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Surviving the "House of a Hundred Windows": Irish Industrial  
Schools in Recent Fiction and Memoirs

Michael R. Molino

New Hibernia Review, Volume 5, Number 1, Earrach/Spring 2001, pp.  
33-52 (Article)

Published by Center for Irish Studies at the University of St. Thomas

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2001.0011>



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Michael R. Molino



## The “House of a Hundred Windows”: Industrial Schools in Irish Writing

Abuse suffered by children raised in Irish industrial schools, often at the hands of the religious running the schools, has been for years a problem hidden in plain sight. On occasion, such as the airing of the 1996 television documentary *Dear Daughter*, public indignation over stories of abuse sparked calls for government investigation and legal retribution. Public fervor over the issue of abuse, however, quickly waned; the abuse of children raised in industrial schools was acknowledged but essentially ignored. Recent stories of abuse have once again traumatized public conscience and stimulated calls for action. Recriminations against those who “must have known” about abuses but nonetheless turned away extend blame not only on those who committed offenses against children but also on those who dutifully worked within the system. Many accused of offenses, and those implicated for silent acquiescence, are members of the religious orders into whose hands the state remanded thousands of young children for more than one hundred years. Fintan O’Toole has articulated the view held by many that Irish society has for too long ignored its mistreatment of children:

[O]ne of the first tasks of this society in the new millennium will be listening to the survivors of the industrial schools in the Commission to Inquire into Childhood Abuse . . . . Historians have to develop a language for discussing 20th-century Ireland in which words like “slavery,” “concentration camp” and “torture” are not exotic imports but belong in the vernacular.<sup>1</sup>

Others—including former inhabitants of industrial schools, educators, and social historians—respond that critics like O’Toole overstate the case in an attempt to discredit the Catholic church. In a letter to the *Irish Times*, Ray O’Donoghue presents a personal, opposing view of life in an industrial school:

1. Fintan O’Toole, “Cooney Has at Least Posed the Right Question,” *Irish Times*, 26 November 1999, p. 14. See also the following articles by O’Toole: “Attitudes that Led to Abuse Entrenched in System,” *Irish Times*, 14 May 1999, p. 14; “Evading the Unpalatable Truth about Sexual Abuse,” *Irish Times* 10 December 1999, 14; and “Letterfrack Reports Show Controlling Mentality,” *Irish Times*, 21 January 2000, 14.

Oh yes, there were a few nasty Brothers and I had a few bad experiences and was constantly hungry, but on the whole I feel that my time [at St. Joseph's Industrial School in Glin, Co. Limerick] was very positive and that I owe most of what I have achieved in my life to being in Glin. If I had not been sent there I feel I would have turned into a criminal, because that was my ambition before I was sent to Glin.<sup>2</sup>

The coexistence of such seemingly irreconcilable statements in the pages of the *Irish Times* hints at the profound levels of shame, confusion, anger, and shock evoked in Irish society by the most recent revelations of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in industrial schools.

Conflicting opinions today on industrial schools also reflect a paradox in the history of the industrial school system—a system in which a charitable and compassionate commitment among the religious to offer residence education for the poor slowly deteriorated into a preoccupation with financial gain, political influence, and secrecy. Stories of child abuse, often ignored or disbelieved at the time, compounded over the years until reaching a crescendo when Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) aired its documentary *States of Fear* in 1999, eliciting a formal state apology from Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, on May 11, 1999 and the formation of a Commission to Inquire into Childhood Abuse.<sup>3</sup> The story of industrial schools in Ireland is, then, a history of intersecting tendencies. On the one hand, initially well-intended educational and religious beliefs and practices gave way to a self-protecting system where abuse was tolerated and abusers protected. On the other hand, the stories of child abuse, often told by adults later in life, reflect a different trajectory—from a topic discussed, if at all, only in euphemistic and muted terms to an incendiary issue where guilt is often immediately assumed. This paradoxical history, with all its ambivalent

2. Ray O'Donoghue, "Memories of Industrial School," *Irish Times*, 15 November 1999, p. 17. See also the following articles for examples of the counterargument: Risteard Mac Conchradha, "'States of Fear' [Letter to the Editor]," *Irish Times*, 27 May 1999, p. 17; Brian Gogan, CSSp, "'States of Fear' [Letter to the Editor]," *Irish Times*, 31 May 1999, p. 17; Patsy McGarry, "Priest Criticises 'States of Fear' for Giving only One Side of Story," *Irish Times*, 2 July, 1999, p. 7; Patsy McGarry, "RTE Stands by Child Institution Expose Series Assertions in State Funding are Defended," *Irish Times*, 20 August 1999, p. 9; Maria Byrne, "'Suffer the Little Children' [Letter to the Editor]," *Irish Times*, 6 December 1999, p. 17; Breda O'Brien, "A Search for the Truth Does not Question Reality of Child Abuse," *Irish Times*, 10 January 2000, p. 14.

3. The documentary was modified into the book *Suffer the Little Children*, coauthored by the show's producer, Mary Raftery, and a Trinity College lecturer, Eoin O'Sullivan, whose area of expertise is the industrial school system. On May 11, 1999, the taoiseach issued the following apology: "On behalf of the State and of all the citizens of the State, the Government wishes to make a sincere and long overdue apology to the victims of childhood abuse for our collective failure to intervene, to detect their pain, to come to their rescue." At the time this article went to press, the Commission to Inquire into Childhood Abuse had not issued its first report.

attitudes, has been pointedly revealed in recent fiction and memoirs, where the stories of children sent to industrial schools are given voice and the horrors of institutional life exposed.

