

Discourse and Hegemony: Race and Class in the Language of Charity in Nineteenth-Century Dublin¹

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Dark as the heathen, in sin they roam;
Their school the wide world, the streets their home;
No voice to warm them, no hand to guide,
How should they know that the Lord hath died?²

But, oh! forget not me, an outcast child,
Poor, wretched, homeless, ignorant, and rude;
On whom the eye of mercy ne'er has smiled,
Untaught to fly from ill; or choose the good.³

In *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, Terry Eagleton cites Gramsci when arguing that hegemony is the “‘permanently organized consent’” by which modern states exercise their authority.⁴ Britain, says Eagleton, failed in its attempts to establish hegemony in Ireland because it never established this ‘permanently organized consent’.⁵ While Britain may not have established hegemony

- 1 I would like to thank Meabh ní Fhuarthain, Kevin O’Neill, Robert Savage, Jim Smith, Mrinalini Sinha, Paula Tirrell, Peter Weiler and Kevin Whelan, who have provided me with a generous amount of their time, advice and critical feedback for this paper. I would also like to thank the Boston College History Department for awarding me the Janet Wilson James Scholarship and the International PEO Sisterhood for the Scholar Award, both of which provided funds toward my travel to Galway where this paper was presented at the 1996 conference of the Society for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Ireland.
- 2 Miss Macpherson, ‘Little London Arabs’ in Sarah Davies, *Wanderers Brought Home* (Dublin, 1871), p. 17.
- 3 Charles Sabine, ‘The Outcast’s Appeal’ in Davies, *Wanderers Brought Home*, p. 24.
- 4 See Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London, 1995), p. 27 and Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1975).
- 5 My use of ‘Britain’ is not to suggest that I do not recognize the Anglo-centric nature of the British nation-state as it operated in Ireland. Indeed, Britain met, on occasion, with similar resistance to the establishment of hegemonic rule in Scotland and Wales. Gramsci says, ‘Hegemony is primarily a strategy for the gaining of the active consent of the masses through their self-organization, starting from civil society, and in all the

throughout all of Ireland, this essay will suggest that it did have success in Dublin. To illustrate this success, the language of charity in Victorian Dublin will be examined.⁶ This language bolstered Britain's hegemonic control within Dublin by reinforcing the upper classes' desire to create an innocuous working class. Within this discourse, not only the Irish Protestant upper class, but so too the Catholic, described the Dublin poor in the class terminology espoused by the British upper classes. By championing the belief that the Irish poor were morally, intellectually and racially inferior and then attempting to train them to be model employees and loyal subjects, the work of Dublin charities strengthened English rule in Ireland.⁷

When evaluating the language of nineteenth-century Dublin charities, contemporary notions of race and class must be considered.⁸ It is difficult to argue that one dominated the other. While most often wealthy charity workers described the poor in class terms, it appears that, at times, conjectures on nineteenth-century racial theories were conflated with those of class. As Gareth Stedman Jones suggests, 'Class [was] a life sentence, as final as any caste system'.⁹ Consequently, this suggests that because both upper-class Catholic and

hegemonic apparatuses, from the factory to the school and family.' See Christine Buci-Glucksmann, 'Hegemony and Consent' in Anne Showstack Sassoon (ed.) *Approaches to Gramsci* (London, 1982), p. 119.

- 6 Women in particular were involved in charity during the nineteenth century. See Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995); Alison Jordan, *Who Cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, 1993); Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence, Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, 1990); Peter Mandler (ed.), *The Uses of Charity, The Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis* (Philadelphia, 1990); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes, Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago, 1987) and F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980).
- 7 For a variety of opinions on Ireland, England and race, see Jeffery Richards, 'Ireland, The Empire and Film' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996); Roy Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (New York, 1993); Sheridan Gilley, 'English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900' in Colin Holmes (ed.), *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London, 1978) and L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, 1971).
- 8 For discussion of empire and race in the nineteenth century, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York, 1995); S.B. Cook, *Imperial Affinities: Nineteenth-Century Analogies and Exchanges Between India and Ireland* (New Delhi, 1993); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale* (London, 1992); Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986) and Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science, Great Britain 1800-1960* (Oxford, 1981).
- 9 Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class' in *Journal of Social History*, vii (1974), p. 493. See also Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971), p. 188.

Protestant philanthropists accepted and applied British theories of race and class to the Irish poor, they furthered the process of hegemony in Dublin.

