to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty” (D 40). Again, she looks at a window, this time it part of the boat that could change her life, if she makes that decision. But again, the window remains only as possibility, with no real tangible direction. Trevor L. Williams calls her predicament a literal “maze of distress” as she is lost in the crowd unable to guide her own movements. The moment of her possible escape, for Williams, is also her moment of coming to consciousness about the reality of her circumstances, and that is why she crumbles into a “helpless animal.” She is nauseated by the idea of being on the other side of that boat window, leaving a home that is both secure and oppressive. Eveline is doomed. “No matter where she turns, she is denied any emergence into consciousness and thus into a healthy individuality” (Williams 444).

At the time when people were migrating in great numbers to Argentina, and not necessarily succeeding financially, the cautionary tale of the “fallen woman,” seduced by
the emigration propaganda by sailors like Frank emerged to protect Ireland’s young women. Articles like these appeared in magazines and newspapers like *The Irish Homestead*, and when publisher George Russell asked Joyce for a similar story, what he delivered instead was a subversive story in which the heroine is caught, unable to act, among a host of conflicting fictions, both Frank’s and the nation’s (Mullin 179). The fictions act almost like walls, trapping Eveline in a maze of her mind. Even though Frank has made good of his promise to meet her at the North Wall, Eveline is paralyzed by her fears that are generated by these fictions. It is her thoughts that prevent her from stepping on that boat.

Joyce makes it clear that Eveline will live a life of “commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness” (D 40) just as her mother did, if she does not leave the home. Her decision to stay suggests that the home environment was all too familiar to women. Even in other stories, such as “A Mother” and “A Boarding House,” they essentially moved from one domestic space to another, from the house they lived in as children, to the houses their husbands brought them to in marriage. In telling the story of the weak, powerless Eveline, Joyce highlighted a domestic structure that threatened to keep women one step away from “the close dark room on the other side of the hall” where inevitable madness loomed. However, it appears this is not the only legacy available to women. As Mrs. Mooney shows in the next story featuring women, the domestic space can be redefined.

Mrs. Mooney, the sole proprietor of the house she lives in, probably fares the best among the three women. Unlike the houses of Eveline and Mrs. Kearney, this building is more porous, in contact with the outside public, representing what Julieann Veronica Ulin
calls a “commercial and commodified space that depends upon the entry of the stranger and flouts the ideals of female sexual purity” (Ulin 264). The boarding house, which, “allowed for a mixing of class and gender” (Ulin 264), blurred not only the boundary between the public and private, but also recast women in roles quite different from those of the submissive Eveline, or the sharp-tongued but ultimately powerless Mrs. Kearney. Mrs. Mooney is a woman who is completely in charge; there is no man to compare her to. She is the head of the household and plays a role that is both domestic and professional. Perhaps because of the absence of men, Mrs. Mooney is more successful than Mrs. Kearney. In her case, she has brought the public into the domestic sphere, so they are on her “turf,” unlike Mrs. Kearney, who had to try to negotiate in a space where men had all the authority. Though her status may not have been accepted by others, including the nationalist movement, because it threatened “the purity of Irish women and the sanctity of the home” (Ulin 268) Mrs. Mooney enjoys many freedoms that married women don’t have. She is the owner and proprietor; she can come and go as she pleases as long as she runs the business effectively, and she is essentially independent.

The built structure of the boarding house functions as dual space of both the public and the private. Since a boarding house “binds strangers to each other through a rent payment” and a shared shelter (Wirth-Nesher 286), there is the illusion of domesticity, even a family. Implicit in their situation, in which lodgers eat meals together and occupy the same parlour every evening, is an artificial home and family, while the construction of the house is simultaneously a place of business for Mrs. Mooney. The spaces of the boarding house function as both private spaces, owned by Mrs. Mooney, and public spaces, as they are shared. Other spaces in the boarding house have the same kind of
fluctuation, too. The staircase, for instance, is the site of movement for the lodgers, a transit running from Mrs. Mooney’s bath to her bedroom, and a place where the romance of Bob Doran and Polly Mooney is enacted, all at once. In this permissive, ambiguous environment, lines that society has drawn between family households and boarding houses are far less readable than spatial divisions dictate (Wirth-Nesher 286). The house itself is the site of many functions, domestic, economic, and even theatrical. It is a space that is “publicly accessible and promotes confusion about identity” (Ulin 270) when it comes to gender and socioeconomic status. The lodgers in Mrs. Mooney’s house are given “open access” (Ulin 270) to Polly; in turn she is clearly given access to the young men, as well, even transcending boundaries of her class in initiating an affair with one of her mother’s wealthier boarders.

The boundaries between gender roles here are quite permeable, whereas in most other locations in Dubliners, they are not. This is shown most dramatically with the romance of Polly and Bob Doran. Mrs. Kearney and Eveline act within the rigidly defined structures of courtship, but here those rules are more relaxed. Though her movements are being watched by her mother, she has an astonishing amount of sexual freedom. In fact, Polly is said to have resembled a “little perverse Madonna” (D 62-63) and the men referred to Mrs. Mooney as “The Madam,” a name that smacks of prostitution. Her performances in her mother’s front drawing room defied all notions of what was appropriate for women. Her song “I’m a naughty girl” is a rather direct challenge to some of the other songs that were featured as part of the Nationalist Movement, which attempted to glorify a lost past, such as “Lass of Aughrim” in “The Dead” or “Killarney” in “A Mother. It seems right in line with the boarding house itself, which disrupts carefully laid boundaries between
public and private. “When seen in opposition to the nationalist rhetoric idealizing an Ireland that has been restored to some essential purity, the boarding house parodies any hope of a return to an ideal, purified dwelling place” (Ulin 271). Mrs. Mooney’s drawing room has already enabled her daughter to break several rules. Rather than passively waiting on a sofa in her parents’ home to be courted by a man, as Mrs. Kearney once did, Polly participates with other men in loud “waltzes and polkas and vamped accompaniments” (D 62). Her song is even more controversial, detailing the sexual appetite of a woman, rather than glorifying some idea of a nostalgic Ireland. Her singing of “Rome is in a whirl/because they’re all afraid/of this naughty little maid!” (Ulin 271) could only happen in her mother’s boarding house; the spectators of the Antient Concert Room would have been appalled. Polly’s theatrical display challenges the notion of the well-behaved women far beyond what any Mrs. Kearney could do.

Joyce makes ample use of the word “open” in describing the boarding house structure—including doors, windows, and the “floating population inside” (D 62)—and the open domestic situation, as well. There is no real privacy for any of the inhabitants, and the windows remain wide open, “as if the world of the street is welcomed into the home” (Ulin 272). It is completely contrary to Eveline’s house, which is a prison that keeps her “protected,” and Mrs. Kearney’s house, whose social graces are secured with the right drawing-room accessories. In “The Boarding House,” Joyce “depicts home as a space in which thresholds can be easily crossed” (Ulin 272). Polly easily walks into Doran’s room, tapping on his door while he stands on the other side of it undressing for bed. The scene is quite suggestive, as Polly is able to cross the threshold quite easily, albeit “timidly.”
Again, traditional courtship, which would strictly keep the female under control in her parents’ home, where the male could only come to call on her and would be subject to her father’s permission, as Frank was, is challenged. This doorway is hardly a doorway at all, for it is easily opened and entered into. Furthermore, the conditions of the boarding house, which have permitted both of them, strangers for the most part, to sleep under the same roof, have Polly entering his room in the late evening in little more than a “loose open combing jacket” and the pretense of a candle “blown out by a gust” (D 67). Ownership of the room itself is also under question. Though Doran rents it, it is not as private as one would think. Not only does Mrs. Mooney have access to it, but so does her daughter. Doran is helpless to the white insteps shining in the openings of her furry slippers. In a sense, he is completely taken advantage of in a room that should be his own turf, where she should exercise power, but instead he is taken down by the charms of the half-dressed Polly Mooney. The boundary between what is her space and his is now blurred. Polly comes into his room anytime she likes, and as is seen on the morning of his “talk” with her mother, she has access to his bed, even if she is only sitting on it, anytime she wants it, as well.

In the boarding house Polly constructs a new space in which she may enact the part of a wifely role with Doran. She cooks for Doran as a wife would, and they share the space of the bedroom, as a couple would, but what is missing is Doran’s part of ownership of this space. While most homes are purchased by male income, Doran has no real ownership of anything here; his money is handed over to a woman landlord. But while Polly is no wife, she has not waited for the traditional symbols of marriage to be given to her, she still exercises more power here than her male counterpart. The house, and even
Polly to some extent, is ultimately under the power of Mrs. Mooney, another woman.

Though the boarding house is only pseudo-domestic, and their affair has none of the "long-term obligations and emotional entanglements" of a real marriage, as Leonore Davidoff notes (Davidoff 70), because of Mrs. Mooney’s authority, Doran “finds himself having to enact” his participation of this performance in a real marriage (Ulin 273). As he is called to the drawing room to answer to Mrs. Mooney, Doran wishes to “ascend through the roof and fly away to another country where he would never again hear of this trouble” (D 67-68) but nonetheless, it is no surprise that he gives in to Mrs. Mooney’s demands. While the doors and hallways of the boarding house were once open to his comings and goings, he is now sealed inside. It is the drawing room in particular where Mrs. Mooney’s power is the most potent, and it is here that Doran’s doom is sealed.