On the topic of education in Irish literature, no novelist surpasses James Joyce. Stephen Dedalus's encounters with various Jesuits and his gradual rejection of Irish Catholicism in favor of the life of an artist form a template for the intersection of personal impulses and religious obligations. However, Stephen Dedalus has an encounter with another group of religious whose impact upon him differs greatly from that of his Jesuit teachers. In the pivotal fourth chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, moments before his artistic calling, Stephen passes a group of Christian Brothers making its way from Dollymount across the bridge linking Clontarf to the Bull Wall. Stephen has just deflected the Jesuit director's overtures regarding a calling to the priesthood and fled his father's fumbling efforts to secure him a position in the university. In both cases, Stephen rejects the efforts of male authority figures to direct his life. When Stephen encounters the Christian Brothers on the bridge, he responds differently; he experiences a sense of shame in the presence of these simple men. Angered by his shame, Stephen looks over the side of the bridge, Narcissus-like, into the water below, only to see, not his own image, but the reflection of the brothers. Stephen's reaction to this image is odd when compared to his cunningly aloof reaction to the Jesuit director:

It was idle for him . . . to tell himself that if he ever came to their gates, stripped of his pride, beaten and in beggar's weeds, that they would be generous towards him, loving him as themselves. . . . that the commandment of love bade us not to love our neighbour as ourselves with the same amount and intensity of love but to love him as ourselves with the same kind of love.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike his father, who disparages the Christian Brothers and refers to the boys they teach as "Paddy Stink and Micky Mud," Stephen holds a view more in tune with the majority of Irish society at the time. By the early years of the twentieth century the Christian Brothers had become a dominant force in Irish education.<sup>5</sup> Even more unusual than Stephen Dedalus's concord with much of Irish society is his identification of the Christian Brothers as a group

4. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Signet, 1991), p. 180.

5. Joyce, *A Portrait*, 74. As Séamas Ó Buachalla contends the Catholic Church experienced a direct reversal of power and influence during the course of the nineteenth century, connected directly to its growing influence in the field of education: "While the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the Irish Church Act of 1869 made far-reaching legal changes, it was mainly in and by the education system that the Roman Catholic Church extended its sphere of power and influence during the century. That church's position of weakness in the early decades, a residual of the penal

who represent love. Stephen realizes that if the wings of art he is about to fashion fail to carry him past the nets of nationality, religion, and language he fears, he can fall safely into the net of love the Christian Brothers offer, a willingness on the brothers' part to take in even the most undeserving creature. Barry Coldrey supports Stephen's assumptions, pointing out the Christian Brothers' commitment to loving and evoking love in their students: "By 1814 the Brothers could claim that they managed their pupils more through love than fear and had removed 'as much as possible, everything like corporal punishment from their schools, a plan which is found to answer the best purpose in the formation of youth.'"<sup>6</sup>

While Stephen's view of the Christian Brothers may reflect a common, though changing, attitude at the start of the twentieth century, a different picture of the Christian Brothers and other religious has emerged over the past twenty years. Two contradictory pictures of the Christian Brothers exist today. The first is that of nationalistic educators who trained many of the leaders of Irish independence and the first independent government. In his book *Faith and Fatherland*, Coldrey points out that in contrast to the Jesuits, whom Simon Dedalus identifies as the elite of Ireland, the Christian Brothers trained 125 of the rebels who participated in the Easter Rising, the Jesuits a mere five. Seven of the 14 men executed as a result of the Rising, three of the five members of the 1917 IRA executive committee, and five of the seven appointed to the Dáil in 1921 were educated by the Christian Brothers.<sup>7</sup> This is a picture of brothers as educators and patriots.

laws, was transformed by the seventies into a position of strength and influence in Irish life. The process of transformation was promoted and catalyzed mainly by a prolonged campaign involving a series of resounding victories on education issues carried by the church against various governments." Séamas Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), p. 36.

6. Barry Coldrey, "'A Most Unenviable Reputation': The Christian Brothers and School Discipline over Two Centuries," *History of Education*, 21 (1992), 278. While admitting that negative opinions of Christian Brothers are often deserved, Coldrey attempts to explain why the industrial schools seem to be the site of so many cases of abuse: "In institutions Brothers and boys had one another's company around the clock. The work was especially tiring and stressful; recreation away from the institution was rare; holidays few; and the boys' moods and reactions differed from those with a stable family background. Bedwetting among younger inmates, the result of basic insecurity and poor toilet training, was a pervasive problem, and no solution appeared to offer itself except primitive aversion therapy. It was likely that stress would lead to violence" (285). See also Coldrey's "A Mixture of Caring and Corruption: Church Orphanages and Industrial Schools," *Studies*, 89 (2000), 7–18.

7. Barry Coldrey, *Faith and Fatherland: The Christian Brothers and the Development of Irish Nationalism, 1838–1921* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), pp. 248–74.

But a second picture of the Christian Brothers has emerged—that of a congregation running industrial schools in a fashion no way resembling the loving environment Stephen Dedalus imagines.<sup>8</sup> This is a picture of brothers as pedophiles and sadists. The appearance of this second picture, and its power to eclipse the first, cannot be explained simply as a progression in public opinion based on new and overwhelming evidence of abuse. Today's conflicting opinions on industrial schools and those who ran them suggest a continuation, not an eclipse, of the first picture, despite the criticism and outrage that evoked the second. An understanding of these conflicting pictures demands a sensitive assessment of both the history of the industrial school system in Ireland and the stories of those who survived the worst manifestations of that system.

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As Jane Barnes documents in *Irish Industrial Schools, 1868–1908* (1989), the industrial schools of Ireland began with the best of intentions, having two specific goals and a clear ethic. During their early decades, the industrial schools demonstrated a distinct ability to train otherwise destitute children as craftsmen and artisans capable of earning an honest living upon release and to provide otherwise criminally inclined children a moral upbringing. The advent of the industrial schools represented an improvement over the existing charter schools and workhouses where many of these young people had been exploited. The industrial schools also strove to provide a place of trust and care resembling a healthy family life, even to the point of replacing the existing family. Herein lies one of the paradoxes of the industrial schools: students entering the schools were often forced or expected to sever ties to any existing family in order to align themselves with the industrial schools and their managers. Any failure of the industrial school “family,” thus, resulted in a betrayal of the values the schools espoused.

