



Irish American History as Soul Retrieval

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National Irish Immigrant Memorial at Penn's Landing, Pennsylvania

“The historical experience is not one of staying in the present and looking back. Rather it is one of going back into the past and returning to the present with a wider and more intense consciousness of the restrictions of our former outlook. We return with a broader awareness of the alternatives open to us and armed with a sharper perspective with which to make our choices. In this manner it is possible to loosen the clutch of the dead hand of the past and transform it into a living tool for the present and the future.”

~William Appleman Williams (Schuster, 2011, p. 144)

Foreword

What huge gaps I had in my learning! It happens in all of our learning. It is visible, sometimes painfully, when someone does not know important parts of human history.

It is visible when someone does not know their tribal ethnic history. We are encouraged to be amnesiac, in the moment, and consuming. My Italian-American friends are often like my Irish-American friends, vaguely aware of an ethnic past. I will travel to Ireland later in the year and I know I will stick out as an American who has lost his Irishness and is on a vague, groping attempt to win something back in the search. I search for something more than the most touching version of “Danny Boy” I can find, visits to pubs in Dublin, the Waterford crystal factory and a

drive through the Ring of Kerry. More than the whiskey at Jameson’s or the brew at Guinness.

This paper is an attempt to be less vague in my quest, to go from the historical to the spiritual, the collective to the individual, to take a run at being more comprehensive, less groping and searching, to increase the chances for serendipity and grace along with the systematic and ordered. My German side can help the Irish side here—bring some order to my art, some reason to my impulses.

Cultural amnesia is real and widespread. Modern societies train us to succeed and not be, and so many of our learning gaps are encouraged and allowed. My Jungian Studies friend Sean Fitzpatrick knows little about his Irish past—his gap is exposed

with one question. (“Wow, your Irish name—so tell me about your Irish heritage?”) As a Schuster with six of my eight great grandparents full Irish, but my dad’s dad’s dad German, my surname is German. I am unlike Sean. I am disguised. I am never exposed. My Irishness is not on my sleeve, visible, ready to be plucked at every March 17th.

There is no need for me to do this systematic/imaginal quest into Irish American history, except I can’t stop doing it. I am being pulled under by a psychological ripe tide, the power of which I have learned not to resist. I have been pulled under by life’s rip tides before. Mainly to good end, but all of them have taken work and attention. I got pulled under by leadership development work in my 30’s. I could not stop asking myself what made for great leadership. It was a useful midlife question as I could turn it into a living by helping others strive to answer that question for themselves. Even though it was its own kind of artistic grope into the mysterious, always there was enough leadership science in my work that the combination of art and the ineffable plus science and the modelable worked as a learning process for me and others.

I got pulled under by Jungian psychology in my 50’s—what lies outside of waking consciousness that is bigger than us and needs to be attended to? That quest is still going on and most likely won’t stop, but will take different forms. One form is this ethnoautobiographical quest, a direct offshoot of my Jungian questions and a study. For this paper, I got pulled under by Irish American history, and Celtic spirituality (my Masters project)—I cannot stop asking the question what is my loss for not knowing my ancestral history and what is my gain if I became aware of the particulars of the Irish/Celtic life-stream of DNA, biological and psychological, from which I spring.

My first task in my ethnic search was to see what the history really is. I knew parts but not the whole. I knew some figures in the foreground, but not the background. I had some stories but only partial context. I had large learning gaps. My second task is to apply it, in both an American pragmatic fashion and in a less pragmatic act of late-in-life ethno-psychic integration. I participate in the historical/mythic dimensions as I do this work with heart and curiosity.

The work, therefore, has two parts. First, what is the stream? Second, what is my part in this stream of life energy to which the history of the Irish and of the Irish Americans points. If I better know the history I can better claim the two poles of me connected to the Irish/Celtic stream. I can claim the universal parts of me that I share with my European/white, red, yellow,

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brown and black friends on the planet. And going to the other pole, I can better claim my uniqueness as well. What do I accept and rejoice about in my Irishness (what the German part of me does to change it from pure Irishness will have to come later)? How do my upbringing and my values and the mysterious part of me that makes me unique, what parts of all that is connected to the Irish stream of life?

Singer Billy Joel has a song “In the Middle of the Night” with a line: “We all end in the ocean. We all start in the streams. We’re all carried along by a river of dreams.” This is the artist knowing that the universal ocean to which we head is started in the ethnic streams. That is the

river of concern in this study, and the riptide pulling at me is at the entrance of the river into the ocean. This is a riptide of ethnoautobiography worthy of exploration. Many have gone before me riding the tide of their own inner life, and many will come after.

I will confine myself in the first part of the paper on my reflections on three books, and the second part will be art and the many interviews I have conducted with Irish Americans. I use Appleman’s beginning idea—I read history to understand it imaginatively and expand awareness. This first part is based on history, but I work for understanding and for a practical application through imaginative psychic assimilation.

Part I: Why Ethnic and Cultural Identity

My questions as I read all this history and absorbed the art and culture are the following: What difference does it make to be from Irish stock? Or any stock for that matter? Why does it matter? Aren’t we all humans encountering the same life force and questions? Yes, of course. But that does not mean that we are also not highly particularized individuals, like no other of the many billions of us who are living or who have lived. If we are to establish an authentic identity we need to work to discover that particularity. And we must also work on the intermediate space, the cultural between the universal and the particular also deserve our careful attention.

Looked at graphically, the following may help:



The middle cultural space is filled with forces and factors with which we all contend. We are universal souls in the cosmic sense on the left of the continuum, idiosyncratic creations in the unique sense on the right, and culturally influenced and shaped in between those two poles. Some of us are emphasize being children of god or are cosmically identified and would rather read from the Eastern literature that we are all one. (Some avoid the spiritual universal side altogether of course — “where is the proof?” they ask, not a bad question, but certainly not the only one.) Some would rather absorb and express the reality of our uniqueness. Still others are primarily culturally identified and want to own and be owned by their tribe and its practices. Depending on who we are, and what stage of our life we are in, any one or combination of the three positions are the ones that primarily concern us at any particular time. I have had my cosmic times, my uniqueness times and I am in ethno-time with this study. One of the Irish American women I interviewed who lived in Ireland twice, for almost two years, after 45 years in the States, said: “I am done with Ireland, I think. If I travel again it will be back to the places I went when I was young. I have done enough on my Irish side.” She was done with the middle space.

Ironically, I write these words on St. Patrick’s Day, when tribal Irish concerns rules for a day of celebration across much of the western world, wherever the Irish Diaspora happened. Some of the celebration is the beauty born on bagpipes and poetry or a devout Mass, or too much beer, and some rests on the particular stories of a family and its storied characters, and some on the general sense that being tribal is itself important. Whatever part of your blood is Irish, from many pints to only a tiny trace, that Irishness can be celebrated and acknowledged all to the good. We affirm both poles of our identities—the universal and the particular—by affirming the cultural.