Mrs. Mooney easily wins the contest that takes place in this room. She faults Doran for “abusing her hospitality” (D 64) as if he were a guest in her home, and invokes the force of public opinion, which will support her as an “outraged mother” (D 64). She also has religion on her side. On the morning that Mrs. Mooney decides to have this talk, the church bells of George’s Church that are heard through the open windows, signaling the watchful eye of the Catholic Church over this illicit affair. Though it is Mrs. Mooney who ignored some of the traditions of the church and allowed the openness in which this affair was able to take place, she now shrewdly uses the dogma of this religion to dictate that the affair must end in the expected course of marriage. As a landlady and businesswoman, she is asking Doran for “payment” for the “consumption” of her daughter (Williams 444). While both Eveline and Mrs. Kearney wind up frustrated and uncommunicative by the end of their stories, Mrs. Mooney has the last word. She stunts
the movements of Bob Doran and makes sure that he won’t be able to “go his ways as if nothing had happened, having had his moment of pleasure” (D 64-65).

Whatever power he may have had in this house has ended quickly as Mrs. Kearney’s illusions of power in the Antient Concert Rooms. Because he was employed in a Catholic wine merchant’s office, unsavory news of the type Mrs. Mooney could inflict, will ruin his career. Unlike Eveline, who is trapped in the home, Polly Mooney traps Bob Doran in a relationship, and thus, her mother traps him into marriage and domestic space by virtue of her power as a landlady. For the first time in Dubliners, we see a woman completely in charge of a space that can be considered by domestic and public. It follows in sharp contrast to the tale of Eveline, who is rendered invisible in the home.

And for Bob Doran, the embarrassment and subjugation does not only occur in Mrs. Mooney’s drawing room, and it doesn’t end there, either. In another space common to the inhabitants of Dublin, the confession box, Doran is shamed as well, with the priest who had “drawn out every ridiculous detail” and “had so magnified his sin that he was almost thankful at being afforded a loophole of reparation” (D 65). Joyce continues Bob Doran’s public disgrace in Ulysses, where he is described as “toppling from high bars” (U 518) and “snoring drunk blind to the world” (U 345), effectively taking the place of Polly’s drunkard of a father. Though at once point Doran feared Mrs. Mooney’s house was “beginning to get a certain fame” and he knows his family “would look down” on Polly, it is quite obviously he who has “been had” (D 66) by the time the story is through. His time spent in Mrs. Mooney’s business has practically emasculated him.

However, while the power of Mrs. Mooney’s parlour remained potent for quite some time, Mrs. Kearney did not enjoy such lasting success. As Dubliners progresses, Joyce
now shows a woman who has left the boundary of her home and has crossed divisions of gender to enter into the male dominated public domain. In “A Mother,” Mrs. Kearney has a voice, authority and control in her own home, yet the trouble begins when she leaves it. Although most literary critics traditionally dismiss Mrs. Kearney as shrewish, several essays cast her in a different light, including Jane E. Miller’s, entitled “‘O, she’s a nice lady!’: A Rereading of ‘A Mother.’” Rather than be consumed by visions of romance the way Eveline was, Mrs. Kearney, according to Miller “chooses to survive and thrive rather than be stifled by the absence of romance in Dublin or its wretched economic conditions” (Miller 356). Although she married her husband mostly to “silence” (D 137) her gossiping friends, their marriage is not a bad one. Mrs. Kearney gets her way with a husband who was a “practical and wise choice,” (Miller 356) but Dubliners were not used to a woman of such logic, and they were certainly not used to a woman speaking up, outside the home. Men like Hoppy Holohan, who ran the concerts at the Antient Concert Rooms, have no problem taking her advice when it is done in the privacy of her home, where no one hears; but in the actual music hall, dominated by male authority, he would most likely prefer to lead her around without protest, much like the silent Eveline.

Eveline’s mother, who decayed within the domestic space, left little choice for her daughter, but Mrs. Kearney, who is in charge and powerful, promotes her daughter’s economic advancement through music. In this way, if there aren’t any marriage proposals, Kathleen might be able to make it on her own with her piano playing skills. Miller calls this a “practical response to a bleak situation” (Miller 353). Mrs. Kearney makes use of the momentum of the Irish Revival by inviting new friends and teachers into her house, facilitating a “commodification of people and relationships” (Williams
that will help her daughter advance economically. By making the right friends within the nationalist movement, and giving her music lessons, she has, in effect, turned the home into a useful space, and Kathleen into a “service” (Williams 444). But while the chances of success for her daughter seem very good, since “the name of Kathleen Kearney began to be heard on people’s lips” and they liked her because she was a “believer in the language movement,” (D 138) Mrs. Kearney ultimately fails in her endeavors once she brings them into the public realm, where men have the authority.

Though the contract Mrs. Kearney made with Mr. Holohan seemed to secure her and her daughter’s involvement with and financial compensation for the concert, we find that the terms of it were not quite binding. As Miller points out, the Revival offered “significant opportunities for women to further their education and work outside the home in a socially acceptable fashion. But while their sphere of activity enlarged, their status remained unaltered” (Miller 354). Mrs. Kearney is still expected to stay in the background, organizing in a silent, inconspicuous way. In the drawing room of her own home, Mrs. Kearney seems to be calling the shots; Mr. Holohan clearly needs Mrs. Kearney. She “helped him” and she “had tact” (D 138) he says. Mr. Holohan even called to see her every day to “have her advice on some point” (D 138).

But Mr. Holohan may only have been deferring to her knowledge and authority because it occurred in a sphere where she had control. Mrs. Kearney is referred to as “invariably friendly and advising” (D 138) and someone who “arranged everything” (D 136). Holohan even calls her everyday to “have her advice on some point” (D 138). At this point, in this acceptable location, her power is clear and respected by Holohan. That quickly fades once she enters the Antient Concert Rooms. What also fades is her idea of
what the concert should have been. As Miller says, “what was imagined at home to be a
crowning achievement is exposed to be low class and rudely public” (Miller 357). While
her house is organized and formal, complete with a “decanter and silver biscuit-barrel” (D
138) for guests in her drawing room, things are chaotic and upsetting for her here. No one
“wore evening dress” (D 139) at the concert hall, Secretary Fitzpatrick wears his hat
“carelessly” (D 139) and his vacant smile “irritated her very much” (D 140). The next
night is no better, as the audience “behaved indecorously” (D 140).

But Mrs. Kearney, who had been sought for advisement in her home, is clearly a
visitor here. She has to “call aside” and “corner” (D 139-140) Mr. Holohan, bringing him
into a “discreet part of the corridor” (D 144) to get answers about her rapidly fading
contract, and is constantly deferred to someone else. During the night of the grand
concert, she “went all over the building looking for Mr Holohan or Mr Fitzpatrick” and
“could find neither” (D 141). She is in unfamiliar territory here; rather than play the host
as she had wanted to, she is forced to the margins. The men of the Antient Concert
Rooms wouldn’t have it any other way. A woman holding any sway in this space would
embarrass them and undermine their sense of ownership of the building and its activities
within. It is all part of the way they would like things to work; women are allowed to
help, but should remain invisible, maintaining the illusion that the men are in control and
don’t need women meddling in their sphere. Joyce exposes that the women are the ones
who “hold things together” and the men are “the feckless dreamers and drunks;”
however, there is an “unspoken agreement” that this control be kept “covert and private,”
that the “fiction of patriarchy in Ireland must be maintained.” Mrs. Kearney “threatens to
expose that fiction” (Miller 361) and therefore, the men are trying to render her invisible,
passing her off to different people, and eventually, to “a little woman named Miss Beirne” (D 142), who they know will do nothing about her problem. They retreat to their spaces, where they know Mrs. Kearney will not follow, “along some tortuous passages and up a dark staircase” to a “secluded room where one of the stewards was uncorking bottles for a few gentlemen” (D 145). She is left lost and forgotten, much like Eveline, in another confusing maze of a crowd. In both of these stories, Joyce illustrates that in Dublin there was often a distinct boundary marking where a woman could go; it is only Mrs. Mooney who will be able to cross that line in “A Boarding House.”

In these gendered spaces where women are not allowed, men’s authority and ownership appear to be something granted naturally; for example, O’Madden finds the room where everyone is drinking as if “by instinct” (D 145). The only room made specifically for women that Joyce refers to is other unseen back rooms where Eveline’s mother babbles in lunacy, after an unsatisfying life of waiting on men and children. In contrast, the men in this back room are being waited on by stewards “uncorking bottles” (D 145) for their drinking pleasure, and worse yet, many of them are shirking their duties. The men are “more interested in talking and drinking in the back room than they are in managing the concerts,” and they “bristle at being reminded of their responsibilities and failings by a woman, in a public space” (Miller 361). Mrs. Kearney’s careful organization, typical of her sex’s skills at running the house, has no place here, and neither do her wishes. At home, she can “command her husband with a movement of her eyebrow,” (Miller 362) but here, the men do not respect her authority, or the language of the “contract” that was drawn up in the “language” of the home. The irony here is that while the men project authority and control, they are, in effect, completely incompetent,
which, according to Sherill E. Grace, reduces the concert “almost to the level of farce by their laziness, timidity, and parsimony” (Grace 276). “Hoppy” Holohan limps, Fitzgerald is frumpy, and Mrs. Kearney’s husband is mostly silent. Their appearance seems to suggest that their apparent control may also be similarly impaired.

When Mrs. Kearney complains that she cannot get a “civil answer,” (D 148-149) it is true because there is nothing civil about the way the men are running the show. The civility with which Mrs. Kearney runs her home and made the contract ends here. Mrs. Kearney loses all power here because her language holds no currency. All business is clearly left up to the men. Examining this “remarking of legitimacy” in terms of gender divisions, Joseph Valente compares the two kinds of discourse that “allocate business expertise to men and social sensibilities to women” (Valente 432). Mrs. Kearney’s power and influence were earned through a social display of hospitality and grace “whose material embodiment is the decanter and silver biscuit-barrel,” and the contract, at once related to her label of “homely” graces, has been “privatized and so in a sense delegitimated” (Valente 433). Mrs. Kearney, who may have at one point believed that it was possible to travel between these worlds, bringing her language of the promissory contract with her, will soon learn the difficult truth that it is, indeed, not. Though she may have control in her home, and within her marriage and over her daughter’s life, her involvement in the nationalist revival, and the currency of her domesticated discourse, will only take her so far.