Some in the nineteenth-century British anthropological community espoused the idea of a racial hierarchy described as a pyramid in shape. Accordingly, the Anglo-Saxon middle-classes were placed at the top. The less advanced, poorer members of the Anglo-Saxon race came next, followed by the other white races, and finally those of dark skin.¹⁰ Social critics, travel writers and writers of charity pamphlets, among others, accepted and employed these racial theories toward Ireland.¹¹ In 1860, Charles Kingsley noted during a visit to Sligo,

I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country ... to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.¹²

Punch and *The Times* often published editorial cartoons depicting simian-featured Irishmen and women staring up from the newsprint, and *Punch* described the poor Irish as 'the missing link between the gorilla and the Negro'.¹³ At times, Dublin charities appeared to accept British theories of racial degeneracy of the poor and apply them. For example, the Dublin Visiting Mission referred to poor Catholic boys as 'wild street Arabs'.¹⁴

Nineteenth-century theories of class contended that the poor were inferior due to their own immorality, intellectual mediocrity and indolence. They were described as 'dirty, diseased, violent, licentious, thriftless, criminal and political-

10 McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 56. She notes that the 'degenerate aristocracy had lapsed from supremacy'. See also Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 5.

11 For example of seventeenth-century racial stereotypes, see James Smith, 'Effaced History: Facing the Colonial Contexts of Ben Jonson's *Irish Masque at Court*' in *ELH* (forthcoming). See also Hazel Waters, 'The Great Famine and the Rise of Anti-Irish Racism' in *Race and Class*, xxxvii, no. 1 (1995), pp. 95-108; Fintan O'Toole, 'Going Native: The Irish as Blacks and Indians' in *Études Irlandaises: L'Irland Aujourd'hui* (Autumn 1994), pp. 121-31; Nicholas P. Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America' in *William and Mary Quarterly*, iv, no. 30 (1973), pp. 575-98; W. R. Jones, 'England Against the Celtic Fringe: A Study in Cultural Stereotypes' in *Journal of World History*, xiii, no. 1 (1971), pp. 154-71 and Edward D. Snyder, 'The Wild Irish: A Study of Some English Satires Against the Irish, Scots and Welsh' in *Modern Philology* (April 1920), pp. 687-725.

12 Charles Kingsley, *His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. Frances E. Kingsley (London, 1901), cited in Luke Gibbons, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History' in *Oxford Literary Review*, xiii, no. 9 (1991), pp. 95-117.

13 *Punch* in 1851, cited in Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Baltimore, 1994), p. 319.

14 *Dublin Visiting Missions* (1883), p. 5.

ly volatile'.¹⁵ So too, within this language, the upper classes also reveal a deep-seated fear of violent action by the masses.¹⁶ For the wealthy, the moral economy became the yearning for ostentatious deference by the poor in exchange for aid, financial or otherwise.¹⁷ Thus the upper class felt that to achieve the desired result of a mollified working-class population, they should be placed amongst their 'betters,' shown civilized conduct, and provided minimal financial relief.¹⁸ When we look at the language, it appears that many in the upper classes advocated that the working classes be characterized as improveable, yet essentially permanent. It was as though the poor had an impenetrable barrier between themselves and the middle classes, a glass ceiling of class, up to which the poor could approach but through which they could never break. For example, the famous social commentator John Mayhew titled the first chapter of his book *London Labour and the London Poor*, 'Of Wandering Tribes in General'. As Gertrude Himmelfarb notes, 'Mayhew contributed to an image of poverty that made the poor a race apart, uncivilized, unsocialized, less than human'.¹⁹ The upper classes then justified their rule by maintaining that the poor were perpetually children, that is, morally, physically and intellectually inferior, forever needing to be shown the proper way to behave.²⁰

15 Jennifer Davis, 'Jennings' Buildings and the Royal Borough: The Construction of the Underclass in Mid-Victorian England' in David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations Since 1800* (New York, 1989), pp. 11-39.

16 See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between the Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971) and Jennifer Davis, 'The London Garroting Panic of 1862: A Moral Panic and the Creation of Criminal Class in Mid-Victorian England' in V.A.C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker (eds), *Crime and Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe Since 1500* (London, 1980), pp. 190-213.

17 See E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York, 1993). Thompson proposes a 'moral economy' in which the poor came to expect 'aid' from the wealthy either through provision of food or other forms of assistance and in return the wealthy expected deference and respect from those they helped. For a discussion of the role of the moral economy in rural charity see Jessica Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: Women of the Landed Classes and Rural Philanthropy' *Victorian Studies*, xxx (Winter 1987), pp. 183-210.

18 For discussion of social control and charity see Simon Gunn, 'The Ministry, the Middle Class and the "Civilizing Mission" in Manchester, 1850-80' in *Social History*, xxi, no. 1 (January 1996), pp. 22-36; Simon Cordery, 'Friendly Societies and the Discourse of Respectability in Britain, 1825-1875' in *Journal of British Studies*, xxxiv (January 1995), pp. 35-58; Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'Manners into Morals: What the Victorians Knew' in *The American Scholar*, lvii (Spring 1988), pp. 223-32; Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Class Expressions vs. Social Control' in *History Workshop IV* (1978), pp. 163-70 and A.P. Donajgradzki (ed.), *Social Control in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977).