The Books I Encountered and Absorbed

“The hard edges of the Irish-American urban experience—the struggle against prejudice, sickness, poverty, the conflicts with other racial and ethnic groups—have been softened by the sepia tint of nostalgia and selective memory. There are still Irish construction workers, cops, and bartenders around, but most commute in and out of the city.” Peter Quinn (Quinn, 2007, p. 35)

In this quest to ethnic realization, reading a book is too light a phrase. I wanted to read the history soulfully, hoping to catch a felt sense of the stream of life called Irish and Celtic and Gaelic. So I encountered the history, absorbing the books while I was interviewing American Irish about their stories and while reading some contemporary Irish writers. I teared up as I read the last pages of the third history book. In the tens of hours of reading, I had acquired a felt sense of my small part in a huge

surge of Gaelic life that had suffered, and then even triumphed by many standards, in the late 1900’s and during my life time, on the shores of the land where the surge had washed, ill-equipped and exiled, 150 years earlier. The encounter was started. It was intellectual, spiritual, emotional, familial, somatic. It took me four months to absorb these books, and to gain a sense of the sweep of history that landed me as an amnesia-suffering, amnesia-denying Irish American in the Midwest of the United States in the middle of my life.

What the books represent

Book #1: *Exiles and Emigrants*: One of the author’s summary ideas reveals the slant taken by this sociologist/historian from the University of Missouri, 100 miles from where I lived the middle third of my life.

“The central thesis of this book has been that Irish-American homesickness, alienation, and nationalism were rooted ultimately in a traditional Irish Catholic worldview which predisposed Irish emigrants to perceive or at least justify themselves not as voluntary, ambitious



Emigrants Leave Ireland, by Henry Doyle, 1868. Public domain

emigrants but as... "exiles" compelled to leave home by forces beyond individual control..." (Miller, 1985, p. 556).

This compendious book covers the economics, the social strata, the penal laws, being kicked off the land, the overpopulation; the strong (better-off) farmers smaller in number versus the ever-present and multiplying poor peasants, the industrialization, especially to the North; the religion, the politics, the agriculture; the lack of self-determination; the consciousness of emigration and exile by Presbyterians and Catholics—that these two sub-groups weren't that separate at first, and both fought for independence from Britain. And the emigration—the pre-famine, famine and post famine emigrations and what the emigrants thought and felt in Ireland and what they encountered in the United States.

The author uses statistics often to illustrate, along with stories and a thick dense sociological prose that carried the facts and sometimes lost the soul of the Irish experience. But it is an impressive accomplishment, more comprehensive than the others by a factor of ten and longer by a factor of three. Miller is never simplistic, and I would contend his thoughts are even overly nuanced, as thoughts are qualified again and then again. Still, to use one example among many, Miller sees that the Catholics must bear varying degrees of autonomy and responsibility for Irish hardship.

In mid-book, Miller says this of the better off Irish Catholics:

"In short, emigration still posed severe social, cultural, and even psychological problems for many Catholics caught between individual necessity or ambition on the one hand and communal customs and obligations on the other."

He goes on to say that the better-to-do Catholics bore some responsibility for emigration of the lower class Catholics, especially famine-related escapees from starvation. They indeed shared

"a major responsibility for stimulating emigration among the less fortunate: not only through impartible inheritance but also through their efforts to enlarge holdings, rationalize land use, and reduce labor costs." (Miller, 1985, p. 240).

That is the kind of nuance Miller provides innumerable times—that some Catholics were responsible for other Cath-

olics suffering. An undeniable merit in this book is a refusal to find simple villains and maintain black and white points of view.

Beyond information to awareness

Miller writes about how the Anglicanization and the rationalization (a type of modernizing and Anglo-Saxon inculcation and acculturation) of the Irish never happened fully. Try as the Brits did for decades, the Gaelic language never left, and modern rationalism never took over. The Celtic sense of magic and mystery and the invisible world close to the visible world, a sense that was brought forth from pre-Patrick, druidic times, never was far below the surface for the Irish. I perked up, taking special notice, as I read these sections of Miller. I have always wondered why I was able to look at science with respect but also with a distance. Why was it that among my friends, in the same schools with the same teachers and religion, I was often the one who was ADD, most willing to take action on faith, on mystery, on intuition and on mythic knowing versus practical knowing and data. Now I attribute some of this to being Irish and un-Anglicanizeable. Who knows if that is really the case, but it is worth considering as I form and reform my personal myth.

For me, reading Miller was a type of chapter by chapter soul retrieval through intellectual/historical comprehension. I could see the imaginal energy streams of Irishness, the big rivers, tributaries and small brooks, the factions within factions, the eddies and historical swirls.

His main thesis on exile was fundamental to Irish history and to me personally. How I have felt like an exile in my life! Miller elucidates why that fits into my Irishness. His phrase "rationalize the land" is so telling. He was using the term economically but it was my experience as a child. In school and at home I was parentally and culturally projected into modern life, reasoned into school success so I would be a career success. My

parents were 'rationalizing' the economic and professional ascent of the family as my older sister and I were sent off daily to excel, to learn how to prosper and make a living in modern American life. We were the pre-Kennedy Irish, a long way from the ditch diggers of the 1840's and house servants of the 1880's, and not so far from urban Irish on the east coast in the 1900's who become cops and secretaries, then politicians and more. We were the new Irish taking our place along the WASPS of America in mid-twentieth century, assimilating and amnesiac. We were clueless about NINA signs of a few decades past (No Irish Need Apply). Jobs and our futures were limitless, secular, with Catholic trappings and Democratic voting surely,

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Irish
Immigrants,
1909.
Public
domain.

but I had to ask things like: “who were the WASP’s again? Are those the public school kids, the ones who root for Nebraska and Ohio State instead of Notre Dame?” I knew I was not exactly in the mainstream yet, but we were gearing for it.

By the time I was in late high school, I deeply related to Elliott’s *Wasteland*, and the art of alienation, which I studied as a senior. It made immediate sense to me. Exile was my late adolescent/early adult psychology. In college, I studied world religions and consciousness (nothing very Celtic). The beat poets came before me to tell me about alienation. The British romantic poets before that—thanks Wordsworth and the American transcendentalists too—thanks Thoreau and Emerson. I became an English major in a world of lawyers and engineers, my successful peers, because of my interest in images and metaphors and narrative and religion. I kept various parts of me connected to Catholicism, but I was a stranger in a strange land and in my mid-twenties even landing in a cult for a year with its alternative reality in order to find a home.

A key event in this early adulthood time was when we went to Woodstock (Woodstock, 2013) metaphorically (I missed the actual event) between my junior and senior years in college. The artist Joni Mitchell wrote and sang—“We are stardust” (Mitchell, 1970). We had the cosmic dimension, we knew “life was for learning”, and we knew we were children of God, but a weekend rock and roll concert was a temporary tribe, not the real thing. We were lost and felt like “cogs in something turning”, wondering what season it was within which our identities were taking shape.