Like her marginalized sex, Mrs. Kearney is left to seek validation of her contract in the more discrete places of the building, such as the hallways, while the men exercise authority is in the main spaces like the dressing room and the concert hall itself.
Therefore the opposition of public and private, “always implicitly hierarchical” is reproduced here in the public sphere in binary terms such as main vs. marginal, the broad vs. narrow, the dressing room vs. corridor, etc (Valente 434) and Mrs. Kearney’s words are subordinated to that of the official language of the Concert Hall, and the Revival itself. Even Mrs. Kearney’s husband, whom she brought along for his “abstract value as a male” (D 141), turns against her cause, asking her to lower her voice, and thus, keep her complaints private. Though Mrs. Kearney puts up quite a fight in a “swift struggle of tongues,” (D 156) and even manages to gain some of the money promised, it is her gender that Holohan uses to immediately silence her. His judgmental declaration of “I thought you were a lady” (D 149) makes her threats to “make Dublin ring” with gossip (D 148) seem desperate and empty. She has no other recourse but to leave the place, and assert her power in the only area that it will be obeyed—in her marriage—by ordering her husband who “went out at once” (D 149) to get a cab.

Kathleen, who showed some signs of rebellion in the dressing room, will more than likely remain under her mother’s watchful eye for quite some time. Holohan’s final statement, “But I’m done with you” (D 149), ends her time in the Antient Concert Rooms just as much as it put a stop to her mother’s. Valente paraphrases Holohan’s words, noting that he is effectively saying, “I thought you understood and worked within the gender divisions, taking those advantages reserved to you and accepting with grace the greater constraints placed upon you” (Valente 436). Mrs. Kearney cannot have it both ways; while in the home she has certain privileges of power, no matter how many women have entered the public domain of the Irish Revival, the men still have the ultimate say there. With the full force of the word “lady” thrust upon her, complete with expectations
of passivity and silence, Mrs. Kearney is forced back into the home, where she will not threaten men’s authority in the public space.

Bob Doran’s comment that “Dublin is such a small city: everyone knows everyone else’s business” (D 66) seems appropriate to all three women’s lives. As Joyce shows, much of Dublin life was enacted both inside and outside the home. Hana Wirth-Nesher points out that the “turning points” in the lives of many of Joyce’s characters are “scenes of humiliation” in pubs with “bleak domestic endings;” single adults live against a backdrop of “rented rooms and public facilities such as restaurants, shops, and trams” (Wirth-Nesher 283). The public even intrudes on Eveline’s sheltered little home, as it promises escape and salvation. Unlike the London of Dickens’s novels, in which home offered a retreat from the streets, Joyce’s Dublin is a place of “indeterminate relations between the public and the personal” (Wirth-Nesher 283). Women will react differently to that intersection. While the timid Eveline is fearful of venturing into that space, and Mrs. Kearney has forgotten her expected role in that space, Mrs. Mooney literally capitalizes on the overlap between the two spheres of public and private. Knowing her power resides primarily in the home, she was able to bring in the opportunities of the public sphere into her own corner and use them to her benefit.

After a disastrous marriage, she learned that dependence on men was not necessary. Instead, she learned how to survive on her own, and “governed cunningly and firmly” (D 62). She redefined the space of the home, and men paid her, rather a situation like that of Eveline, who gave all her wages to father. Polly’s marriage moment was certainly not a romantic one, as she may have been dreaming of, but Mrs. Mooney has been the most successful out of all the women at securing it. Eveline may never leave her father’s
house, and poor Kathleen Kearney will be the object of jokes in all the Nationalist circles. If people talk as much as Doran says they do, gossip and rumors could ruin any chances they have of being courted. With great cunning, Mrs. Mooney saw how, in a boarding house, the divisions of gender were blurred, and she was able to stretch the limitations of her sex and explore new roles more than any other woman in the novel, while still getting the approval of both Dubliners and the Catholic Church. Like many women in *Dubliners*, she found herself negotiating both a role within the home and a role outside the home, with boundaries that were often unpredictable. But in comparison to her counterparts, she has been able to redefine both roles successfully.
Chapter 2: The Lives of Dublin’s Men: Defining manhood in the streets, at work, in the home, in church, and in the pubs.

In contrast to women like Mrs. Kearney and Mrs. Mooney, who exercise a great deal of power in the spaces where they are traditionally situated, the male characters in Joyce’s *Dubliners* are blatantly weak. “The Boarding House” is placed between several stories featuring men’s lives, “Two Gallants,” “A Little Cloud,” and “Counterparts,” none of which show men in a very powerful light. These stories, in fact, illustrate a downward spiraling life, most of which is played out in an emasculating workplace, then followed by the desperate attempts at recovery in the public houses, ending in an unfulfilling, bleak existence in the domestic sphere. The church, a distinctly patriarchal institution, offers yet another weak, corrupted model for masculinity.

The placement of these stories so close to “A Boarding House,” where the protagonist has managed to be successful, is even more cynical than if they stood alone. Each man is shown as a pathetic, weak, often drunk failure. While many women seem to embody the power of the domestic space, these men seem to be crushed by the workplace and the pub. According to A. Walton Litz, the thirty-year-old Lenehan of “Two Gallants,” situated between the younger Jimmy of “After the Race” and the aging Doran of “The Boarding House,” “completes Joyce’s gallery of frustrated ‘adolescents’; as he wanders back and forth through the city he acts out the plight of young Dublin” (Litz 328). Lenehan’s lack of opportunity and direction may very well be a result of the imperialism of England, which left men in economic hardship and unable to offer marriage prospects to women. Farrington and Little Chandler also show evidence of the self-negating power
of colonialism as they struggle for economic survival in the face of the imperial presence. Farrington is forced to work for a British company, and Little Chandler only sees his self-worth in terms of whether he would be accepted by English critics. In these stories, Irish manhood is a fragile one. Any notion of a romance as it pertained to courtship with women is tarnished by the reality of men’s unhappiness. Joyce does not include a space in these stories where men appear happy and strong. Every environment, including the church and home, appears to subjugate, rather than empower them.

"Two Gallants" was a story that attacked the romanticized notion of men popularized in such tales as The Three Musketeers. Joyce had to vehemently defend this story to his publisher, Grant Richards, since it did not show men in a very favorable light. In correspondence, Joyce wondered if Richards’ printer, who refused to print the story, was offended by “the code of honour which the two gallants live by” since it differed so greatly from these childhood tales (Litz 330). Indeed, the world in which these two gallants live is not worthy of storybook romances. Rather than a place filled with heroes and ladies in full dress, the places in which the men of Dubliners frequent are depressing and dull. The built space—pubs, streets, workplaces—bear down on them and are suffocating rather than liberating. They speak more to their desperation and weakness than they do to any idea of strength normally associated with masculinity.

The streets of Dublin entrap Lenehan like a mouse in a maze. Like Eveline’s, his power is limited, but instead of staying indoors, he wanders aimlessly. His movements parallel the lack of direction and control he has over his life; and the twisting streets are the physical manifestation of his helplessness. While the opening lines of the story paint a somewhat romantic picture of Dublin, with its “gaily coloured crowds” and the
“illumined pearls” (D 49) of the lamplight, by the end of the story, the harsh reality of the prospects for men like Lenehan and Corley, (Litz 328) who are in their early thirties and still unmarried, is revealed. Lenehan wonders “Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own?” and he complains that he has “walked the streets long enough with friends and with girls” (D 57-58). He looks to his friend Corley, who he imagines is in “deep energetic gallantries” with the young slavey woman, to recover for him some lost notion of romance, for he feels “keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit” (D 57).

Corley, who perhaps takes more control of his environment, as he is constantly “swaying” through the streets, represents the kind of man Lenehan wishes to be. “His bulk, his easy pace and the solid sound of his boots had something of the conqueror in them,” Lenehan observes (D 55). Perhaps, the reference to “conqueror” recovers some of the lost manhood taken from Dublin’s men at the hands of England; for in this sense, Corley appears to have ownership of the streets, whereas Lenehan seems a visitor. In his play of the “mug’s game” (D 52) in which he hopes to win something, most likely a girl, Lenehan skulls around town like a waiting scavenger. In order to make friends and get free drinks, he “held himself nimbly at the borders of the company until he was included in a round” (D 52). In many ways, his movement through the streets is indicative of a way of surviving an aimless, hopeless future.

There is a weariness and hopelessness about these male spaces, best exemplified in the street musician the two men come upon, who plucks at his instrument “heedlessly,” as he glances “wearily at the sky” (D 54), looking for escape. His harp, a known personification of Ireland itself, has a similar condition. Rather than being a majestic
instrument, “she” is “heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees,” and is “weary alike of the eyes of the strangers and of her master’s hands” (D 54). The powerful imagery of the instrument also suggests the “modern degradation” of a colonized city (Litz 332) whose inhabitants cannot escape the shadow of the oppressor and come into their own. Though neither men comment on the music, it follows Lenehan and begins “to control his movements.” He can no longer enjoy “all that was meant to charm him and did not answer the glances which invited him to be bold” (D 56). The mournful air seems to remind him of the futility of the upcoming night. “He knew that he would have to speak a great deal, to invent, to amuse, and his brain and throat were too dry for such a task” (D 56). Suddenly, like the harpist and his instrument, he is weary, too, and longs to escape his environment. He feels more at ease when he wanders into a dark, quiet street, entering into a restaurant, until once again, he can be alone with his thoughts.