19 'The phrase "wandering tribes" was often used at this time to describe the vagrants' (Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'Mayhew's Poor, A Problem of Identity' in *Victorian Studies* [March 1971], p. 320). See also Richard Maxwell, 'Henry Mayhew and the Life of the Streets' in *Journal of British Studies*, xvii, no. 2 (Spring 1978), pp. 87-105.

20 Similarly, Richard Lebow argues that colonizers needed to rationalize their rule over

Caesar Lombroso, the late nineteenth-century criminal anthropologist, provided an example of this view. In his book *The Female Offender*, Lombroso portrayed the poor, criminal female as degenerate. 'Their moral sense is deficient; they are revengeful, jealous, and inclined to vengeance of a refined cruelty'.²¹ He further argued, '... women are big children; their evil tendencies are more numerous and more varied than men's but generally remain latent. When these are awakened and excited they produce results proportionally greater ... [T]he criminal woman is consequently a monster'.²² Lombroso asserted that a poor, criminal woman loses much of her maternal instinct 'because psychologically and anthropologically she belongs more to the male than to the female sex. Her exaggerated sexuality so opposed to maternity would alone suffice to make her a bad mother'.²³ In 1847, Mrs Kate Charlotte Maberly in her pamphlet titled *The Present State of Ireland* advocated education for the poor Irish female while at the same time describing her as 'but one degree removed from a savage state. Ferocious, idle, drunken and revengeful, they are the chief instigation of every outrage, not hesitating, when there is an opportunity, of taking an active part in the disturbance'.²⁴ Thus the poor woman was a depraved child. Charitable women often characterized their relationship to the impoverished as essentially that of mother to child; and as mothers, Irish charitable women attempted to mould the behavior of the poor, thereby furthering the establishment of British hegemony through class control. In a visit to an Irish Magdalen asylum, Nora O'Mahony makes explicit the indigent woman as child when she quoted the Reverend Mother, head of the asylum, who described the penitents as, '... very good children, real saints most of them'.²⁵

Because charities believed the poor to be child-like, they also felt that the poor's moral development was stunted and that they then must be taught virtuous behavior in order to create a better British subject.²⁶ Social commentators often argued that the poor were more susceptible to sexual and financial temptations.²⁷ They argued that the conditions in which the poor lived con-

the colonized. Therefore when inhuman descriptions became untenable because of Enlightenment thinking and the anti-slave movement, the natives were instead ascribed an inferior human status, often described as 'backward children'. Richard N. Lebow, *White Britain Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 20. See also Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes*, p. 180.

21 Caesar L. Lombroso, *The Female Offender* (London, 1895), p. 151.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 153.

24 Mrs Kate Charlotte Maberly, *The Present State of Ireland* (n.p., 1847), p. 28.

25 Nora Tynan O'Mahony, 'In A Magdalen Asylum' in *Irish Monthly*, xxxiv (July 1906), p. 374.

26 See David W. Savage, 'Evangelical Educational Policy in Britain and India, 1857-1860' in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, iii, no. 22 (September 1994), p. 488.

27 As Paul Johnson details, in the nineteenth century, the poor were accused of enrolling

tributed to their immoral behavior. Reformers believed that males and females crammed together in small filthy rooms sleeping four and five to a bed would lead to immorality. So too, poor and ragged clothing failed to keep them decent and could lead to sexual misadventure. In the *Report of the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population* the author noted,

upwards of forty persons sleeping in the same room, married and single, including, of course, children, and several young adult persons of either sex. I have met with instances of a man, his wife, and his wife's sister sleeping in the same bed together. The result of this over-crowding upon morality is palpable and frightful ... by such crowded rooms they were led into temptation.²⁸

Social commentator, Henry Worsley, believed that by not separating the sexes at work 'it has proved universally to be prejudicial to morals ... the almost universal absence of chastity and purity among the labouring-class, in our country villages at the present day, it is notorious to every one at all acquainted with them'.²⁹

Those described above were persons living in the worst of circumstances. However, within the 'class' of the poor, there was a variety of economic levels. From artisans and shopkeepers to unskilled laborers, the working class was a hierarchy within a hierarchy.³⁰ However, of the poor who needed state or private aid, there were generally categorized as either deserving or undeserving. Charities often used wonderful phrases to describe those members of the deserving poor. In 1883, the Managing Committee of the Association for the Suppression of Mendacity in Dublin called them the 'unobtrusive classes of the meritorious poor' who were 'praiseworthy [for] desir[ing] to establish a certain

their children in life insurance funds and then killing them for insurance money. Paul Johnson, 'Class Law in Victorian England' in *Past and Present*, no. 141 (November 1993), pp. 147-69. See also David Phillips, "'A New Engine of Power and Authority": The Institutionalization of Law-Enforcement in England 1780-1830' in Gatrell, Lenman and Parker (eds), *Crime and Law*, pp. 155-89 and the anonymous 'The Garrett, the Cabin and the Gaol' in *Irish Quarterly Review* (June 1853), p. 311.