Many of the industrial schools were run by religious groups, both Protestant and Catholic. The Christian Brothers were the most prevalent Catholic group associated with industrial schools for boys—such as the great school in Dublin, Artane, which housed as many as 900 boys at its peak, training them in such fields as farming, carpentry, weaving, tailoring, harness making, and painting. Many of the boys assigned to schools like Artane remained until their sixteenth birthday when they were released to their families or trade. Girls were not excluded; in fact, the majority of the industrial schools were designated specifically for girls, or girls and infant boys under ten years old. Most

8. The Christian Brothers (C.B.S.) are not considered an order but a “congregation,” though the terms *order*, *congregation*, and occasionally *institute* are used synonymously.

of these schools, sometimes misleadingly referred to as “orphanages,” were operated by the Sisters of Mercy, who ran approximately two-thirds of all industrial schools.

Jane Barnes’s study of the industrial school system ends at 1908, the year the Children’s Act was passed. This law compelled even more children to attend industrial schools, including those who had committed minor crimes. This change in policy blurred the boundary between reform schools and industrial schools. In her conclusion, Barnes contends that

the industrial schools represented an advance in the care of destitute, orphaned and neglected children. Before their establishment no state provision was available to this class of children other than the dubious sanctuary of the workhouse. Industrial schools, with all their drawbacks and limitations, provided for many children who would otherwise have faced a miserable existence as vagrants or workhouse inmates.<sup>9</sup>

In his 1903 comparative study of educational systems in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, Graham Balfour identifies two slight but important differences between reformatories and industrial schools in Great Britain and their counterparts in Ireland. In Ireland, children could only be sent to institutions run by persons of the same religious persuasion as the child’s parents, and parents guilty of criminal offenses could not send their children to industrial schools, even if they agreed to pay for the child’s commitment. Balfour concludes that the

certified Industrial Schools in Ireland are regarded as institutions for poor and deserted children rather than for semi-criminals, probably because there is no other means of compelling street urchins to attend schools. Consequently young children who are criminal in a very slight degree and in England would probably be sent to Industrial Schools, are sent in Ireland to Reformatories and the older and more criminal children do not appear in them at all.<sup>10</sup>

In one of the earliest literary references to an industrial school, neglected and unguided children find refuge and purpose within the confines of an institutional setting. In May Laffen Hartley’s 1881 short story “The Game Hen,” a young woman’s story is told in part through the gossip of the women who live in the clay-floor houses of Commons Lane. A strong-willed and outspoken young woman known as the Game Hen has already had twins born out of wedlock, both of whom were immediately taken from their mother and placed

9. Jane Barnes, *Irish Industrial Schools, 1868–1908* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), p. 147.

10. Graham Balfour, *The Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), p. 114.

into two different Dublin industrial schools or orphanages. In Hartley's story, neither the separation of the twins from their mother nor from each other is questioned by the neighbors. From their conversation, the Game Hen's neighbors assume either that the children will be better off or that the priest had no real choice in the matter. The sin may be the mother's, but the consequences of that sin are meted out on the children she brings into the world. Such stories of illegitimate children separated from or ignorant of family members recur today among industrial school survivors. The Game Hen's twins will probably live their entire lives within miles of each other but never know they have living relatives.

Reduced to begging, the Game Hen finds that she can either go to a workhouse or take money from the twin's father and escape to Liverpool. She chooses the latter, deserting her eight-year-old son Petie and his infant sister. A kindly neighbor woman chooses to care for the infant, but Petie is charged with vagrancy before a divisional magistrate and "sentenced to five years in an industrial school."<sup>11</sup> In Hartley's story, the sentencing of young Petie reveals the tacit social assumption that there was something wrong, even criminal, about the children sent to industrial schools, a form of guilt by association with the parents. Moreover, the process of sentencing young children to industrial schools like Artane clearly occurred regularly and within plain sight of average citizens. The driver who takes Petie and his police sergeant escort to Artane refers, with unwitting irony, to the young boy as a "small commodity," anticipating the income Petie will generate for Artane both through the government subsidy the school will be paid for his keep as well as the income derived from the products of his labor.

Upon arriving at Artane, the police sergeant and Petie are met by an "old priest," presumably a Christian Brother, who asks, "only one this time, eh?" (*FTC* 165). Once within the confines of Artane, Petie is escorted by one of the brothers. Learning that Petie comes from Commons Lane, the brother seeks other boys who come from the same place in hopes of finding a boy to befriend Petie and mentor him in the ways of Artane. In each case, the boys the brother questions say they do not know Petie. Each boy, in turn, eagerly awaits the end of the conversation so that he can resume his duties in the shop or field. Artane has taken children who may otherwise have repeated the cycle of poverty and vice and given them discipline and pride in their own hard work. The concluding scene of Hartley's story presents Artane as a clean and organized place run by concerned brothers where boys learn the virtues of industrious labor:

11. May Laffen Hartley, *Flitters, Tatters, and the Counsellor* (London: Macmillan, 1881), p. 161; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (*FTC* 161).

They had walked round the house, and came to a great building situated at its back. A door opened, letting out an extraordinary sound, a kind of low murmur, like that of swarming bees, and mingled with and rising above it the rapid click clack of sewing machines. A long hall lay before them with two rows of benches, the inner one higher than the other, along the wall, and on these benches sat about a hundred small boys, all of them under ten, some of them not yet six years old. Each had on a clean white blouse and a pair of red slippers.