Since Lenehan has so little power in his environment, he seeks it in what he believes to be a role model of strength and manhood. He puts his energy into imagining his friend’s actions in the seduction of the slavey, for it is in Corley that Lenehan hopes to see his own self. Corley’s failure would be his own. The point in Corley securing money from the girl is so that the men will be able to afford a night of carousing in the public houses. Here is another place where Lenehan and Corley will attempt their fragile manhood, with the same depressing results. He anxiously awaits Corley’s arrival, almost expecting that he will fail, probably due to the fact that he is used to the feeling of failure. His manhood seems elusive to him and his circulation through the city streets is a complex performance of negotiating his place as a man in an urbanized Dublin. The streets are the site in which Lenehan attempts to participate in a performance of economic
movement and exchanges that he thinks will make him a man, but are really a reversal of the traditional codes of male honor. Though what he really wants to do is “settle down in some snug corner and live happily” (D 58), Lenehan performs, as a jester might, in the perverse rituals of his peers that take place night after night in the streets and in the pubs. These actions, the complete opposite of traditional courtship rituals, show the desperation and dashed hopes of these men, for reaching their true manhood is nearly impossible.

When Corley does produce the gold coin, Lenehan is not only assured of Corley’s conquest, but is reassured of this lost notion of manhood, even if it is an obvious subversion of real gallantry. What is very sad, pathetic actually, about Corley’s stories is that while they are supposed to be for the purpose of regaining this manhood, they serve rather to undermine it. Corley pushes women to give him money. He passes himself off as middle class so that the girl will think he is “a bit of class” (D 51). In what is the most severe instance of his hypocrisy, he refers to the girl as a “tart,” when in reality, it is he who offers himself to her in hopes of monetary gain. In a very real sense, it is Corley who is like a prostitute, forced to “work the streets” to survive. Like Mrs. Kearney and Mrs. Mooney, who have utilized their environment in a practical way, Corley has harnessed his own power. But his story appears dismal and his actions shameful. While the women found more ways to overcome the limitations of their sex, Corley has tainted the idea of manhood with his shady dealings and less than respectable “work.”

However, even men who were employed in reputable jobs didn’t seem to fare much better. Farrington, the scrivener of “Counterparts,” suffers a different kind of loss of identity as he exchanges it for a dull, routine and mechanical existence. The repetitive monotony of his work at the British company fills Farrington with rage at his own
impotency and emasculation. Inside the office of Alleyne & Crosbie, his day is filled with humiliations, which repeat themselves in other settings, too, such as the pubs and at home. Margot Norris compares the office in which Farrington works to a beehive, and Farrington to a worker bee. “In this environment, the human body is instrumentalized as a mere mechanical tool, with its needs, feelings, and urges completely peripheralized as extraneous to the workplace” (Norris 124). The office functions much like a prison for Farrington; his comings and goings are closely monitored, just as a prisoner’s are. He even needs permission to use the toilet.

In order to try to recuperate some of his manhood, lost in the humiliation he suffers at work, Farrington visits the pub, where he believes he will regain his “voice.” In the pub, where men of all kinds are gathering and drinking, the work and home worlds are forgotten and a new kind of space is formed. Farrington can become a new kind of person. By telling the story of his smart retort to Alleyne, with encouragement and corroboration from his friends, Farrington transforms it into a repeatable and circulating pub anecdote that will feature him as a kind of workplace hero” (Norris 132) instead of a humiliated, frustrated man. However, though he may enjoy a moment of recuperation, it doesn’t last long. The pub is inhabited by other kinds of people, too. It is not as safe from outside threats as the men may have thought. He is later humiliated yet again by an English actor in a game of arm wrestling that he clearly should have won. Then he is ignored by the beautiful English woman from whom he seeks attention. Both incidents do nothing to flatter Farrington’s character. And it is no coincidence that the perpetrators of all of his humiliation are English, or are associated with the English as is his boss from Northern Ireland. The space of the pub, thought to be a place of safety for the working
Irish man, illustrates how a “caste” system operates not only in the office, but here as well (Norris 135). Here, Farrington again finds himself excluded, at the bottom of the totem pole, not only because of his Irishness, but also because he is a married man and his friends chide him. But all the men seem to be suffering from the same defeat. The movement from pub to pub, that only stops when the money runs out, seems to be a desperate attempt to regain status, a sort of lost moment, such as the one Farrington had when he was able to reverse the effects of Alleyne’s abuse into a story that cast him as a hero.

In the domestic space of the home, Farrington is again overpowered and weakened, this time by his wife. The home, which should be a catharsis to this colossally bad day, is another let-down. There is no dinner, no fire, no wife to comfort him. In any area he inhabits, Farrington is completely stripped of pride and is made to feel weak. Even his wife is known for bullying him. As a result, he strikes out at the only person who is weaker than he, his poor defenseless son. He cannot tell his story of demeaning abuse to anyone, and therefore, it turns into a violent re-enactment in the home. In this story, Joyce provides no real space where Farrington has any kind of lasting power. Perhaps it is the gendered space of the pub that offers Farrington the most hope for his unhappy situation. But even here, where men at least felt unity with their own gender and countrymen, that sense of power is fleeting. David Lloyd compares the way men in pubs attempted to create both masculinity and the identity as Irish men to the transvaluative movement of *negritude* in Africa, a movement that refused the values of the colonial economy, which included labor, regularity, and thrift, in favor of “an alternate mode of homosociality,” aimed at recovering a lost identity. He adds that it is “a practice that
entails debt as well as psychic dependence” (Lloyd 133). Joyce’s bar scenes seem to follow this pattern as well, because none of them are really satisfying for the men; they all tend to show fleeting moments of heroism for the male protagonist, always followed by disappointment and failure. Much of the anger expressed in the home seems to be generated from feelings of failure in the public space. As a result, Lloyd suggests, the construction of a gendered space for men was a “systematic attempt to reproduce in Ireland a modern division of gendered social spheres within the image of a masculine civic or public sphere could be reframed in opposition to a privatized feminine space” (Lloyd 134).

In this way, Mr. Holohan’s anger against Mrs. Kearney, and Farrington’s anger at his cold dinner in the home, could be seen as a way men attempted to reconstitute a patriarchy made fragile by the influence of English imperialism. Images of the Irish as “undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent” and worse yet, impulsive and feminine, dominated English culture in the late nineteenth century (Lloyd 134). By drawing clear borders between what was masculine and feminine space, men attempted to recover their strength as men, separate from anything that could be seen as feminine and weak. The pub often served to reinforce their insecurities, rather than absolve them from them. As “Counterparts” so keenly illustrates, the rigid hierarchy of Cosbie & Alleyne is no different from the sort of “caste” system that operates within the pub; the sphere of work and recreation overlap in a way that escape from alienation and oppression is nearly impossible. Farrington, like many other men, including Little Chandler and Mr. Kernan, are easily reminded of their lower status.
In the home, men’s failure is just as prominent as it is in public. Little Chandler fails to comfort his own child, who cries the tears that Little Chandler represses inside and acts out as anger against him. With his wife he is powerless, who barely sees him as a man and doesn’t trust him with the care of their children. He likens himself to “a prisoner for life” (D 84) in his own home, and enacts the kind of linguistic and sexual paralysis typical of a colonized subject. Like most of the men in Dubliners, Little Chandler suffers from an inferiority complex, set into motion by the imperialism of England, the escape from which is attempted in the pubs.

Without the possibility of development, without a future, such characters can only flounder in the narrow space allowed to them, all potentiality displaced into false consciousness, petty snobbery, dreams of escape, and fixation on the past (Williams 63).

Because of colonization, men lost their place of authority and assumed the position normally associated with women, enforced passivity. Their aggression against weaker victims, like women and children, is an effort to retrieve that lost power (Benstock 303). Their anger, repressed emotions, and insecurities often resulted in a debased life of drinking, which their wives came to begrudingly accept as normal, or fell into just as badly, as Mr. Cunningham’s wife did, and Farrington’s wife sometimes did. Mrs. Kernan’s complaints of there being “nothing in the house to offer” (D 155) because her husband has failed to bring home money seem to be common among the women of Dubliners. “He never seems to think he has a home at all,” (D 155) she laments. Her contentions don’t feel unjustified; all of the stories with men protagonists frequenting the bars, make very little mention of the wives back home, and both Little Chandler and Farrington come home empty-handed. The city, for them, is a place to wander aimlessly in repressed frustration, seeking comfort in pubs; and sometimes, for men like Lenehan
and Corley, it is a place where men attempt to make a living and sometimes have to resort to manipulation just to survive. Alcohol is presented as very much a part of life and healing these wounds. For instance, as soon as someone comes to help Kernan, they pour brandy down his throat, and when Kernan wakes up, despite his ridiculous, embarrassing state, he requests even more alcohol. The dependence on this substance as a cure-all, is shown exactly as it is: unflattering and pathetic. Joyce had decided to hold up a “moral mirror” to his city, and the alcoholism in “Grace” did not escape the reflection. In these stories, the home, too, is not presented in a light any more flattering. It is clear that home is where a man winds up after a night of drinking, and he finds no solace there. He is obviously subordinated to the power of his wife, and for him, this is a source of embarrassment and bitterness.