I was naturally melancholic for much of my early adulthood, like an exile should be. The idea of success and belonging in the world as it is came later to me, in my mid-30’s when I gave my business a run for more than two decades, with my Canadian-Irish wife no less, equally amnesiac. I had kids to raise and fund. I was positivistic and stayed un-Irish and grew business

and corporate-like, fitting in as best as possible with my customers. Leadership development became the science and art form within which I could work—it had enough mysterious components that I could engage my poetic sensibility and feed human aspiration. For a few decades of mid-life, I was quite rationalized, especially on the outside. But the Celtic undercurrents returned. I started reading novels again in my 40’s. Tolkien’s books pulled me under with their magic and myth. My wife bought me a guitar in my early 50’s. I went back to the psychological margins where I felt I belonged. I started to read Jung and the Jungian secondary authors.

So I was an exile twice over. In a bottom line world of American world of commerce, I was not at home even when I made it my living for a good time, helping leaders find their voice. And secondly, in my Cunningham/Schuster-McDonough Irish clan of Irish Catholics who kept their Catholicism, love of Notre Dame and Democratic politics for the most part, but lost their Irishness, I had no sense of my ethnic identity. I had noticed some things about me. I loved to dance and was pretty good at it. I had an interest in what was pre-Roman Catholic, pre-science. I was drawn, pulled under with that rip tide, to visit my rural roots and in Iowa. There I could drink in my cousins, my aunts, and the feminine energy of belonging to a clan. I was in love with Iowa. The line from Kevin Costner’s *Field of Dreams* movie captured my Iowaphilia—the dazed baseball player comes out of the corn field and asks, “Is this heaven?” “No...it’s Iowa!” replies Costner. I always loved lyrical rural Iowa, especially the northeast of Waukon and Dubuque, where my Irish cousins lived, where I was baptized at St. Patrick’s. It was not a rational place to pursue a career. My Dad left Iowa to do his career. I stayed away from it to do mine. But like him, with mom in the front seat of the ’58 Chevy Biscayne as we vacationed and took our Easter holidays annually in Iowa, I always came home.

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All this poetry and music and alienation and melancholy and feminine and Iowan sod was my Gaelic past, my Erin roots, edging their way into my soul. I understood faeries and leprechauns without knowing faeries and leprechauns. I understood turf and the old sod, and grew beans and tomatoes in the summer to get my fingers dirty. I was an unsuspecting Irish exile—modern, sensing the wasteland, not very interested in success, modern and not knowing how much I missed my anything-but-modern Irish identity. Miller's book on emigration and exile helped me understand all this. He gave me the external context for the journey inward. I had a start on the content, the what, of my quest. He gave me a working view of history.

There was more to absorb.

Book #2 How the Irish Turned White:

"The poor have traditionally lacked not only the education and time to record their lives, but also lacked the interest. The stories the poor carried with them with rarely about their own particular travails and tragedies. These events weren't remarkable or exceptional, but the everyday context of life itself.... It offered mythic explanations of evil, death, failed crops, cures, curses, the feared or welcomed interventions of heroes, fairies, angels, saints, or God Himself... On arriving in the cities of America, these stories quickly shriveled in meaning and significance" (Quinn, 2007, p. 39).

Ignatiev's book was shorter than Miller's, a snapshot into the decades' long history of blacks and Irish in an economic/race/class struggle that defined the larger America, but was writ large in the Erin/African conflict. Ignatiev names this period for how the Irish "turned white." For a few decades at least the Irish were on a level with the black slaves who had been forced here, sharing the same neighborhoods and working the same jobs. They shared a common bond for a time, as seen in this pamphlet for the Irish in the 1840's in Boston:

"Irishmen and Irishwomen! Treat the colored people as your equals, as brethren. By your memories of Ireland, continue to love liberty—hate slavery—CLING BY THE ABOLITIONISHTS—and in America you will do. honor to the name of Ireland" (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 10).

I was an unsuspecting Irish exile—modern, sensing the wasteland, not very interested in success, modern and not knowing how much I missed my anything-but-modern Irish identity.

The bond was short-lived.

Ignatiev is a Marxist-like thinker whose primary view of life is through class struggle and the fight for a decent wage. He did not care about Irish consciousness, Gaelic roots, Celtic spirituality. He cares about labor. The struggle for a fair wage was upon the Irish when they landed on American shores. The author concentrated on the Irish in Philadelphia and he explored how the Irish could turn white, that is, be eventually accepted, after several generations of Anglo-Saxon prejudice, as members of society, by virtue of the skin color. Blacks could not, at least for several more generations. The reason for this was not complimentary to the Irish. The Irish who at first sympathized with the blacks need for freedom, which was not unlike the Irish struggle with England, turned against blacks in large measure as the fight for jobs got sharpened.

The southern plantation owners found a wedge they could exploit—they gave money to Daniel O'Connell in Ireland and to his forces for Irish freedom against England. By doing so, the abolitionist Irish voices were muted, and the Irish assimilation "over and against" blacks was enabled. The bond between blacks and the Irish was dissolved:

"The truth is not, as some historians would have it, that slavery made it possible to extend to the Irish the privileges of citizenship, by providing another group for them to stand on, but the reverse, that the assimilation of the Irish into the white race made it possible to maintain slavery. (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 11).

Ignatiev creates an either/or choice here, and the possibility of both happening as cause and effects may indeed may be more plausible. But his point is well-made—Irish assimilation enabled slavery.

This was a very useful book for a romantically leaning Irishman like me to read. The Irish were somewhat the victim in this book, like they usually are. But they were the victimizer as well. They not only took advantage of the blacks they encountered, they created advantages and banned against them. They learned to knock African-Americans down the rungs on the ladder of society so they could have a few rungs near the bottom for themselves. Ignatiev does not present a pretty story of Irish sentimentalism here. All Irish should read this book. They won't. No more than all Americans will read the full story of American Indian. They'd rather go to the Indian-owned casinos and a re-release of the Irish dance box office smash, Riverdance.



Irish immigrants did much of the work of digging the canals to power mills in Lowell, MA. Lowell National Historical Park

History sets in motion social structures that last for generations. This black and white book caused me to reflect on my youth and early adult life, parts of which I have already highlighted above. Ignatiev's thinking stimulates my imagination like Miller, but in a different way.

My life before I was a teen was about my Dad and my family of laborers. My uncle carried a lunch pail to work in the factories of Dubuque. My Dad, 10 years younger, was the only one of five children to finish high school, let alone college, so he was the one who was to assimilate and "rationalize" into the wealth-generating urban industrial society that was emerging in the 20th century. After the depression of the 1930's, it took the post WWII years to re-establish economic growth and my family sat poised to ride the wave of prosperity in the late 1940's to the late 1970's and beyond when I was on my own.

My older sister once said this about our family: "the central organizing principle in our family was our dad's career." It was about labor and how to improve upon it. My dad's upwardly mobile life was about escaping rural and mid-sized city poverty. He led our family away from the clan in Iowa and we became the

mobile nuclear family, enrolled in the private schools that the Catholics had built with their own hard-won earnings for the infrastructure that supported their separate identity.