Everybody was working; some tiny creatures had crochet needles in their hands, some were knitting, and others stitching. More advanced ones were tending the sewing machines, which they worked with a gravity and steadiness that was wonderful. The boards of floor were scoured white, the paint was fresh and clean, and through tall, open windows came sweet-smelling country air. All the eyes were turned on the new-comer [Petie] at once. (FTC 166–67)

Between the Children's Act of 1908 and the Kennedy Report of 1970—which signaled the end of the industrial school system—government officials investigated the conditions in industrial schools, educational reformers elsewhere in the world warned of the deleterious effects of institutional living on children, such prominent figures as Austin Clarke and Father Flanagan of Boys' Town spoke out publicly against industrial schools, and many people heard firsthand from children living in the schools about the harsh and inhumane treatment that has become the hallmark of the industrial schools. Recent accounts of children raised in industrial schools during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s have focused public awareness on just how far these schools fell from their initial goals and ethic. Moreover, these stories have caused many to question the unholy alliance between church and state in independent Ireland that allowed children of the poor and children of those deemed morally corrupt to be exploited and brutalized in institutional care run for profit by religious congregations like the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy. Of this period in the development of industrial schools, Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan conclude that the

reality is that the Catholic Church and the State in partnership made certain choices, not so much out of ignorance but more for reasons of financial expediency. The institutional model for the processing of children into adulthood by religious orders was undoubtedly the cheapest option available. From the State's perspective, any of the more enlightened approaches that they were aware of would not only have cost more, but would also have been strenuously resisted by the Catholic Church as an erosion of its power.<sup>12</sup>

12. Mary Raftery and Eoin O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland's Industrial Schools* (Dublin: New Island, 1999), p. 15. Harry Ferguson presents the industrial schools

The memoirs of Paddy Doyle, Patrick Touher, and Bernadette Fahy disclose painful stories of abuse that differ chiefly in the names of the institutions where each child was confined. So, too, the novels by Mannix Flynn and Patrick McCabe present fictional, or partially fictional, accounts of children confined to industrial schools who suffer the abuse and humiliation identified by Doyle, Touher, and Fahy. Most recently the three-part documentary *States of Fear* presented not only victims' stories of abuse in industrial schools but information gleaned from government archives that reveal a concerted effort of both Church and State to criminalize poverty, hide and punish the children of the poor, and exploit the young for commercial gain.

Paddy Doyle's 1988 memoir *The God Squad* and Patrick Touher's 1991 memoir *Fear of the Collar* have several elements in common. Both relate stories of the physical and sexual abuse of children at the hands of respectively The Sisters of Mercy and Christian Brothers; both reveal the perverse allegiance victims of abuse typically have toward those who abuse them; and both demonstrate a conflict between the adult who tries to tell his story and the child whose story is being told. The conflict for Doyle comes through as early as his preface, where he states, "Many people familiar with the effects of institutional care, particularly Industrial Schools, will say I have gone too easy on them. Lives have been ruined by the tyrannical rule and lack of love in such places. People have been scarred for life."<sup>13</sup> Two paragraphs later, Doyle pulls his punch when he allows the story that follows to be interpreted as the consequence of an abstract force called "society," despite the frightening implications of his final words:

This book is not an attempt to point the finger, to blame or even to criticise any individual or group of people. Neither is it intended to make a judgement on what happened to me. It is about a society's abdication of responsibility to a

within the larger context of child care and neglect, challenging Raftery and O'Sullivan's conclusion of systematic abuse of poor children: "Oddly, the links between the industrial schools and child protection are ignored [by Raftery and O'Sullivan]. Cruelty and neglect are not even mentioned in the context of noting that at least 80% of children admitted to the schools were categorized as being there due to 'lack of proper guardianship' . . . the sheer scale of the child protection movement in Ireland can be seen from the fact that between 1889 and 1955 the NSPCC [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children] dealt with 478,865 Irish children. However, the numbers of children actually removed from parental custody was low, relative to the large numbers dealt with, amounting to less than 2% of the children annually coming to the attention of the Society. Thus, while the Society's work was overwhelmingly with the poor, it was still only in exceptional cases that children were taken from parental custody." See Harry Ferguson, "States of Fear, Child Abuse, and Irish Society," *Doctrine and Life* (2000), 24.

13. Paddy Doyle, *The God Squad* (Dublin: Raven Arts, 1988), p. 10; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (GS 10).

child. The fact that I was that child, and the book is about my life is largely irrelevant. The probability is that there were, and still are, thousands of “mes.”

(GS 10–11)

The conflict in Doyle’s prefatory words is compounded in the book’s title and the first edition’s cover art. The original cover of *The God Squad* shows a noose hanging prominently in the foreground with a rosary extended through the noose—a startling conflation of sacred and profane images linked both by their physical similarity and by their psychological impact on the author. Behind the noose is a picture of a young boy with a disfigured foot, whom the reader learns later is Doyle himself in St. Patrick’s hospital, one of the many hospitals in which Doyle stayed as a boy. The reader sees the young boy through the noose while the smiling boy receives a blessing from a priest whose face and torso are partially blocked by a shadow cast by the noose.

The reader learns later in *The God Squad* that the title refers to a group of hospital nuns who prepare patients for surgery and contact the hospital chaplain for those wishing to have their confessions heard before surgery. These nuns, Doyle’s “God Squad,” appear in only one paragraph of his memoir and do not in any way threaten or mistreat the young boy, unlike several of the sisters at St. Michael’s industrial school, who inflict great suffering during the year-and-a-half that Doyle lives there. The priest in the photograph turns out to be a visiting East German cardinal who immediately comes to the young child sitting alone in a ward full of dying old men. The image of the rope, however, plays a prominent role in the book. The story of Doyle’s father’s suicide—the image of which haunts the young boy’s dreams—is both the precipitating cause of Doyle’s institutionalization as well as the moral stain that justifies the harsh treatment the boy experiences at St. Michael’s.

On the one hand, the cover and the title of *The God Squad* seems to blame the wrong people for the injustices suffered by the author, obscuring the many acts of kindness offered Doyle by members of the religious. On the other hand, in the context of the story Doyle tells of people who knew about the mistreatment taking place inside St. Michael’s, the cover and title suggest a chain of events starting with the sin of one person whose punishment is inflicted upon another, ending with the loss of faith by a young boy so willing to be faithful.<sup>14</sup>

14. The cover art described here appears on the first edition of the book, published in 1988 by Raven Arts Press. Recently, Transworld Publishers of London reprinted the book, probably in response to the public interest sparked by *States of Fear*. The cover art to this edition differs from the original, showing a head and shoulders shot of the author as an adult, the same photograph that appeared on the back cover of the first edition. Also, Doyle recently learned that the man he always assumed was his father, whose suicide precipitated Doyle’s stay in St. Michael’s, in fact may not have been his father. This question has yet to be resolved. See Maria Pepper, “On the Trail of His Past,” *Wexford People*, 22 March 2000.