When men fall under the domination of their wives in the home space, a space associated with their gender, they are subject to the bouts of anger women feel as a result of their failures as men. Mrs. Kernan “accepted his frequent intemperance as part of the climate” (D 156), but her bitterness still comes out in spurts. “The back of my hand to you!” (D 162) she shouts as she leaves the room containing her husband and his friends. Here, we have a look at what wives think of their domestic life, but it is a perspective that comes from the background, a sharp word here or there, and the sympathy goes to the men, who feel they are victims of their unwarranted criticism. Their lives are separate, Mrs. Kernan spending most of her time in the kitchen, making food for Kernan and his friends, popping in only to serve them this, along with the proverbial mugs of stout. Mr. Kernan’s visitors pay proper respect to his wife’s authority in the parlour, where she receives them, and then immediately retreat to what is referred to as “his bedroom” (D
156). Whether or not the Kernan’s actually slept in the same bedroom is not specified, but it is evident that this may be the only part of the house where Kernan has any privacy. The men feel free to open up a frank discussion of religion. Here, they talk of great Irish priests like Father Tom Burke and Cardinal John McHale. They speak of papal infallibility, a memory soon to be juxtaposed by the image of Father Purdon’s, whose name coincides with a street in Dublin known for prostitution, in the pulpit giving a rather flawed sermon. Cunningham’s contention that the “Jesuit Order was never once reformed” and that “Irish priesthood was honoured all the world over” (D 164) is sharply ironic when compared to the retreat that they attend. In the bedroom, they air their true feelings, and attempt to construct their manhood in the limited fashion available to them in the home. Later they will go to church, follow codes of behavior there, and asked to be redeemed by a model of manhood that is known to be corrupt, Father Purdon. But, Mr. Kernan and his friends know they are not beyond reproach, either. They, too, are part of the “collection of scoundrels” (D 163) around Dublin that go to church and hope for forgiveness via Father Purdon’s speech.

The space of the pub is perfect for this kind of corrupted behavior. Mr. Kernan’s fall is anything but pretty, a far contrast from the picture his wife imagines of him dressed nicely at their wedding. Here, he lies “helpless,” his clothes “smeared with the filth and ooze of the floor on which he had lain, face downwards” (D 150). The pub filth, meant only for shoes to walk upon, is now smeared all over his face. In a sense, he has reached “bottom” in his life and has the ugly evidence to prove it. The shady dealings he is involved in, played out in the public house, are impossible to ignore. The manager of the bar repeatedly asks “where had his friends gone,” (D 151) possibly trying to stay out of
trouble, suspecting some foul play. Kernan tries to dismiss the incident, but everyone 
 witnesses the “deplorable figure” (D 152) he has become as a result of his fall. His 
tongue, now cut deeply, can not use any fancy words to convince anyone otherwise. But 
Joyce’s use of the pub stairs in “Grace” to illustrate Mr. Kernan’s “fall from grace” in the 
business world of Dublin is also rich in metaphor pointing to the degradation of the city 
itself. As Stanislaus Joyce contends, the story parallels the theme of *The Divine Comedy*, 
and man’s descent into Hell, and later his ascension to Heaven (O’Connor 289-99). But 
the “heaven” that Joyce paints is extremely flawed.

In the space of the Gardiner Street Church, a place where both genders in Dublin are 
supposed to answer to a higher authority about their morality, is yet another corrupt 
space, serving only to excuse the degraded state of its people. Father Purdon’s strange 
choice of sermon, a parable about an unjust steward, whose actions are condoned by God, 
serves to show the spiritual failings of both the city and the church itself. The 
congregation gathered to hear this sermon is a rather fitting emblem of the political and 
commercial culture of Dublin. It is an audience of usurers and pawnbrokers, corrupt 
politicians, and a “rogue’s gallery of financial derelictions and moral ineptitudes” (Norris 
209). The whole scene in the church is full of ironies. The priest’s sermon, meant to 
guide, excuses bad behavior. Mr. Cunningham, who has brought Kernan to the church for 
the purpose of “washing the pot” and spiritually cleansing his soul, is an odd judge of 
character based on his marriage to an incurable drunk. The church, a space built for the 
purpose of man coming closer to God, serves to re-enact the politics of the street, where 
the lessons of Father Purdon’s parable are reproduced (Norris 203). The allegory of 
Catholic theology fits perfectly as a reading of this story, since the church, as Joyce
presents it, has also fallen from grace, becoming closer to the depraved world of men. Purdon’s sermon is a “text for business men and professional men” who “were forced to live in the world” and he, himself, is not looked upon as godlike, but as “a man of the world” (D 174). His words function as both a “mirror and moral model for these men” (Norris 204) who survive commercial failure by manipulating loans, debts, and bribes. His example is a tarnished image of the Jesuit priest of old that the men discuss in the quietude of Kernan’s bedroom. He is described as struggling to the pulpit, manipulating his bulk, and having a “massive red face” (D 173). The mention of the color red is numerous, including the “red speck of light” (D 172) that crowns his red face, a detail that could easily suggest the red light district of Dublin, which, coincidentally, occurred on Purdon Street (Norris 205).

The spaces in which all Little Chandler, Farrington, and Kernan inhabit are filled with images of the power and control, both of colonial rule and religious control. Kernan works for a British tea company, and his two sons have achieved success in Belfast and Glascow, two cities also under British control. He is “saved” by Mr. Powers, who works for the Royal Irish Constabulary, charged with suppressing Irish dissidents. Farrington works for a British firm, and Little Chandler, who has a middle class job as a clerk, envies the success of his friend, a writer for British newspapers. While Kernan has enjoyed a certain amount of middle class success, his children betray a different story: their rude behavior and uneducated accents expose a deep fissure in the image that Kernan puts forth in public life. Farrington is immediately rendered second-class by the British woman in the pub, who ignores his presence, and Little Chandler’s dreams of being a writer are overshadowed by his feelings of inferiority to the colonial rule whose
approval he seeks. The men in these stories, who move through spaces that betray both their Irish background and English influence, are uneasy in the roles that they play. No matter what measure of success they have achieved, they are all boiling over with an anger that often finds itself enacted on their defenseless children. Joyce has demonstrated that, more often than not, the paterfamilias of the Dublin household, middle class or not, is a hopeless drunkard whose sense of self worth has been taken over by a force out of his control, whose hopes and dreams have been stuffed deep inside. In every space they move through, they are subordinated, including the home in which women wield and exercise more power.
Dubliners opens and closes in “women’s worlds”; we begin in “The Sisters” in the parlour of Nannie and Eliza Flynn, and we end in “The Dead” at a party in the drawing room of the sisters Morkan. Both stories feature unmarried sets of sisters who are living very typical lives of women in Dublin. The leading professions for women at the time were shopkeeping and teaching music (Walzl 143). Though the stark parlour of the Flynn sisters is vastly different from the warm and lively drawing room of the Morkan sisters, there is one thing that is common to both of them: their influence over the men in the story. Throughout Dubliners, women are always present, even if in the majority of the stories they are in the background doing the cleaning and care-taking, it still suggests a significance of women in the lives of men. According to Marilyn French, “women frame men’s lives, as if they existed before men, and shall exist after them” (French 267). It is no coincidence that both the narrator in “The Sisters” and Gabriel of “The Dead” interact mostly with women. What we observe in “The Sisters” through the eyes of a young boy opens up to a much larger, complicated world in “The Dead.” In both cases, the narrator has stepped into a world controlled by women.

The Flynn sisters are poor and uneducated, and have taken care of their brother for his whole life; most of their own dreams have gone unfulfilled. The Morkan sisters are of a higher class. They are music teachers and live in their own home, without any men. But, another man, their nephew Gabriel, describes them too as “ignorant old women” (D 268). Yet, ignorant or not, both pairs of sisters dominate the space of the home. In both stories,
there is much movement among the women, while the central paralysis belongs to the
man.

Though Father Flynn obviously suffers from a very real physical paralysis, even the
narrator of “The Sisters” appears to enact very little movement himself; his father
complains that he doesn’t play outside and get exercise, but instead spends his time in
that dark, small room with Father Flynn. It is only in this tiny, secluded place, where the
priest and the boy attempt to build and express their manhood, with Flynn trying to
impart whatever knowledge he has to the boy. Later, he is haunted by the man’s death,
hiding under the blankets in his bedroom trying not to think of “the heavy grey face of
the paralytic” (D 11). His budding manhood seems in danger, as it is being molded by a
creepy priest, in a strange room distanced from the rest of the house in which Nannie and
Eliza occupy. Something has shaken the psyche of Father Flynn, leaving him laughing
like a lunatic in the confession box, and it is probable that the same will happen to the
narrator, too. The story leaves the reader with a sense of incompleteness, a fractured
manhood, which will be taken up later by Gabriel in “The Dead.”

Strangely, the boy is both attracted and repulsed by “the little dark room behind the
shop” (D 12) where he spends his time with Flynn. He appears to miss the time he spent
there, learning “how complex and mysterious” (D 13) institutions like the church are, but
simultaneously feels “a sensation of freedom” (D 12) brought on by the man’s death.
Perhaps it is in this small, smoky room that the young boy began to mature and open up
his mind to the larger world around him. But there is something troubling about the
priest being in charge of molding his manhood; rather than being a strong figure, the
priest is a tainted role model, making the boy uneasy with his strange smile and ugly,
discolored teeth. It doesn’t seem a coincidence that his “ancient priestly garments” (D 12) are faded and blackened by his continuous snuff habit. There is something tarnished about the man in general. The boy’s dreams are filled with images of far away lands, but also a grey face that “desired to confess something” (D 11). It is as if the boy is attracted to the liberatory nature of the knowledge the priest offers, but is trapped and suffocated, paralyzed, by something the man represents. Like many other men of *Dubliners*, Flynn did not have access to much power in the spaces he inhabited. His literal dependence on women to take care of him served to emphasize that the women were in charge in the home space.

In the “dead room” at the sister’s house, the narrator learns the reality of the priest’s life, that is was one that was effectively controlled by his sisters. They describe their brother as a silent participant, unlike the man the boy knows him as in the little back room. Eliza says he was no trouble, and that “you wouldn’t even hear him in the house any more than now” (D 16). His sisters have spent their lives taking care of him, and in his death, he is prepared by other women who wash his body. He is also remembered by his sisters with what they decide to say about him in his death. In this way, his life’s worth is measured by women, who are earlier noted for their shabby clothes and feeble ways. Ironically, the words they speak about him in death render him barely significant, a sort of living ghost. In the first version of the story, written for *The Irish Homestead*, Joyce went so far as to write of the priest: “He had an egoistic contempt for all women-folk, and suffered all their services to him in polite silence. Of course, neither of his sisters were very intelligent” (Norris 206). But whether or not the priest felt this way, he
lived and died by the help of women. He lived his life confined and helpless in the home environment, his manhood overshadowed by those capable, his sisters.