My dad went after an Irish-flavored success. He did not pursue business school—ownership and business were not a path he would consider—but he got a government desk job. Then his skill and ambition took him to an executive track, up from the police and firemen that had become the goal of many Irish two generations earlier. My dad and I stopped fishing together when he took his final big executive job in Cincinnati. No more fishing was an apt symbol of non-Iowa, Irish-amnesiac life. We were drifting away from our roots and getting amalgamated in the malls and TV culture of middle class Ohio.

At school, I was taught the Papal encyclical about the new order of the world. *Rerum Novarum*. (Leo XII, 1891). It was published in the late 18th century and still had a place. This work was Catholicism judging that capitalism has to have a human face and some built-in fairness. From Miller and his exile expose, I had travelled to Ignatiev's work on the troubles of ebony and ivory, career mobility and the racist mid-18th century

truth of my clan in a capitalist world of winners and losers. I found part of the Irish shadow, not the alcoholism that is well documented, but the racism that is less so.

I had more to read; one more history book that would bring me up to date.

Book # 3: The Irish Americans: This third book was the one that brought tears at the closing paragraphs on a cold February night in Columbus Ohio. This was the book that brought me to the present. It was the easiest to read, the most accessible, and the most upbeat. It would cover some of the same material and the repetition was useful. After three books I was still picking up many new facts and knowledge, but less so. I was permanently absorbing the last three centuries of the Irish-American saga and I could feel it, not just think it, and I could feel the repetition as a felt since of knowing.

Dolan started with the struggle in Ireland but his perspective was primarily American and 20th century. He writes about the canal digging poverty days, like Ignatiev:

“In a condescending manner, Charles Dickens said, ‘Who else would dig and delve, and drudge, and do domestic work, and make canals and roads....’ ‘The poor Irishman, the wheelbarrow is his country,’ observed Ralph Waldo Emerson. Wherever there was hard, dirty work, there you would find the Irish (Dolan, 2008, p. 43).

What I found the most useful in Dolan, however, was the coverage of the generation of my parents and the decades of my life, which, taken together, are about a century now. It was a century of assimilation and amnesia. Instead of the old clannish stick-together Irish, a new kind of patriotism and identity with the whole, the kind I grew up with, was emerging:

“The new leadership in the Hibernians sought to promote a more tolerant American ethos...St. Patrick’s Day had become an American holiday, no longer reserved for the Irish alone. Uncle Sam had trumped St. Patrick.” (Dolan, 2008, p. 221).

He cites a pamphlet of the time

‘We must be broad . . . loving not merely our own members but all God’s children, irrespective of their race, unmindful of their color, regardless of their creed.’ Such a posture would make the American Irish more respectable and accepted” (Ibid).

What Dolan describes was my journey, as I mentioned earlier. I feel compelled to say and write more as I read him. I was Irish, not knowing I was Irish or that I had come from a struggle for opportunity.

One memory stands out where it started to occur to me that my Irishness made me different. I remember in my early 30’s being in the Bible belt in the south and Midwest when I had starting to do a lot of seminars, and I realized, “oh, there are not many Catholics here to understand some of my old grade school stories.” I had been interested in Notre Dame but my devotion to it and to the Hollywood movies with Pat O’Brien as the endearing priest had faded in my 30’s. I had known the Hibernians and the Knights of Columbus as a teen, but as I got divorced in my early 30’s my ties to Catholicism were strained except for the Jesuits and teaching at Rockhurst University’s MBA program. In my generation, no one on either side of my family divorced. Exiled again. (In the generation above me, one alcoholic uncle who disappeared to the East into a mist of family secrecy and shame divorced, at least we think, and one aunt on my mom’s side also endured the shame of a divorce and even a forbidden remarriage. She did not go to communion for decades, until in her 70’s when she heard her first husband, a prominent physician/teacher at the University of Iowa, had died.)

Some years later I made a deeper and lasting peace with my Catholic fold through an annulment that had the surprising-to-me communal/spiritual function of a ritualized dissolution. I am learning that exiles, maybe most of them, can be temporary

In my 20’s I picked up on my family’s mobility and I moved and moved and moved again. I was trying my own version of upwardly mobile. (I left my Irish grade school friends, like Tom Hoarty in Omaha, where he lived, raised eight beautiful Irish kids, moving to an adjacent parish, and sending the boys to the Jesuit high school and the girls to the sister school

for the females.) I was the traveling wandering nuclear family, descended from the nuclear family of my dad and in my own nuclear family for eleven years, de-tribed, un-clanned. I became “rationalized” for work in business, organized and culturally amalgamated. I did not know what a guitar was—my constant companion now--and my trips back to Iowa were far in-between for a few decades. I was stealth Irish, even to myself. I had become Jason Bourne, the Matt Damon character from the movie series. I had amnesia like he did and I had tropisms and particular attitudes (the blarney gift had helped me do the seminars)

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and did not know why I had gotten them or where I was from. And then I started to wake up.

My career in my 30's, and the business I shared with Patricia, became leadership development. The real and mysterious ways that leaders develop and bring their spirit to the world was my way of blending the inner and outer world, the sacred/Celtic and the secular/economic, into a career aspiration. The Sufi poet Rumi writes a line: "... people are passing over the doorsill where the two worlds touch. Don't go back to sleep." (Barks, 2013). Leaders touch the external world of results and history with the inner world of spirit and essence. They pass over the doorsill skillfully and often, if they have real know-how, and reach the followers' hearts. They are, unknowingly mostly, shamanistically at home in both worlds. This career became my work. I was a disguised corporate Gaelic pseudo-shaman, disguised to them, and mainly unknown to myself.

"In the 1970s the Irish," according to Dolan,

"were already making inroads in Boston's banking and business communities, but they had clearly arrived by the 1990s, when two of the city's major banks, US Trust and Fleet Bank, had an Irishman at the helm; Peter Lynch, a Boston College graduate, became a financial guru who put the Fidelity investment firm on the map with his management of the Magellan Fund from 1977 to 1990; Patrick Purcell was the president and publisher of the *Boston Herald*."

Dolan adds to these examples, one more example of the ultimate in assimilation and economic rationalization:

"The Irish-born Thomas Flatley, who'd arrived in this country with just a few dollars in his pocket, became not only one of the richest men in Boston but in the entire world through his real estate developments" (Dolan, 2008, p 278.)

He goes on to say that many Irish became Republicans:

"Such a division was apparent in a 2005 survey in which 42 percent of Catholics identified themselves as Democrats and 39 percent as Republicans. This was a far cry from the days of Al Smith when finding a Catholic Re-



"Chocolat Dancing in the 'Irish-American Bar', 1896, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Public domain.

publican was as rare as spotting Halley's comet" (Dolan, 2008, p 294).

Dolan was not naïve in pointing out the "victory" of assimilation. He knows it comes with amnesia.

"Another way to explain the Irish renaissance is to recognize that in moving out of Irish neighborhoods into the American suburbs, the Irish have experienced a loss of identity."

He quotes a sociologist who in some ways explains my quest, my need for this independent study course in Irish-American Amnesia:

"Mary Waters wrote, 'Being ethnic makes them feel unique and special and not just vanilla . . . They are not like everyone else. At the same time, being ethnic gives them a sense of belonging to a collectivity. It is the best of all worlds; they can claim to be unique and special while simultaneously finding the community and conformity with others that they also crave.'"