Mother Paul, the nun who dominates Doyle's memories of St. Michael's, articulates a philosophy of child rearing that recalls the original goals and ethic of the industrial school system:

When we had finished singing Mother Paul reminded us that as we had no parents it fell to the nuns to give us the guidance and grace that would make us into fine young men. Nuns were married to God she said as she raised her right hand to show a thin silver ring. Nuns did not have children in the way mothers had. "Each of you was sent to St. Michael's by God and you will be trained in the manner He would like. Mark my words, you will all one day be proud to have been part of this school." (GS 18)

The daily treatment of the children at St. Michael's falls far short of "guidance and grace." A scornful attitude is directed at him in almost every encounter with Mother Paul, and Doyle is chastised for the increasing difficulty he experiences with a lame leg and his recurring nightmares of his father's suicide. To some extent, these are special circumstances; Doyle's genetic medical condition, idiopathic torsion, would have been a mystery to any lay person at the time and was, in fact, poorly diagnosed and treated by medical staff once he reached hospital. Regarding the nightmares, the sin of suicide would have been seen as one vestige of the past best forgotten, and counseling was not an available option at that time.

Nonetheless, the failure on the part of the sisters to train Doyle and the other children at St. Michael's in even basic personal hygiene and social deportment reveals an indifference to these children becoming future members of Irish society. Doyle recalls the time his uncle collected him from the school to take him on a short holiday. After meeting the uncle and sharing a meal with him, Mother Paul advises Doyle to use the bathroom before leaving on his journey:

"You have a long journey ahead of you and you can't expect to be stopping every few miles just because you want to go to the toilet." I sat there, my hands firmly gripping the seat. I clenched my fist and gritted my teeth as I willed my bowels to empty. After much forcing I succeeded and then stood up to re-fasten my trousers.

"Wipe yourself," Mother Paul snapped before she realized that I had no idea of what she meant. She took a small piece of tissue from the roll and folded it in two. "Every time you go to the toilet, you must wipe your backside. Don't forget that." In my time at St. Michael's I never used toilet paper but just pulled my trousers up when finished. (GS 67)

Mother Paul's guidance in this instance occurs only because the uncle is present and waiting to take the boy. Doyle's story makes clear that, beyond any mistreatment that can be contextualized and rationalized today, the sisters of

St. Michael's industrial school did not see fit to rear well the children in their charge—physically, mentally, or spiritually. Doyle acknowledges that he required extensive tutoring later in life just to earn a leaving certificate. The sisters of St. Michael's industrial school seem to have assumed that children like Paddy Doyle would not grow up to need the traits and training necessary to function in society. Doyle's story also makes clear the taint of sin and the assumption of culpability bore heavily upon the children sent to industrial schools:

Not all the children inside St. Michael's were orphaned, many came from broken homes or domestic situations into which they simply didn't fit. Inside the school there was a clear distinction between those who had parents and those who had not. Those who did have a father or mother alive who was alcoholic were often berated by the nuns. "Is it any wonder your poor father took to drinking. The poor man must have been at his wits end trying to manage you." I don't know if any of the other children there had parents who committed the mortal sin of suicide. If there were, then like me, they were probably kept in ignorance. (GS 85)

Just as Paddy Doyle does not want to "point the finger, to blame or even to criticise," Patrick Touher, in *Fear of the Collar*, is reticent about implicating the guilty or decrying the treatment he and others received at the hands of Christian Brothers running their flagship industrial school at Artane. Touher's story is in many ways more troubling than Doyle's because Touher tries to cast a positive light on the events of what he calls "My Extraordinary Life." Touher struggles with the way he wants to convey his story; parts are a stilted and awkward presentation of facts, while other parts evoke a personal style that captures the voice and feelings of Artane's boys. For example, when he recounts his first day at the school, Touher recalls the boy who escorts him to the dormitory. This boy speaks like a tour guide, providing factual information about the school, its history, population, the number and size of buildings, the school's goals and accomplishments. In short, the boy in this case provides a narrative device by which the adult Touher relates factual information about Artane to the reader.

Likewise, chapter fourteen, titled "Life as a Trader," begins with the story of a summer day in 1956 as Touher and other boys go off to the workshops that were Artane's source of pride and income. After relating a few stories about Joe Golden, the lay manager of the boy's bakery who treated the boys well and taught them to care for their work, Touher begins a new section: "The bakery was only one of the very busy places in Artane, essential to the smooth running of the institution. There were many others."<sup>15</sup> An impersonal account of

15. Patrick Touher, *Fear of the Collar: Artane Industrial School* (Dublin: O'Brien, 1991), p. 129; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (FC 129).

the various workshops follows, separated by such subheadings as “Carpenters and Cabinet Makers,” “The Tinsmiths’ Workshop,” and “The Sawmill.” Chapter fourteen ends with Touher expounding the philosophy of Artane’s founder, the Reverend Brother T. A. Hoope:

The idea of each boy learning a skilled trade was the brainchild of the founder and first manager of the Artane Industrial School, Rev. Bro. T. A. Hoope. It was his vision of the school to train and educate boys for the needs of the world outside. That vision of his was achieved. Each year a great harvest of young talent was reaped as another group of boys reached the age of sixteen. That harvest was then sent out to the cities and towns of Ireland, where the boys carried on the crafts and skills they had learned in Artane. (FC 135)

Sadly, Touher contradicts his words of praise for Hoope and his ideals in the Epilogue when he recounts the difficulty he had obtaining work as a baker after his release because did not receive a diploma. Despite his years of schooling at Artane, Touher discovered that the bakers’ union refused to hire anyone trained in a nonunionized house or school. Sadder still are the stories of brutality, humiliation, regimentation, and punishment that punctuate such words of praise.