The spaces which the paralytic inhabits during his lifetime are dark and claustrophobic, and it is fitting that the last images the narrator is left with are first of him lying “solemn and copious” (D 14) in the confines of a coffin, and then by a remembrance from his sister Eliza, “sitting up in the dark in his confession-box, wide awake and laughing-like softly to himself’ (D 18). Things are not always as they seem.

A pillar of the Catholic Church can easily crumble. Like many things in “The Sisters,” the image of the confession box is an incomplete one, suggesting an incompleteness in Flynn’s life. Eliza’s words trail off, as do Old Cotter’s as he explains that there is something “queer” about Father Flynn and that a relationship with a priest is “bad for children” (D 10). It is implied that the young narrator will have to reorder the many fragmented pieces he is given in these rooms and piece together his own understanding of how life and manhood in Dublin operates. His role model does not offer him very much.

Unlike other stories, such as “Eveline” or “A Mother,” where a woman’s voice is silenced, in the Flynn home, it is the sisters that actually enforce silence. We may never know what happened in some “back room” that caused Father Flynn to lose his mind, but we do know that it could be possible that the sisters do, and their possible complicity is covered up in the performance they give in the “little room downstairs” (D 14). Though Eliza’s words may be covering “hidden and bitter feelings” caused by the expectations that she care for her brother (Norris 24), she still keeps silent about what happened in the room, thus controlling the flow of information about his guilt. The relationship of the sisters to their brother is a typical one of gender difference in Ireland. Eliza and Nannie
have been forced to take care of their brother; while he somehow managed to get an
education overseas, they have only risen to the success of storeowners. Now, it is
possible that they are forced to hide his scandalous breakdown, holding together “the
appearance of normalcy and propriety he has so incomprehensively compromised”
(Norris 24). The sisters don’t say enough about their brother to fully illuminate his
problems; they must protect him and themselves from embarrassing neighborhood
gossip. So instead they enact the ritual of the waking, and only let a few comments slip,
such as “there was something queer coming over him lately” (D 16). Her mention of the
“rheumatic tires,” says Garry Leonard, may be something of a discursive retort, a “back
answer,” hiding her true feelings of disappointment. Though possibly under the control of
gender expectations, their words are a kind of back answer, a venting of anger common
to the women of Dubliners. It shows that, although the Flynn sisters will follow certain
social and religious expectations that dictate they care for their brother and maintain his
reputation, they cannot be completely silenced. These back answers suggest that the truth
is often difficult to discern, and may not be easy to digest. It suggests that somewhere, in
the back of a Dubliner’s life, are repressed desires and moral dilemmas, hidden by the
culture’s expectation of normalcy. By focusing on the sisters as a title, perhaps Joyce
reminds us to “pay attention to marginalized and stereotyped figures” (Norris 29) and to
read between the lines. Nannie and Eliza aren’t as ignorant as they are described, and
exercise more power in the home than their male counterpart does.

Therefore, it is imperative to read with a critical lens the spaces of the Morkan
household, where in this unique intersection of the public and private spheres, gender and
nationalist politics are played out. From the moment the narrator, Gabriel, sets foot into
his aunts’ house, he has entered the territory of women, and largely is outnumbered by
them. He spends the night caught up in the fires of their anger, consistently embarrassed
and made to feel insecure. While he may have thought his standing as a man was solid
before he entered through those doors, his illusion is exposed as soon as he encounters
the gendered space of the home which the many women control.

The story begins with Lily, in the servant’s territory of the pantry, where she greets
guests. Gabriel brings his sense of male authority, granted easily in public spaces, into
the party, and is surprised at how quickly it fades in the space of the domestic. In this
entryway, it is as if Gabriel has entered a hornet’s nest of women’s anger. In trying to
make conversation, he says the absolute wrong thing to Lily about her dating life, and is
embarrassed at her bitter retort. He quickly tries to escape and in trying to make amends,
he reassert his position of power with a symbol of his superior status, a coin, which he
offers to the servant girl. He is linguistically rendered “discomposed” (D 155), in the first
of a series of humiliations he will suffer at the hands of several other women at the party,
including his own wife. Lily’s retort, and insinuation that modern men were full of
“palaver and what they could get out of you” challenges Gabriel’s self esteem and
renders him unimportant to a woman like Lily. In short, she lets him know that he isn’t
really needed. Gabriel, in the site of this domestic space, is prompted to wonder where a
man like himself, with education and wealth, belongs in modern Ireland.

Surrounded by an array of women—house servants, musicians and music teachers,
none of whom are married and dependant on a man—Gabriel attempts to construct his
own self as a male Dubliner. His role models of manhood are already troubling. There is
no place for a man like him in the pubs, where Freddy Malins has drowned himself. And
the Father Flynn's of Dublin do not give a very good name to religion. The Celtic
Revival, where Hoppy Holohan has situated himself, does nothing for Gabriel, either. So
Gabriel is left very alone, an educated man who now finds himself on the defensive.
Though he is quite conscious that the other guests are of a "grade of culture" lower than
his, he is the one worrying about failing with them "just as he failed with the girl in the
pantry" (D 155). It seems almost comical that a man whom everyone is waiting for, the
man who is asked to give a speech at the dinner table, appears to have lost control in a
pantry, and is afraid to face a situation where he clearly should be able to exercise his
power. But, the party, studied more carefully, hides under its surface a complicated
relationship of discourses and power that serve to interrogate Gabriel's "natural"
patriarchal authority granted to him by his superior, continental education. Gabriel's
voice is overpowered by their blunt remarks. Gabriel believes he is in ownership of the
spaces in which he inhabits, and that include the "space" of marriage carried out at the
site of his wife's body. His eyes wander "from her dress to her face and hair," (D 156)
ignoring her as a whole, but instead viewing her as fragmentary pieces to watched over
by his protective authority. Through the use of more symbols of his heightened status,
namely the goloshes he has purchased during his travels in England, he infantilizes her.
His comment suggests an essentializing of the female similar to the attitude of the British
Empire towards its colonies as "incorrigible children" (Cheng 349). But again, he is
defeated by the women, who joke over his "solicitude," (D 156) and he is forced to laugh
nervously. Though the sisters profess an idolization of their favorite nephew,
linguistically, they and his wife defeat and humiliate him easily, even with Julia's
ignorance about goloshes.
The Morkan house is a place where Gabriel’s heightened status is clearly diminished. Constant retorts and prodding by his female counterparts interrupt the illusion of what Gayatri Spivak called “the masculinist-imperialist ideological formation” (Spivak 296). Because his travels through the continent cause the guests to associate him with things more European, and less Irish, it is easy for him to say the wrong thing, to be sort of “politically incorrect.” But as Earl G. Ingersoll points out, he is a colonized subject himself, an Irishman, and demonstrates many of the insecurities of a man struggling to piece together an identity, wondering where his alliances should lay. Like many of Joyce’s stories, this one “rehearses distinctly Irish issues of choosing between a liberating self-exile and the tempting yet constrictive comfort of home” (Ingersoll 42). What is interesting though is that his “desperate efforts at validation” (Ingersoll 40) are made in the presence of the women, who ultimately have control in this domestic space. His job, writing book reviews for an English paper, places him in opposition to the women, who found another way to acquire power: on the coattails of the Revival. Though they were not able to acquire much power in the Antient Concert Rooms, or in church choirs, but here at the middle class dinner party, their association with the Revival gave them power and a platform to articulate their feelings. The drawing room of Morkan sisters is a place of life and music, where the women can shine.

Though Aunt Julia has been excluded from art publicly by the church, here in the drawing room her talents are respected, and she displays them well with her rendition of a very difficult opera aria. Also, Gabriel’s achievements are diffused by the power of his counterpart, Molly Ivors. He particularly does not appreciate her needling because it reveals to him a very unsettling, emasculating truth about Irish men, that in aligning
himself with that power in the East, he has negated all possibilities of becoming fully masculine as an Irishman. His disparagement of his Irish heritage, played out most clearly in the argument between him and Molly Ivors is actually a self-disparagement, too, and corresponds with the kind of self-denigration typical of a colonized subject (Dilworth 160). The Morkan’s party is the site in which this internal conflict of his is enacted to the point that he can ignore it no longer. Though he believed that he had found a successful route to manhood, Molly Ivors quickly makes him feel powerless, that he has somehow made a grave error in judgment in aligning himself with things European, rather than Irish.

The conversation during which she manages to linguistically defeat her male counterpart is important in the way that it dramatizes a space in which the public and private realms are no longer clearly distinguishable. Women’s ideas, traditionally silenced, had a platform in the home, particularly in the space in which a dinner party was held and the public and private could mix. This new space was a competitive one, in which “one competes for recognition, precedence, and acclaim,” says Seyla Benhabib (Benhabib 69) and what makes Gabriel and Ivors’s conversation so intense is that the two are on equal terms. Unlike the other women Gabriel can easily dismiss as lowly and ignorant, Ivors is someone who has an equal amount of education as him. Perhaps, this is what makes this scene one of the most powerful in the story. On a dance floor in a middle class home, the public sphere comes into existence, because it is defined as a place that exists “whenever and wherever all affected by general social and political norms of action engage in a practical discourse, evaluating their validity” (Benhabib 82). In this way, the dance floor of the Morkan party is transformed into a public space in which
politics can be debated. Gabriel, not as aware of this changing notion of the domestic space as his female counterpart, is caught off-guard. Most likely used to having the authority naturally given to men, he is shaken by the power Miss Ivors has gained through the Revivalist movement, and in this environment. It disrupts his notions of what is good and right, the image of the newly printed books he reviews are now tarnished. Gabriel can no longer claim that there are no politics behind his decision to write reviews for the English newspaper. He is forced into the kind of identity reflection that confronts his insecurities dead-on, and he is frightened.