Waters and Dolan bring me back to the beginning of this paper on the ethnobiographical history of this mostly Irish soul who had lost the middle of his identity on the scale of universal—ethnic/cultural—unique. I started to sense the reason why, even though I tried to fit in for a time in my career, that my quest into the mainstream of corporate performance was, once and for all, really an attempt to find and expand the veins of humanity that survive inside corporations and to help transform them into forces for social good. My middle ground of Irishness had indeed provided me with a middle space from which to operate, make a living and fit into the world. Only I missed its essence, almost all of it, with the amnesia of modern life. I lost that middle identity. These three history books help me to reclaim it. Soul retrieval began. I thus began deconstructing my whiteness.

Part II. Irish-American Amnesia: Myth, Art and Narrative Interviews

The Art

"Even amnesia, the absence of remembrance, cannot erase the imprint of the past. Recalled or unrecalled, memory is embedded in the way we love, hope, believe.

Tamed, sublimated, suppressed, memories will not disappear. It pulls on us like the moon's elemental urgings on the sea. Full, gibbous, eclipsed, obscured by clouds, or enthroned as regent of the sun, memory has its sway, a distant, immediate, irresistible direction...Memory is more than a recollection of discrete events, battles, inaugurations, assassinations... Memory is a reel of endless, haunted gossip, a montage of snippets, remnants, patches, whispers, wisps, the way our parents held us, the acceptance or reluctance in their arms, shadows on the nursery wall, the smell of cut grass, chalk dust, mother's breath" (Quinn, 2007, p. 48).

I read the following books, artistic in nature, as part of this soul retrieval project to go along with the history I was absorbing: *Looking for Jimmy*, by Quinn; *Charming Billy*, by McDermott; *Essential Celtic Mythology*, (Clarke, 1997). I went to the play *Airstreaming* (Jones, 2012) at the Irish Repertory Theater in NYC. And I viewed two movies from the mid-20th century as I had been alerted by the historians that the changing place of the Irish in American history was picked up by Hollywood. I visited the Center for Irish Studies at St. Thomas University in Houston Texas, spoke with the director and went to two of the lectures in early 2013, one on Celtic Spirituality and one on the four visits Queen Victoria made to Ireland in her reign.

Quinn captures the soul retrieval through remembrance process—snippets, patches, whispers. That is what I absorbed in the interviews, the myth, the art. One snippet full of family whispers was the story of uncles on both sides of my family who struggled with alcohol. One uncle disappeared off to Detroit from Dubuque and his son, Terry, mysteriously came through our lives one summer, one time only, as kids. This uncle's disappearance was the whisper, the snippet not acknowledged. The National Book Award winning novel, *Charming Billy*, by McDermott captures the snippets of an Irish alcoholic whose tattered life is never healed. I allowed myself one dive into this dark set of Irish whispers, the alcoholic shadows.

The protagonist Billy cannot find happiness in his life so he focuses on redemption. His life-long friend and his long-suffering widow, the two most drawn into the misery of his life do find healing in their love, to some degree, after his death. Here is one of the longer philosophical/theological passages in this understated book whose setting is the Irish community in New York City, but is more about the Irish sense of the tragic:

I have the fun side of it all,
and remember the loud
laugh of my mom that
would fill a room. And I
have the sadness too.

"The force of his faith, of his Church, a force he could only glimpse briefly while sober—maybe for a second or two after Communion when he knelt and bowed his head, or for that brief instance when he pushed aside the heavy curtain and stepped into the dark confessional, or in the first rising scent of the incense at Benediction—became clear and steady and as fully true as the vivid past or the as-yet-unseen but inevitable future. A true redemption—it was a favorite word of his, after a few, Dan Lynch and my father agreed, a favorite topic—a redemption that was not merely a pretty story grown up around a good man but a fact that changed the very fiber of the day, the moment. Drunk, when Billy turned his eyes to heaven, heaven was there....Heaven was there, utterly necessary, utterly sensible, the only possible reconciliation of the way he must live day by day and the certainty he'd felt that life meant something greater. The only redemption, the only compensation for the disappointment, the cruelty and pain that plagued the living" (McDermott, 2004, p. 216).

Redemption and reconciliation for the plague of cruelty and pain of life that the alcohol attempts to take away. The flip side of celebrated Irish joviality is this longing-laced, Irish sadness, the kind the bagpipe can convey like no other instrument. McDermott captures the darkness, the tragic view of life linked to the Catholicism (and to Irish myth) that so linked to my natural sense of exile and Celtic/human alienation from the modern world into which I was born. I have the fun side of it all, and remember the loud laugh of my mom that would fill a room. And I have the sadness too. *Charming Billy* left me more empty than I wanted. It portrayed the alcoholism unflinchingly.

Another theatrical work of Irish art, equally bleak in its subject matter, left me more hopeful. Billy never is redeemed,

but the two women unfairly trapped in the British prison for fifty years in *Airswimming*, (Jones, 2012) find a kind of redemption even in their incarceration. They swim the air in their vivid imaginations, and they have a real relationship of friendship and caring, somehow transcending the cell they share in their imprisonment. The play is based on the historical fact of two women, who nicknamed themselves Porph and Dorph, were finally freed near the age of 70, after 50 years of prison. One was jailed for a pregnancy and illegitimate relationship, so her father disowned her. The other was openly gay and had unusual interests and was put away for her general "strangeness." No one cared for either, they lost any recourse they had to find

their freedom and the only freedom they do find is in the world of their imaginations and in their love for each other, and genuine desire for the other's well-being. They scrub the cell, they fantasize, they make up stories about their lives to find meaning in their confinement. *Airswimming*, their own fantasy of freedom, in which they make swimming motions together, slow full-length arm movements pushing back fluid imaginary water, becomes the symbol of their humanity in the inhumanity of the confinement.