Touher recounts the physical and sexual abuses exacted on the boys and their persistent sense of fear and confusion. He recalls an encounter with a brother nicknamed The Sting, who was later removed from Artane. Touher, known as Collie, and his friends are caught by The Sting after climbing over a wall to collect chestnuts. The Sting tells Touher he will deal with him that night at eight o’clock. After the brother leaves, the other boys warn Touher that The Sting routinely beats and fondles them: “‘You know, Collie, he hurt me privates. As he beat me with one hand, he held me with the other hand. He had me lie across the bed sat beside me, started stroking me bottom, then beating me at times with his leather’” (FC 36). Each of Touher’s friends relates similar stories of abuse by The Sting. That night, nine-year-old Patrick Touher obediently arrives at the brother’s room: “The Sting stood in front of me and said, ‘Well, you have to learn how to keep out of trouble now, won’t you, boy?’ I said, ‘Yes, sir, I will in future, sir.’ ‘I know you will, boy, I will teach you the hard way. Take off that nightshirt, you will not need it for a while’” (FC 37). The Sting beats and molests Touher, after which the brother weeps, holds the crying boy in his arms, and promises never to beat him again. While Touher claims that he was never sexually abused again in Artane, he was—like the other boys confined in that industrial school—a victim of other forms of abuse and intimidation.

Like Doyle, Touher struggles with the contradictions of his childhood story. Despite its title, Touher’s book ends with a glowing biographical portrait of Artane’s founder as well as a brief account of the 1868 Industrial Schools Act

and a historical overview of Artane Castle. But *Fear of the Collar* is more than a title; it sums up the apprehensive disposition of a victim that is woven into the narrative of Touher's memoir. Each time Touher identifies one of the brothers by name he parenthetically mentions that the brother is now deceased. This practice occurs with every brother mentioned in the book—as if Touher can only bring himself to tell his story now that all the brothers involved, some of whom acted kindly toward him, are indeed deceased, or that he can tell his story now only because he no longer fears reprisal. Even when he acknowledges gradual improvements in the treatment of the boys at Artane, Touher's words accentuate a sordid history of mistreatment at the school:

. . . like a lot of other brothers, [the new brother] did not remain in the Christian Brothers. The Bucko left, and so did The Lug and The Apeman, who would have them? So they left the brothers or it left them, perhaps. Artane was slowly, very slowly changing. Not all the brothers were bad. As time went on new brothers came and they were gentler. (FC 88)

In the final chapter, Touher describes his thoughts on his last night in the school:

I was full of memories now. Odd really to think that a place so full of regimented ways and of hard tough discipline and a system as tough as nails, would mean so much to me. Artane Industrial School was in fact an institution and it was quite possible that I had by now become institutionalized, and that the system would leave a mark on me for a long, long time. I felt that I was part of the great institution and that in going I was losing part of myself. (FC 165)

A few pages later, the young Patrick Touher prepares to leave Artane for good when a car containing two new boys arrives at the school. Touher reflects that the two boys “would [soon] know that they were in a different world from where they came. A world full of intrigue, a boys' world, a world of black and white, black habits and white collars. I thought how they would soon fear the collar and all it stood for” (FC 170). The conflict in Doyle's preface and Touher's conclusion do nothing to diminish the horrifying reality both children experienced. Rather, these passages highlight the difficulty both men have as adults in formulating and conveying their childhood experiences to a public well aware of such institutions as St. Michael's and Artane, but blind to the treatment exacted on children behind the walls of those industrial schools.

Mannix Flynn's and Patrick McCabe's novels set in industrial schools differ from the personal memoirs of Doyle and Touher in more ways than their fictionality. Both Flynn's 1983 novel *Nothing to Say* and McCabe's 1992 novel

*The Butcher Boy* are narrated by characters who, unlike the abandoned Doyle and Touher, exist on the margins of society, in part because of family problems and in part because of criminal actions. Flynn's thinly disguised autobiographical character, Gerard O'Neill, winds up in St. Joseph's Industrial School, in Connemara, commonly referred to as Letterfrack, after a long history of petty crimes and truancy. Because his home life is characterized by chaos, poverty, and contention, Gerard is sent to Letterfrack ostensibly for criminal violations, but also because his mother cannot control him:

"Mrs. O'Neill," said the Judge, "You are a sick woman. You have thirteen other children who need looking after. You cannot spend your life running around after Gerard." The Judge turned to the Probation Officer and asked for the report. . . . "Comes from a family of fourteen, the youngest about three years of age. Father works in the cleaning Department of the Corporation. There is also a drinking problem from the father and constant marriage break-ups. The housing situation is bad and consists of one sitting room, a kitchen, a toilet and two bedrooms in which the family sleeps."<sup>16</sup>

The court's open hostility toward both Gerard and his mother reflect a recurring prejudice against the poor. Raftery and O'Sullivan contend that the "Industrial schools were designed for the children of the poor, who were perceived as a threat to the social order. It was these children who were inevitably targeted for incarceration. . . ."<sup>17</sup> Like Flynn's speaker, Francie Brady, the speaker in McCabe's novel, is the product of a family in social, economic, and psychological decline. Francie is incarcerated in an industrial school because he breaks into and debases the Nugent home. He, too, is caught in a cycle of abuse and neglect that precludes any hope of normal development and maturation.

Both Flynn and McCabe employ techniques of storytelling that free them from the restraints of realism, though these stylistic choices work better for McCabe than they do for Flynn. Most of Flynn's novel entails a desolate portrait of Dublin streets, deficient family housing, and the isolated Letterfrack industrial school. The middle chapters of the novel reveal Letterfrack, known for taking criminally inclined boys, as a kind of juvenile detention center run as much by the street toughs confined there as by the Christian Brothers in charge: "This was the law of the inmates. The Brothers had their rules and the boys had theirs" (NS 66). The story of Gerard O'Neill begins on a boat sailing for England as O'Neill and his friends Padder and Mucker—whose names

16. Mannix Flynn, *Nothing to Say* (Dublin: Ward River Press, 1983), p. 37; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (NS 37).