Miss Ivors uses her “home advantage” to issue comments are alternately complimentary and acerbic, and succeeds in flustering Gabriel. As the two argue about what is the true language of their nation, they enact the complicated relationship a colonized subject has with identity. For it is quite difficult to construct a healthy sense of self when under the thumb of someone else—one has to decide whether to make use of the colonial power and influence, as Gabriel does, or to attempt to recover a lost identity and voice, through language and culture, as Molly Ivors does. While Gabriel may be a winner among other male colleagues of his caliber, here he is quite defeated. Not only is he silenced when he has no answer for why he is “sick” of his own country, but Miss Ivors has the last word, as well. The barb of “West Briton!” stings him and shatters his illusion of stability in the belief of continental power. The words place him in what Trevor L. Williams calls “a deracinated no-man’s land,” for the phrase makes him “English” to the Irish, whereas he would still be “unalterably Irish” to an English person (Williams 454). Or, another way of putting it, Miss Ivors’s words upset him so much because she conjures before his eyes “something he fears and has repressed, denied, or
sold out;” his “Irishness,” symbolized by the West of Ireland where he wife comes from, is less cultured, less civilized, and is “something which his Ego wishes to deny” (Cheng 353). Molly Ivors has silenced Gabriel, a man. After this, he may hesitate in using his travels to the East as a vehicle for asserting his phallocentric power and position. He reacts to Miss Ivors’s silencing in the only way he can—by taking it out on his wife, refusing to relent to visiting her native Galway, in what Vincent Cheng calls “asserting his patriarchal mastery by closing off further discussion” (Cheng 354). While this assertion may be a bit harsh on the flustered Gabriel, and he may not be aware of his patriarchal perspective at this point in the story, by the end of the night, he reaches an unprecedented self-awareness that none of Joyce’s other characters do.

Miss Ivors is a forceful reminder to Gabriel that he is really in the territory of women. The words she exchanges with Gabriel are a rejection of his male world. In effect, she has used the domestic space to “demonstrate to all the other women in Dubliners that a first step toward liberation is to refuse to be absorbed into the male world” (Williams 454). Unlike the defeated Mrs. Kearney in the Concert Hall and Mrs. Mooney, who only succeeded in getting a sub-par marriage for her daughter, Miss Ivors may be the strongest, most articulate model for women that Joyce has presented. Because of her equal status to Gabriel, she is taken seriously. Her retorts serve to undermine an important ideology that has supported Gabriel’s intellectual life, that of a man completing the life of a woman (Williams 454) and that of the “totalizing power” of patriarchal discourse (Williams 455). On the dance floor, Miss Ivors has demonstrated clearly to her male counterpart who is in charge.
The space of the Morkan dinner table is another place where Irish politics are debated. The table setting as a whole, replete with a fat brown goose, a ham, puddings, and even “American apples” (D 196) is a symbolic rendering of the family’s success, meant to be obvious to the guests. The Morkans want to project an image of success and cultivation, and may not be aware of how much of this is in deference to the imperial power aimed at controlling them. Critic Lucy McDiarmaid notes how the Victorian dinner party was often a site for politics in London to be discussed and enacted. Though the home was a domestic, private space, “it is the talk, not the room, that created a zone with a certain elasticity, making the occasion a flexible one” (McDiarmid 50). Just as Miss Ivors is able to transform the dance floor into a space where nationalism can be utilized to defeat Gabriel, the Morkan dining room thus functions as a similar politicized space. Because of the space of dining room, there was an “assumed safety” (McDiarmid 50) of guests straying into political territory. But it is interesting to note how stringently the borders of that talk are enforced here.

At the Morkan dinner table, the guests are discussing favorite tenors, none of whom mentioned are Irish. The “glaring omission,” says Thomas Dilworth, is indicative that “all those who participate in this conversation—actively, or passively as listeners—implicitly share Gabriel’s sense of cultural inferiority” (Dilworth 160). In fact, Mr. Bartell D’Arcy comes right out and says that all the good singers are in “London, Paris, Milan” (D 173). The only person who challenges this view is Freddy Malins, who wonders why a very talented Negro singer cannot be successful in Dublin. No one has heard of him and when he asks “couldn’t he have a voice, too?” (D 198), everyone ignores him. It is clear the subject makes everyone uncomfortable and they would rather
keep silent. Mary Jane leads the discussion back to “legitimate opera” (D 199). As Margot Norris points out, the scene is reminiscent of an earlier one when Aunt Julia airs her frustrations about being excluded from the church choir after working at it her whole life. Mary Jane “intervenes pacifically” (D 194) as soon as she sees the dancers coming back, and effectively silences her. It is clear that certain topics are not to be discussed among company, and certain people, such as an old woman like Julia or a Negro, are to remain silent about injustices done to them. As Mrs. Kearney learns, now Aunt Julia has learned, “the institution and practice of art are as exclusionary as all other institutional practices, and a homely old grey spinster is not considered eligible any more than a black singer” (Feminist Criticism Norris 200).

Freddy Malins is the only one who is honest enough to air his true feelings at the dinner table, despite it not being the proper table-talk. It is here where he and Gabriel have the most in common. Both are subordinated and kept quiet by the rules of the home, enforced by the women. It is permissible to talk of politics as long as it is kept within the accepted realm of the environment, both men learn. Though from very different backgrounds, Gabriel and Freddy Malins are both struggling to find and assert their manhood in this hotbed of female anger.

Gabriel expounds upon an ideal he feels will defuse that anger, unite everyone, and possibly help him regain the confidence Miss Ivors has shaken. What he puts forth most strenuously in his dinner speech is the Irish sense of hospitality. But again, his words betray a weakness, rather than strength of his sex. For one, he talks about hospitality because he knows he will gain the respect of the dinner guests. Also the idea of hospitality is an inclination to accommodate, and thus being hospitable, can be “a
political vice,” in a conquered and occupied country (Dilworth 162). Ireland’s political accommodation of England was something Joyce showed in an unfavorable light in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room” and was most likely satirizing in Gabriel’s behavior at the party. Throughout the night, he lends money, gives money, and humors his aunt’s demands to cut the goose and give a speech. In addition, he offers to walk Miss Ivors home, serves everyone before himself, and pays the cab fare for all at the end of the night. Though this may show his generous nature as well, it is clear he wants to please everyone, and he wants everyone to like him. And though he had said earlier that he was sick of his country, during his speech he worries that “this new generation, education or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humor which belonged to the older days” (D 177). His words, indicative of a man torn between his loyalties to family and his burgeoning exploration of lands beyond Ireland, are complicated. He is not sure whether to self-acclaim or to self-negate in order to survive. At the table, he does both, and manages to recuperate much of the power he lost on account of Molly Ivors. By utilizing the rhetoric of hospitality, he is able to cast himself in the proper light for all of the guests to admire. He also makes certain to pay tribute to his aunts with inflated speech, part of maintaining the image of a successful bourgeois middle class family. Gabriel is anxious to please because he is insecure, and this also accounts for his generosity and inflated speech. It is a way for him to reassert his position as paterfamilias, after having it falter with Miss Ivors’ comments, and earn the title of “jolly good fellow,” a position he surely enjoys.

However, his recovery of power does not last long. Listening at the top of the stairs to Bartell D’Arcy’s rendition of “Lass of Aughrim,” his own wife is rendered a stranger to
him. The song itself symbolizes the political metaphor of Ireland’s accommodation to England with the story of the lass, who is shut out of the home of her lover, the English Lord Gregory, with their lovechild (Dilworth 162). Though Gabriel assumes he is comfortable in his relationship with his wife as he looks at her, his assumptions about his natural “ownership,” so to speak, are about to be shattered. As Gabriel assumed that Lily would soon “graduate” from being the caretaker’s to becoming someone’s wife, “a much more elevated state of ownership,” (Williams 453) he thinks of his wife also as someone who is defined only by his very self. But the truth is that Gretta has had much of a life before him, and may even still have a separate private life from him in her thoughts. His efforts to decide what she is a symbol of, or to enscript her with a title as if she were a painting, seem silly later on when he realizes the truth about Gretta’s life. His fantasy of being in control of his wife ends precisely at the moment he looks up at her, lost in a moment of her own on the staircase. He stands “in the gloom of the hall” as she stands in mysterious repose at the top of the stairs. Joyce’s use of space is particularly potent here as Gabriel sulks in the dark as his wife, standing above him, out of reach, is lost in her own reverie. This part of Gretta is a shock to Gabriel who, like a conqueror, thought he knew every bit of the terrain he owned. Moments before, he had been stomping around in his goloshes, imitating his grandfather’s horse circling the statue of King William. In tracing his grandfather’s movements, in his “civilized goloshes,” he was “unknowingly reinscribing” a kind of “subservience to (and co-option by) the Empire” (Cheng 357) that Ireland had fallen into. Gabriel learns very soon thereafter that just because one feels in charge, like a conqueror, it often isn’t true. His grandfather had fallen into that trap of
subservience to England, and it is obvious that Gabriel has also. And now, it is also clear
to him that he does not know and understand every part of his wife’s heart.

Also, in yet another moment where he is reminded that he is not in charge in the
domestic space, he sees that he has been sharing Gretta with others, too, just as Ireland
has been sharing itself with its dominator, England. The memories he recalls of their love
together, spurred on by the great burst of desire he feels at the bottom of the staircase,
mostly take place in public in which others participate. He remembers standing on train
platforms together, and standing on streets looking inside shop windows. Though these
things take place in public, he says they are part of their “secret life together” that “no
one knew of or would ever know of” (D 213). Their love reminds Gabriel that the public
and private were often indistinguishable for Dublin’s residents. In a way, Dublin itself is
much like a woman, whose ownership is claimed by men. All around the city are
“masculine political landmarks, all reminders of Ireland’s oppression by the English”
(Wirth-Nesser 290). As the Conroys and their company leave the party, the first thing
they notice is the palace of the Four Courts standing out “menacingly against a heavy
sky” (D 213). The sky is heavy like the thoughts of Gabriel, who is no longer so certain
of his place in the world. In the public space as well, Gabriel is made insecure. Though
there are reminders of masculinity all around him, his own is not yet complete.