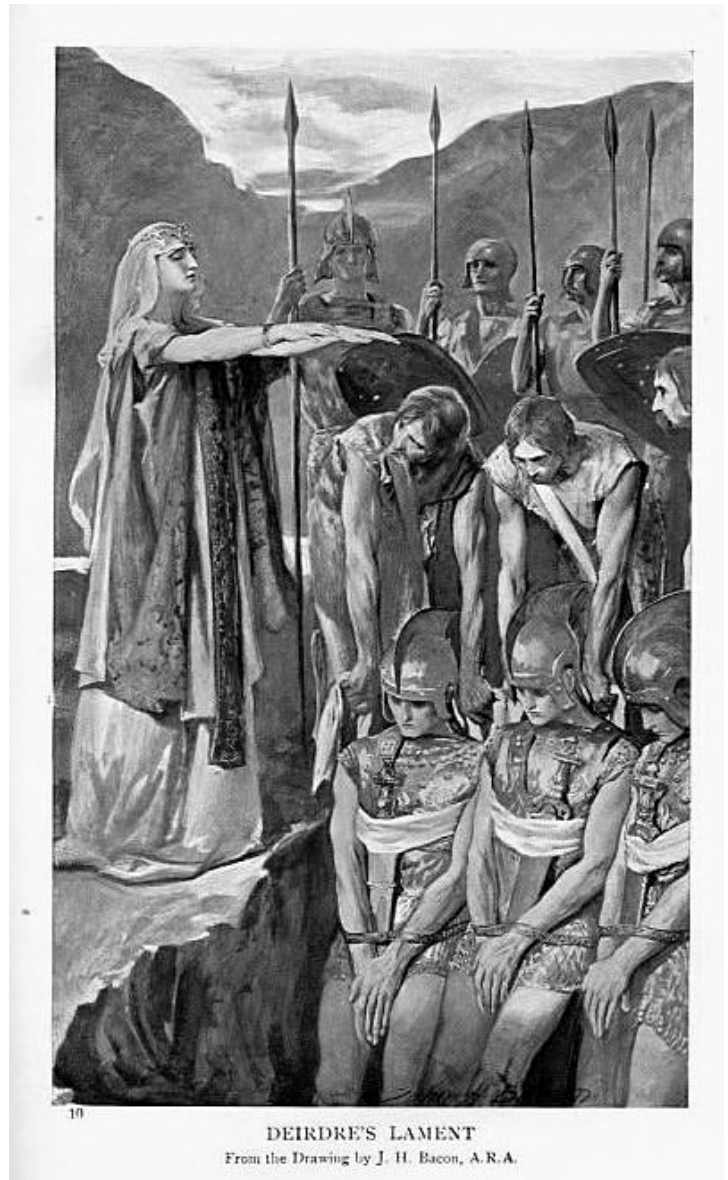
Airswimming can be seen historically: the many years of illegal imprisonment of young women who were pregnant or not filling into the family mold of well-behaved. It can be seen mythologically; the imprisonment of the feminine Gaelic energy in a British world of masculine imperialism. It can be seen mythoculturally; the trapped nature of the soul, the relatedness principle of humanity surviving internally in spite of external confinement. Or it can be seen Jungian psychologically: the anima energy in all of us is denied expression by the power principle and an ego that knows only the animus/masculine side of itself.

The Movies: Irish Romanticism

The grittiness of the Irish in America story is too much for a movie-going public that wants to escape, much of the time, anyway. Perhaps the 1930's global depression, followed by World War II, was too much for most to want to handle, and so the escape function is a legitimate one.

The two movies I chose to experience had varying degrees of escape through romanticism in them. Let me describe. The first movie was *The Quiet Man*, (Ford, 1952) with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, set in Ireland. The plot concerns the return of an American to the place of his Irish birth, after his boxing career in America ended with the death of an opponent. He falls in love with a beautiful hot-tempered lass and the trials of his fitting into the community in Ireland, his tragic boxing secret, and their getting together are the main themes in the story. There are Protestants and Catholics, there is mention of the IRA, and the pub, the drunkenness, the brawl (John Wayne's character finally confronts his past in a 15-minute fight with his bully brother-in-law that the whole village views and on which they bet—the fighters enjoy it and end up as admiring buddies, arm-in-arm, as a result.) There are sheep, beautiful outdoor scenes, some 1950's sensuality, lots of singing, and a happy ending.

The romanticism here is pronounced as there is no real attempt, other than the one scene of the death of the boxer, to explore the darker sides of Irish alcoholism, economic struggle or difficulty of any kind. It is fun, love, community, fighting for the joy of it, drinking as daily lubricant, love as natural outcome, return to the old sod as a homecoming. The importance of the movie for me was the clichés, the shallow but real look at Irish by an Irish director (Ford was born Feeney) and the history.



The Irish here not the brutes of the 1800's, but the partially civilized charming clan whose backwardness is cute, and even entertaining.

The second movie, made 14 years earlier in 1938 in the depths of the depression, was less romantic overall and still seeped in Hollywood escapism and religiosity through the priestly character and sentimental portrayal of the Catholic Church. In *Angels with Dirty Faces*, (Brown et al., 1938) another academy award winner, James Cagney plays Rocky Sullivan the unrepentant gangster whose boyhood friend, played by Pat O'Brien, had become a priest. In and out of prison, Cagney's tough character becomes the source of hero-worship for the kids in the crowded slummy neighborhood of immigrant kids, Italian and Irish mainly. As he eventually heads for the electric chair, Cagney is asked by O'Brien to play the coward at his execution, so that the kids will be disillusioned, gaining a chance to renounce the life of gangster (set against the cops and the establishment, and a precursor of today's life for black kids with gangsta rap and hip hop)

and his ignoble, illegal ways. The message the priest needs for the kids is that crime does not pay, that working your way up through the system as it is, is the best path, as unfair and unexciting as it may be.

The gritty Irish underworld life is captured in this movie. The politics, the economics, may be fairly realistic in this portrayal, even the negative effects of a penal system that creates criminals instead of rehabilitating them that leads to death, not defiance. However, he starry-eyed, idealistic priest working against all odds, and even his old friend redeemed at the electric chair, is as sentimental a view of Catholicism as the Pope could ever want.

The final piece of Irish art I encountered was the half historical, half artistic, uncategorizable book of essays *Looking for Jimmy* by Peter Quinn (Quinn, 2007). Quinn's range of Irish and Irish-American knowledge is a bit staggering, having studied at Fordham, lived in the Irish Bronx, and reflected over a lifetime, with speech-writing for two governors thrown in early in his career. He takes on all topics with imagination and energy: three big ones being the Democratic Party, the Famine and its wake, and the Catholic Church. I found myself going back over his sentences repeatedly as the words were so powerful, beautiful original.

Quinn speaks to my experience, though I was in Iowa when he was in New York, but that did not matter in all instances, like this one:

"Contra the assertion of my good friend Frank McCourt, the Irish-Catholic childhood isn't the most miserable of all. I was blessed as well as burdened, graced more than cursed. Yet I find little to lament in the loosening identification of Irish with Catholic. As well as idolatrous, the equation of religion and nation is, in the end, poisonous to both" (Quinn, 2007, p.151).

I could not agree more as my Irish Catholicism was as much a huge blessing as it was a huge, but not insurmountable, burden. Yet he nuances the religious identification process more:



Celtic cross at Monasterboice outside Dublin, Some rights reserved by Nick Corble, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/22943054@N06/>

"Breaking the reflexive association of religion and ethnicity, however, isn't the same as saying that religious values are formed in a vacuum, divorced from history and devoid of cultural content. My faith is rooted in my Irish-Catholic heritage. It couldn't be otherwise. That's who I am" (Ibid).

Such is my experience with my Irish Catholic DNA. I had to make peace with it some time ago, an

uneasy one on occasion, and now a Jung-inspired one, but a peace nevertheless, with an appreciation for all faiths and Eastern sensibilities.

What do I take away, integrate and absorb from this art? The sadness, the beauty, the singing, the clichés, the history, the alcohol, the brawling, the un-Anglicanized, raw Irish spirit. Surely all of this. But the real answer is I don't know yet. It is too early. I see the history in the art and because of Quinn primarily, the imagination and art in the history. I see the human spirit in its Gaelic version, the tribe I come from, romanticized, celebrated, bemoaned and suffered. I listen to the music more attentively. I see the last 400 years, like the history I read, and I feel the need to go before that, to more primordial, mythic roots.