17. Raftery and O'Sullivan, *Suffer the Little Children*, p. 64.

echo Joyce's Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud—flee the authorities after a string of petty crimes. Flynn frames his novel with Gerard fading in and out of a dream state, which creates an ambiguity in the novel. Is the entire story of Letterfrack, which accounts for half the novel's content, merely a dream manifesting Gerard's fear of being caught? Have the boys fled the country before they can be caught and sent to an industrial school? If so, Letterfrack then becomes a place of nightmares where bad boys who run wild through the streets and refuse to go to school are sent. Letterfrack becomes a place of what-ifs, a place of punishment created out a child's imagination: "1-2-3-4-5-6-7, all good children go to heaven; 1-2-3-4-5-6-7; all bad boys go to Letterfrack" (NS 33). If O'Neill's dream, however, is a recollection of an actual stay in Letterfrack, then it is recalled in a dream state and told in a style that occasionally mixes reality and fantasy: "It seemed as if days and months had gone by since we boarded that boat and left Dublin without telling a single soul we were going" (NS 11). Such ambiguities problematize scenes like the one on the train.

Toward the end of the novel many of the boys prepare to leave the school and board a train for Dublin. The scene assumes a surreal quality as the boys play, some cowboys and Indians, others soldiers, others spies. The boys' play begins to blend, as cowboys start fighting soldiers. So, too, the play moves from imaginary to real as objects start flying through the air. This momentary scene of childhood play and imagination is broken up by a brother who enters the car screaming at the boys. In his efforts to break up the horseplay, the brother is hit by a shoe and covered with spit and debris. The enraged brother grabs a boy at random and beats him so severely that the boy is bloodied and other brothers must restrain the offender. Once the train arrives in Dublin, the brutalized child meets his parents, who are rightly horrified by the sight of their son. The boy's father curses the offending brother while his fellow brothers calm the terrified parents of other children:

"Oh Jazus, look at that poor child! What happened to him?" said one of the women to anybody. "The Brothers hit him on the train," said Fritzzy. . . . "Here, hold on there," said the man that was sitting beside the boy. The man now stood beside the Brothers. Next thing, his son was beside him, crying and pointing: "It was him, Da." My heart leapt for joy, and I grinded my teeth against each other. I don't know which came first, "Yea rotten poxy bastard," or the unmerciful punch Brother Michael got right into his specky mush. The rest of the Brothers held the man back. (NS 171)

This scene in the railway station indicts both those running the school as well as those in society who turned a blind eye to the brutality. The scene in the train and the response in the station are moments of rupture when actions routinely taking place behind the walls of industrial schools become unex-

pectedly visible outside their walls. But the surreal scene on the train, like the dream state that frames the novel, blunts such moments and raises doubts in the reader's mind regarding the actuality of events, lessening the impact of that moment of rupture.

McCabe's portrait of an unnamed industrial school takes on even greater surreal qualities. Francie Brady falls victim to the same kind of abuse his father did a generation earlier. Like his father, Francie is sent to a "house of a hundred windows."<sup>18</sup> Francie Brady's story is far more fantastic than Gerard O'Neill's, yet McCabe is more successful than Flynn in presenting an affecting moment of rupture that creates a rare moment of clarity for the reader, as well as a fleeting chance for Francie Brady to seek the fostering he so desperately needs. McCabe locates the entire story in the mind of his central character, a troubled boy prone to emotional flights of fancy and sudden outbursts of anger. Throughout the novel, the reader struggles to determine to what extent the events in the novel actually occur and the extent to which Francie's unique perspective controls his account of events. One point comes through quite clearly to the reader, despite the difficulty of Francie's narrative. When Francie tries to tell his best friend Joe Purcell about the sexual abuse he received in the industrial school, Joe stares at Francie in disbelief. Joe—the one character who consistently acts as Francie's anchor, his connection to the outside world—cannot bear to hear the story Francie tries to tell. Francie responds by dismissing the whole thing as a joke, a story he made up just to tease Joe:

I told him about the gardener and the Black and Tans and the bogmen and their bony arses and being locked in the boilerhouse and puffing fags and talking to the saints and St. Teresa. It sure is some laugh said Joe, what did they lock you in the boilerhouse for? I says oh nothing, just messing around, you know. That was all I was going to say but then he says it again but what did they lock you in the boilerhouse *for*? Then I thought the best thing about friends is you can tell them anything in the whole world and once I thought that I didn't care. As soon as I started the story it ran away with itself. There were tears in my eyes and I couldn't stop laughing the bonnet and Tiddly [Father Sullivan], I love you! and the whole lot. You want to see the Rolos he gave me I said, I must have ate about two thousand fucking Rolos Joe. Rolos said Joe, he gave you Rolos but what did he give you Rolos *for*? . . . I wanted to talk about the hide and the old days and hacking at the ice . . . But Joe didn't want to. He kept going back

18. Patrick McCabe, *The Butcher Boy* (New York: Delta, 1992), p. 71; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (BB 71). In an interview, McCabe refers to the narrative technique employed in *The Butcher Boy* as "social fantastic." See Christopher FitzSimon, "St. Macartan, Minnie the Minx and Mondo Movies: Elliptical Peregrinations Through the Subconscious of a Monaghan Writer Traumatized by Cows and the Brilliance of James Joyce," *Irish University Review*, 28 (1998), 176.

to the other thing so in the end I told him and what does he say then he says Francie he didn't really do that did he? I said what are you talking about Joe he *did* didn't I just tell you? The next thing I knew I was in a cold sweat because of the way Joe was looking at me. . . . Then I said: I fairly fooled you there Joe. Tiddly! Imagine someone doing the like of that! Tiddly! Rolos—for fuck's sake! I laughed till the tears ran down my face. *I fooled you* I cried out. (BB 103–5)

In a novel where the real and surreal merge in Francie's mind, what the reader knows with certainty is that Francie cannot tell anyone about life in the industrial school. The moment when Francie's voice and his story are most clear is also the moment that those around him choose not to hear. It is not surprising, then, when Francie spins into a downward spiral of paranoia and violence that results in Mrs. Nugent's murder and Francie's incarceration. Because Francie cannot exist in society, he is locked up in a place where he can continually relive his few happy childhood experiences with Joe, those happy days before his mother's death and his commitment to the industrial school.