Gabriel’s mind has been sent into darkness by the events of the night. He feels
completely out of control. Following his wife again up another dark stairway, this time
being guided by a porter’s candle, he is seized by strange emotions and a keen pang of
desire. He seems to want to hide or repress these emotions, and asks the porter to take
away the candle. It is in the “ghostly light from the street lamp outside” (D 216), a sharp
contrast to the warm light of the party, that Gabriel confronts his wife about her past. What he sees is painful and ugly, like the ghostly light. Also, it is again a combination of the private and the public that is the environment in which Gabriel begins to see a new reality in both his marriage and his own life. The window, which both gaze out of from time to time, is an important portal to the rest of the world, and represents their larger identities outside their marriage. Though they are in a private room with no one else there, they don’t seem as united as two partners in marriage should. In the space of the hotel room, where the domestic space of marriage has been relocated, Gabriel should feel in control, but his authority is, again, usurped, this time by a dead man. Finding out about Gretta’s past makes Gabriel feel alone, as if “he and she had never lived together as man and wife” (D 222). Her revelations, felt by Gabriel as a rejection, threaten his masculinity and control in the marriage. He longs “to be the master of her strange mood”(D 217) but finds himself “humiliated by the evocation of this figure from the dead”(D 219).

Many details in the room symbolize the inner conflict of Gabriel as he renegotiates his own place in the many spaces in which women subordinate him. There is a large swinging mirror, a clear symbol of reflection. Gretta undresses in front of it and Gabriel catches a glimpse of himself in it. As if looking at himself for the first time, literally and figuratively, Gabriel sees his face “whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror” (D 218). The mirror symbolizes Gabriel’s crisis of identity, which comes to fruition most clearly with the knowledge of his wife’s story about Michael Furey, and continues in the final scene in which he watches the snow falling over Ireland. He has begun to see “his inadequate response to his entire experience” (Tate 390) as he imagines
how quickly his life is moving toward the grave. He thinks back to the party, and imagines that same lively drawing room becoming a place for a funeral for Aunt Julia. The chilly room and dim light of the hotel room allows him to see another reality, much different from the one in which he has been living. As Gabriel shifts from the concrete details of his life, such as the petticoat string and Gretta’s pair of boots, to the falling snow outside, it is evident his perspective has changed (Eggers 36). He sees a much larger picture of life as he looks west, and imagines the snow covering all of Ireland, then all of the universe. His own identity, already starting to dissolve by the dominance of the women at the party, is now “fading out into a grey impalpable world” (D 223). The women have, in effect, been the cause of Gabriel’s soul-revealing experience.

As a counterpart to “The Sisters,” the ending of “The Dead” is another funeral of sorts, this time the result of the psychological death of Gabriel. The cold and wet that killed Michael Fury does not seem to be a threat to Gabriel; he is warm in his hotel room, but what he realizes is that he is just as alone as the dead man. Gabriel discovers that space is complex, and is often of a dual nature. Things that had seemed simple to him are no longer that way; simple definitions don’t work anymore. The home, the site of his marriage, is not what he thinks it is; it encompasses so much more. For the first time he sees that a person has a life beyond marriage—in the hidden space of the psyche, where memories are, and the personal self is—and in seeing that this can not be controlled by another, he realizes that not all spaces can be controlled in general (Wirth-Nesser 291). Whereas in “The Sisters” the world was relatively small, consisting of the home and the world of religion, Gabriel’s expansion of consciousness has revealed a much larger, highly complex universe in which the dead and the living overlap.
Gabriel is left with the realization that he has little control in the spaces in which he inhabits, both public and private. While the women are able to clearly articulate their anger, Gabriel is often at a loss for words. Like Father Flynn, he suffers from a paralysis, but his is one in which prevented him from realizing his true nature. Thanks to the women, however, Gabriel shows potential for an expanded sense of self-actualization. “The Dead” ends on a positive note in the sense that Gabriel’s understanding of the world has grown, and he may even have more compassion for women. He recognizes that the role models for men are few, but this could be productive for him. Though their anger is overwhelming to him at times, Gabriel did listen to what the women were saying at the party. He recognizes a need in both of the sexes to realize a more fuller sense of national identity, something Joyce wanted when he decided to hold up the mirror to his fellow Dubliners.
Conclusion

Joyce’s glimpses into the many spaces of Dublin—the home, the streets, the quays, the pubs, funerals and parties, hotels and concert halls—dramatize the gender politics of the time. Using space as a portal to the consciousness of his characters, Joyce explored the many relationships that made up the content and character of early 20th century Dublin. This included the relationships of mothers and daughters, sisters and brothers, men and women, women and women, men and men, men and the bosses who presided over them, women and children, and men and children. In both private and public spaces was a deep-seated estrangement between the genders, which manifested in a very lonely family life, and a culturally shared self-negation as the country attempted to fortify a national identity.

When we enter the spaces that Joyce’s characters inhabit, we enter into their inner lives. Within the image of Eveline sitting by her window, is the story of her contemplating a “way out” of her violent home and oppressive work life in Dublin. The ghostly light of the Gresham Hotel is the proper space in which Gabriel confronts his more immaterial self. Mr. Kernan, covered in the muck from the bar floor exposes not only a soiled exterior, but an inner corruption of the soul. Every detail, told in spatial images, is not wasted. The chalice on the lap of the laughing Father Flynn, suffocating in the confession box, is a fully-loaded image, waiting to be unpacked. Gretta at the top of the stairs is as much of a symbol as her husband wants her to be, and tells much about gender relations and its connection to men’s response to colonialism.
Within the everyday environments of Dublin, Joyce conveyed much of what was culturally and historically significant at the time. The lonely, aimless wanderings of Corley and Lenehan reflect the reality of economic opportunities for men and how they related to marriage and the estrangement between the genders. Like most men of his time, Lenehan is already in his thirties and his prospects are slim. Economic deprivation forced many, like Eveline’s suitor, to seek a living abroad. Those who stayed behind, like Lenehan and Corley, still attempt to construct a gallantry of manhood in their dealings with women. But their debased masculinity is shown blatantly in the gold coin the slavey presses into Corley’ hand. Joyce’s images of street life in Dublin vividly portray the flawed manhood of his characters. These two streetwalkers have more in common with prostitutes than they do with the gallant men of fairy tales. Joyce’s gold coin stands for the loss of masculinity that economic times have brought about for Lenehan and Corley.

The built space betrayed an uneasy relationship between men and women. In the living room of the Kernan household, where his sons and daughters are unruly in the presence of a guest, the neglect and violence that his children have suffered as a result of his repressed anger and his wife’s bitterness is illustrated. The constant image of pint glasses against an array of street and pub names tells where the men live their lives, while other images of cold dinners being left by frustrated women speaks to the loveless, unromantic nature of marriage and home life. Visions of Mrs. Kearney trekking through long, tortuous hallways in search of the incompetent men supposedly running the show convey that while men languished in the pubs, women responded with practical action. Using a space where their power was possible, women were largely responsible for creating a type of “salon society” (Landes 140) that capitalized on the momentum of the
Celtic Revival. Mrs. Kearney’s silver biscuit tray and other parlour accoutrements remind readers that women wielded significant power in the home. Mrs. Mooney’s living room, owned and utilized by Mrs. Mooney herself, is another reminder women were able to access the kind of power usually given to men, in this case through the ownership of property, if they were clever.

In seemingly well-ordered spaces where it was clear whom the power and authority belonged to, Joyce shows that there are slippages, gaps where gender components can be regrouped (Davidoff 178). “The Dead,” the final culmination to *Dubliners*, is a complex space in which the public and private overlap and gender politics are played out. Gabriel finds that while men had been using their privileged position to create all-male organizations and spaces, such as pubs or the elite educated society that he belongs to, women have reacted with a force of their own. On the dance floor of the parlour, at the dinner table, and even in the streets of Dublin, Gabriel learns that his image of women as they pertain to men is erroneous. Through the eyes of Gabriel, who views many images that night that open his mind, the reader, too, begins to question a gender structure that appears fixed, with clear boundaries between the two. In a deeply psychological rendering several image of his wife—on the staircase, walking through the streets, in front of the mirror, and finally, lying beside him in bed—Gabriel understands a deep truth about women and the spaces they occupy. While he once believed they only occupied their “assigned space” as caregivers and wives, he soon learns that their power there is far more than he imagined. Joyce shows that in the moment a woman occupies her “assigned space,” as Gretta does on the staircase, there is a moment of slippage. As Shari Benstock puts it, “Woman in Joyce’s works is always representing something and
being represented" (Benstock 305). At the same time she occupies a space, she escapes its confines, representing both a lack of power, and at the same time, turning that representation into a reinforcement of power.

Gabriel glimpses the various layers of personality and existence that most others do not see as they move blindly through gendered space and conform to its rules and expectations. He hears the women complain of the oppressive nature of the church, sexuality, and politics, and he recognizes that he feels similarly. There is no available structure where a man can realize his full manhood, either. His crisis of identity and resulting rebirth is suggestive to Joyce’s fellow Dubliners to do the same. Joyce implies in his final work that the soul of the Irish is not only found in the tight, confined spaces of the homes and streets of Dublin, but in a much larger network that expanded to include the rest of the world. Perhaps the impression he sought to leave on readers of *Dubliners* was to begin examining the spaces we inhabit, and view them as places of performance, where elaborate staging of masculinity, femininity, and national politics goes on.
Works Cited