Celtic Myth

I will encounter both the very early Catholic and pre-Christian, pre-Patrick mythic roots of Ireland when I do my masters project in the fall of 2013. I have a trip to Iona and a yet-to-be-planned-but-lots-of-ideas excursion over the rest of Ireland, a 33 day jaunt and pilgrimage like no other I have had. We have a guide to Iona. We, my Canadian-Irish wife Patti and I, are preparing now.

For this paper, having read the last several hundred years of my ancestry on both sides of the Atlantic, I needed to go back to the myths and sense more of the dawning of the Irish life I now better appreciate. Ethnoautobiography includes, and is indeed founded on, myth and narrative. I read four of the myths carefully. Much of the Gaelic oral tradition has been lost of course. While the Irish monks in the scriptoriums were saving

classic Greek and Roman civilization, they were not particularly focused on saving their own oral traditions.

Only one of the myths grabbed me, as myths often go for me and others—different degrees of resonance. But Deidre of the Sorrows was enough for me. In Deidre the tragic story of a beautiful Irish lass is spun to its sad conclusion. Her cry from her mother's womb is heard throughout the kingly court that was having a party. The sorrow in the cry, its sheer volume, was enough to presage an extraordinary life and one of sadness. Like a Moses child, Deidre is whisked away after birth by the king to be out of harm's and society's way and to be raised in isolation and enjoy a special upbringing.

As an exceedingly beautiful maiden she meets a wandering band of brothers, themselves escaping and exiled from the court, and they marry and travel together as they are pursued doggedly by the powers that be. As can be sensed from the title of the myth and its beginning womb-lament, all does not end well. Through betrayal, the exiled brothers, with Deidre and her husband, return to the court, the center of power, being promised clemency. Betrayal occurs of course, her husband, her true love, is slain, and she lives the end of her life in grief, or in another version, dashes herself against a rock and ends her life of sorrows.

The story is in some ways the history of the Gaelic sensibility in the world of the West, of commerce. It is the story of the Irish people, betrayed by the economic system into which they were colonized. The betrayal of the famine, which if not socially engineered was socially allowed at many levels. At the level of the individual psyche, the myth is the masculinized ego, and the power drive, eventually killing the feminine soul, betraying it.

Like the fairy tales we read in my Jungian seminars the story may have characters and a plot, but the myth is the story of the nature of consciousness. An opposing story of the same conflict comes from pop culture, *Mary Poppins* (Travers, 1934) made into the huge movie of Julie Andrews fame in the 1960's. The overly career-oriented father sings at the story's beginning: "It's great to be an Englishman in 1910. King Edward's on the throne. It is the age of men." But as the lord of his house is defeated in a career flop at the bank, the feminine principle reigns and the man finds his heart. Much of the West is informed by the masculine principle negating the feminine. The ecological crisis is its macro manifestation as mother earth absorbs one more coal-fired power plant built in the age of men. Deidre of the Sorrows is the Gaelic version of this on-going tale.

Like the fairy tales we read in my Jungian seminars the story may have characters and a plot, but the myth is the story of the nature of consciousness.

The middle ages tale/myth/story spun by Thomas Cahill, formerly of Fordham, was brought back to mind for this paper (Cahill, 1995). As I read this book eighteen years ago, it was early in my Irish-American amnesia, too early for me to connect the dots and sense where I was headed in my quest to explore my ancestral unconscious. I had had no idea of the post-Patrick story of the flourishing of Celtic spirituality through Patrick's evangelical announcement of some good news on the human/divine story. There needed to be some good news apparently--why else the huge response and the popping up of monasteries and convents across the Isles, one of them Iona, in the early middle ages? Why else the monasteries spreading all across Europe for hundreds of years as Roman and Hellenic works of art are recorded.

Here is Cahill:

"The word *Irish* is seldom coupled with the word *civilization*. When we think of peoples as civilized or civilizing, the Egyptians and the Greeks, the Italians and the French, the Chinese and the Jews may all come to mind. The Irish are wild, feckless, and charming, or morose, repressed, and corrupt, but not especially civilized. If we strain to think of "Irish civilizations," no image appears, no Fertile Crescent of Indus Valley, no brooding bust of Beethoven" (Cahill, 1995, p. 3).

From this base, Cahill goes on to tell the story of the monasteries in Europe flowing out of Ireland. This is the one Irish contribution to civilization, too little known, on a grand scale. While I did not read the entire book again for this paper, I had to include Cahill and thank him for putting the word out on this story for the Irish to celebrate. From the early church history of the saint that drove out the snakes and converted Ireland,

we have a Celtic story, perfect for the Church and for the Irish people, but also too big for the church to entirely appropriate. It is the story of Western civilization saved by the feminization, the spiritualization, the preservation of art in the darkest of ages. The Gospel illumined by the small centers of devoted monks and nuns in all their frailty, record the classics for all time. Upon that foundation, the Renaissance was possible. The Irish, not known for civilization, kept civilization alive.

The Interviews

I interviewed three Irish-Americans from New York City, one from Detroit, three of my four Cunningham cousins in Waukon Iowa, my 88-year old aunt Dorothy Cun-

ningham, also from Waukon, and Maureen Murdock, Irish author and Jungian informed analyst/therapist from Santa Barbara. The purpose of the interviews was to calibrate my experience of my amnesia against the experience of other Irish-Americans. It was a fascinating and very informative part of the study.

New York City Irish-American

interviews: This late January, 2013, trip was different. I go to New York all the time on business or pleasure, or both. I teach coaching at Columbia University. But this time I go as a student to interview New York Irish-American ladies—Julia McNamara and Anne Whelehan Smego. They are mid-life, super-smart, career-oriented Irish ladies who knew what it was like to be Irish in American. Julia was second generation and Anne first. The stories they told! The recall they had! I could hardly comprehend their experience. It was so Irish to be them. Multiple trips back to Ireland to meet relatives. Julia published a first-class book (McNamara, 2006) on the Irish as her Irish identity-affirming project.

They both have their Irishness right under their skin. Because of time, only one or two generations, because of practices and exposure—Julia regularly hears the authors speak through the Irish Arts Center and Anne remembers dancing in the kitchen with her 15 relatives as a teen—they know Irish. They are Irish-American. Siobhan Murphy was on the next trip, the February one, to New York. We had work to do at Columbia University together. I interviewed her twice. She was like Anne and Julia—first generation, five sibs, her parents had moved to NYC in their twenties and she was born in the first year of their marriage. Summers back in Ireland. “My house was like an Irish museum,” she said. “My parents really never left.” Her parents needed Irish mementos everywhere. This was the first in person story I had heard of the trauma of leaving home. The others were in the history books. Siobhan, pronounced Sha-van (Gaelic has no v letter) was the most Irish of the lot. She marched in the St. Patrick’s Day parade with the Hibernians for years, playing the bagpipes. She knew the most Gaelic. These three had some amnesia, but nothing like mine. After their interviews, I was jealous and inspired, relating and yet distant from their stories. They were close in space and time to Ireland. What a difference fewer generations make. They were in the intensity of an urban environment that had enough critical mass, of many kinds like the Jews and Italians and so many others, so that all those kinds could both assimilate while celebrating their ethnicity more. What a difference location can make. My Celtic side came from the forgotten rural Irish, who had blended in and eroded away their Irish culture and memories like loose top soil in a stiff spring wind.