Bernadette Fahy's 1999 memoir *Freedom of Angels* and the RTÉ documentary *States of Fear* approach the industrial school in new ways, combining personal testimony, historical background, and cultural and political analysis. Fahy, who participated in the 1996 documentary on Goldenbridge Orphanage titled *Dear Daughter*, published her memoir when the public controversy over *States of Fear* was still at a high pitch.<sup>19</sup> Fahy charges the Irish church and state with collaborating to criminalize poverty, and to use it as a justification for institutionalizing children in an attempt to control what was seen as the moral laxity of the Irish poor: "When nuns and staff told us, 'You'll turn out like your mother,' they meant it as an attack on us, pointing out an inherent, irredeemable flaw: our birth."<sup>20</sup> The result is a nature versus nurture paradox that kept the offspring of poor families, single parents, or overextended households trapped in an cycle of fear, confusion, and inevitable sin:

Perhaps the nuns believed that the less we knew about sex, the less likely we were to become curious about it and, worse still, actively engage in it. After all, their principal aim was to protect us from moral danger . . . In contrast to their theoretical teaching, in practice they continually punished us for being the product of our parents' sin and predicted that we would "turn out" just like our mothers. (FA 114)

19. Louis Lentin produced the television documentary *Dear Daughter*, based on Christine Buckley's time at Goldenbridge during the 1950s, which was aired in April 1996.

20. Bernadette Fahy, *Freedom of Angels* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1999), 122; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (FA 122).

Such paradoxical teaching only exacerbated the fear and confusion felt by young women in such institutions as Goldenbridge who were the victims of sexual abuse, because any knowledge or experience of sex was grounds for transfer to a Magdalen asylum.

Fahy tells her story with more confidence than Doyle or Touher, and she is able to place her personal experience within a larger context of judicial inequity and educational corruption. Even so, Fahy still has moments when, like Doyle and Touher, she seems to fear telling her story. Twice, early in her book, Fahy mentions that one particular event stands out as her most painful and debilitating experience at Goldenbridge. These two statements dramatically foreshadow an important revelation that Fahy clearly wants to make. When that moment arrives in her story, however, Fahy buries it in the middle of a long paragraph, almost as if the humiliation she felt then still stings. The reader, recalling her foreshadowing an important event, one in particular among many, must stop return and reread the passage and deduce that the experience in the room known as the “Rec” must be the event Fahy hinted at earlier in her memoir. So acute is the pain of the event that Fahy can more easily anticipate its telling than actually tell it.

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All of these texts have commonalities, the most obvious of which is the brutality levied against children at the hands of brothers, sisters, and lay people working in industrial schools. But other commonalities arise as well. One of the most troubling is the fact that, for these children, the customary distinction between public and private is erased. Industrial school children were not afforded the common freedom of privacy; showers and baths were events performed in front of others; and even the bathrooms were open to display. At other times, particularly among younger children, whole dormitories were awakened at night and the children were forced to use chambers pots or the bathroom at the same time. Rarely are the children of industrial schools permitted the freedom of simply being alone. When events do take place in private, they are often traumatic, as when is a child called away from the group into the private chamber of a brother or nun and is sexually or physically assaulted. So rare, in fact, is a private moment for Paddy Doyle that, when he finds himself alone in bed during a trip to his aunt’s house, his fear prevents him even from getting out of bed to use the bathroom. When he defecates in the bed, his enraged aunt vows not have him back in her house. In an industrial school, privacy equates to an empty stairwell, or to confinement in a hot boiler room or dark closet, where the child could be beaten. In the end, children of industrial schools develop no clear sense of a private self, only an institutional self.

Bernadette Fahy makes this pointedly clear: “One of the few things we could call our own was our identity number. . . . mine was 138” (*FA* 29).

In the light of recent novels and memoirs, it is ironic to think of the skeptical and aloof Stephen Dedalus finding the Christian Brothers representative of the love he so clearly lacks. Such a view of the Christian Brothers may have held at the time of Joyce’s novel, but an alternate view has been forged in the conscience of contemporary Irish society. Beyond such contrasts, though, Joyce’s novel is helpful in another way, for *Portrait* is a bildungsroman, a story of development and initiation in which a young man grows up, develops a sense of himself, assimilates the tenets and teachings of his culture, and then reaches a point where he can accept or reject the culture that shaped him. These memoirs and novels of institutional life make clear that the children of industrial schools were afforded no such opportunity. They were raised in an environment where the two key ingredients of a bildungsroman, self and culture, were not distinct entities that interplay during the course of childhood and adolescence, but, rather, a melding of the self with the institution and its inviolable rules. An obliterated distinction between private and public spheres results in young people growing up without a clear sense of self; what is private becomes sinful or painful to the individual lacking the opportunity to evaluate, accept, or reject the teachings of the institution.

The characters in these texts, whether real or fictional, suffer from the same fate: they must struggle to see themselves as members of Irish society, and can only haltingly assimilate into society outside the confines of the industrial school. Such simple things as eating and conversing with others proves alien and disconcerting to them. As Gerard O’Neill laments at the end of Flynn’s novel, “You don’t know the face in the mirror and the face in the mirror doesn’t know you” (*NS* 171). Rather than assure the moral rectitude of at risk children, the industrial school created undereducated, underachieving, alienated adults who find only a tenuous place in Irish society. It is no wonder so many of them—like the fictional Francie Brady or the real Mannix Flynn—spend part of their adult lives in prison, while others try to free themselves from a prison of silence.