A fourth non-family interview was with Susan Starkey, a Detroit Irish Polish Catholic, now in Denver, who spent many of her middle years, with her husband, reclaiming her Irish roots

with trips to Ireland. She had had amnesia like myself in her 20’s and 30’s and then her Irish identity came back to haunt her and she did her Erin exploration. Her grandfather was her tie to the leprechaun stories, as he would travel back to Ireland during the summers when she was a child. When he died, her drift into adulthood, career and American middle class concerns erased the immediacy of the Irish life which she has rediscovered. Less amnesiac than me, much more than the New York City crew, Susan was like a missing link in a fossil trail, a bridge to the New Yorkers who seemed more Irish than I could almost fathom.

Cunningham interviews: On January 30th 2013 I called my Aunt Dorothy, the remaining member of her generation. Dorothy is the holder of the Irish comic genius in the family. For years I used to think she was fun and funny. A few decades ago I realized her view of life and her gift of humor is more than funny. It is philosophy told in jokes and banter and linguistic surprises. She tells me is that she and her sister Helen, when a storm was approaching, when the tornadoes were possible, would take a radio, two beers, a rosary, and an Iowa map into the basement: “At first I would drink beer and Helen would pray the rosary, and then we would switch.” Her eyes would twinkle and I would laugh at her perfect timing and tone. I have had more tears of joy laughing with Dorothy than anyone in my life.

Dorothy was born in 1924 in Waukon Iowa, the northeast corner of Iowa bordering Minnesota and Wisconsin. This county was farmed primarily by Norwegians, Irish, and Germans. Dorothy described how very little Irishness specifically had been passed on to her consciously. Like her older sister, Rita, my mom, Dorothy was full Irish—Quinn, O’Brien, Healy and Cunningham are the grandparents, but the move into modern life in rural Iowa had none of the New York cultural heritage. The brogues were mainly gone. Waukon’s Catholic Church, St Patrick’s, where I was baptized, was Catholic, but not Irish Catholic. All the Germans went there too.

Dorothy told me she will try to remember the songs that her mother taught them. My mom could sing them, but we only found that out when she was 88 and we were driving around Ireland on the tour bus and mom would sing with the guide. We had never heard the songs before. My mom pulled them out of her far away past, where they still had a life. Dorothy was like me and her brothers and sisters and my sisters and cousins—we are very Irish and don’t know what that means or what difference it makes except in broad strokes. But we are proud of it somehow.

My aunt did know that where she was born, near Hanover, a small township outside Waukon, which was a very Irish part of the county. The parish that she went to, Saint Mary’s, was also very Irish. On Saint Patrick’s Day, there is still an honorary mayor of Hanover that is elected. This honorary mayor is a vestige left of the Irish celebrating their particular Irishness on the farms at Hanover Iowa. Dorothy has no real recollection of spe-

cific Irish acculturation. She was educated at Saint Patrick's in Waukon for three years of high school. She spent her last year at Saint Joseph Academy in Des Moines Iowa. She lived with me when I was born, as my mom and dad, Paul and Rita, took her in as she began her working adulthood.

My Cunningham cousins, all from the same area, graduates of St. Patrick's, tell the same story as Dorothy. Most of their Irishness is consciously lost and unconsciously present. They have an Irish lilt in their voice, intonations I recognize as Irish from being around them. I have lost my lilt, if I ever had one. Mostly you hear the Irish pattern in the one to two-minute stories they tell. Their conversation is laced with stories that end with a laugh, a perfectly delivered punch line after the set up that reveals an insight, a surprise, a way of seeing the world through Gaelic irony and artful language. I interviewed three of the four—Joe, the oldest, Danny and Kay, and their sister Annie, only a month different than me in age, had a busy phone line the three times I called. Next time Annie.

Joe remembers the most Irishness, the valleys in the county that had the most Irish farmers, Hanover and Wexford. He remembers the Irish brogues in the old days, the 1960s and 70's, when it was more there, of the Irish farmers coming to Regan (his Irish uncle) pharmacy where he worked and that he would eventually own. He remembers his Dad, my uncle Leo, the storyteller extraordinaire like his sister Dorothy, going on with rapid fire and steady stream stories, and I remember him pulling radishes out of the soil in their garden.

The final interview was with Maureen Murdock (www.maureenmurdock.com), who has written about her journey with her Irish identity and presented seminars on it. She was very articulate about her Irish roots and the meaning of this Celtic stream in her life. She talked about the lamentation of the Irish, the creativity and comedy and alcohol as outlets for the lamentation. She thought mythically—how the long suffering martyr and the hero myths operated in her life. She had a profound awareness, many trips to Ireland, and was a Peter Quinn for me with a psychologist's view, and a Jungian one at that. I was moved by her depth and I ended my interviews with her.

Conclusion

I had come to the end of the history and art and interviews and had put my toe into the Masters project ahead of me this fall. I was heading toward Celtic myth and spirituality, the early Irish-Catholic Church, the foundations of the Irish American identity I was excavating. My mom, four years from her death at 88, decided she wanted to see Ireland with her two daughters and her son. The Cunningham she was wanted to go back to see County Cork. No one from her generation or the ones above her had ever returned, as far as we knew, and she was perhaps a third generation (perhaps because the past is murky on all this, and the genealogy part may never yield anything much very certain) with no story of any Quinns, Healys, O'Briens or Cunninghams ever having gone back.

What she wanted from the trip she never articulated much. It was for her fun. The pubs were the highlight for her. She was joyous in those moments as every night we made sure to find one for her. She enjoyed it all, the roads, the countryside, Dublin and The Waterford Crystal Plant. (Mom always liked beer. When we saw the crystal displays for sale at the end of the Waterford tour, one of them was a beautiful horse and carriage. Upon seeing it mom declares: "Oh, the Budweiser horses!!" Our tourmates overheard her and laughed to a person. They enjoyed my mom's Irish beerphilia in its 9th decade). This trip was my mom's contribution to this study and paper. Without it I may not be going back in the upcoming fall with the learning I have done or the learning agenda I am still acquiring.

Early on in the Professor Kremer's and Jackson-Paton's work on ethnoautobiography they say we have a call "to reengage anew the thorny, complicated issues of personal and cultural identity... (and, interestingly enough) individualism is a pernicious threat to much of what we hold dear." ... Identity is not individualism because people are complex webs of place, history, gender, ancestry, ever growing and changing." (Kremer & Jackson-Paton, 2013).

And so I am. This paper both documents my changes and has changed me. I am more Irish than ever before and know I have just begun. I am still wondering and wandering, restlessly and happily so.

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