28 Cited in 'The Garrett', p. 316.

29 Henry Worsley, *Juvenile Depravity* (London, 1849), pp. 35, 67.

30 Geoffrey Cossick quotes it as three tiered, 'comprised of artisans, the poor and below them 'a class of honest independence with no ties to the general scheme of society', Geoffrey Cossick 'From Gentlemen to the Residuum: Languages of Social Description in Victorian Britain' in Penelope J. Corfield (ed.) *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), p. 163. See also Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984); K.C. Phillipps, *Language and Class in Victorian England* (Oxford, 1984) and Asa Briggs 'The Language of Class in Early Nineteenth-Century England' in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds), *Essays in Social History* (Oxford, 1974).

decency of appearance' and in 1835 it called them the 'well-disposed and orderly poor'.³¹ Many charities noted in their statement of intent that they helped only those who 'deserved' aid.³² As St Mary's Industrial Institute noted, it hoped to benefit the 'distressed, but truly deserving portion of the community, viz., the Industrious Poor, will, it is hoped meet with the generous and ready support of a benevolent Public'.³³ The Strangers Friend Society for Visiting and Relieving Distressed Strangers and the Resident Sick Poor stated that

its benevolent operations are still more extended embracing a most deserving class of the community. It will at once be seen that they are not the noisy importunate beggars, who impede our progress in the streets, hang about our doors, taking every opportunity to exhibit their misery – nor are they those who, with begging letters, fabricated testimonials and well-concerted tales of apparently genuine distress, go about, endeavouring to impose upon the kindness and credulity of the unsuspecting charitable and humane ...³⁴

While helping the most deserving, religious conversion was also the goal of a small but vocal Protestant minority in Ireland that desired to save Catholics from hell.³⁵ Benedict Anderson argues, and this may also be applicable in the case of Ireland, that missionaries actually desired 'to turn "idolaters" not so much into Christians, as into people culturally English, despite their irremediable colour and blood'.³⁶ The 1883 report of the Dublin Visiting Mission in Connection with the Society for Irish Church Missions, stated that the mission was an 'association for sending Town Missionaries into the back streets and lanes of the city – visiting from room to room – not passing by Protestants but especially seeking out Roman Catholics'.³⁷ Missionaries described Catholics as idolaters who

31 *Managing Committee of the Association for the Suppression of Mendacity in Dublin* (1833), p. 10; (1834), p. 14, and (1835), p. 11. Certainly names given the poor in general were quite colorful including 'wretched class' or 'neglected persons'. The *Dublin Female Penitentiary* (1814) termed them 'hardened and unworthy' (p. 10) and in 1815 called the women they worked with, 'outcast, degraded, rejected and despised' (p. 9).

32 The *Dublin Providence Home* (1841) clearly noted that it was 'designed for the advantage of poor females of good character alone' (p. 5, their italics).

33 Included in the *Second Annual Report of the Ladies Association of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul* (1853), p. 27.

34 *Report of the Strangers Friend Society for Visiting and Relieving Distressed Strangers and the Resident Sick Poor* (1832), p. 4.

35 In Ireland the term 'Souperism' was applied to those persons who exchanged soup for conversion. See Irene Whelan, 'The Stigma of Souperism' in Cathal Póirtéir (ed.), *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995) and Desmond Bowen, *Souperism: Myth or Reality?* (Cork, 1970).

36 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983), p. 91. See also, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

37 *Dublin Visiting Missions* (1883), p. 3.

blindly threw bog water upon themselves, and who needed to be saved from the clutches of Romanism in order to reach heaven.³⁸ Thus, besides saving their souls, Irish missionaries may have hoped that conversion would also put Roman Catholics on the road toward becoming loyal subjects to the Empire.

One well-known Dublin proselytizer and member of the Irish Church Missions was Ellen Smyly. In the mid-nineteenth century, Smyly opened the Smyly Orphan Homes which adopted an explicit agenda of prioritizing the acceptance of Roman Catholic children or children of inter-faith marriage, with Protestant children accepted only if room were available. As evinced in a report of one young girl from Smyly's Townsend-street Ragged Schools and Girls Home of 1893, Catholicism is equated with darkness and savagery: '[She] had been a Roman Catholic, but the teaching of the Word was blessed to her soul, and she was steadfast in her determination not to go back to the darkness of Romanism from which she had been delivered'.³⁹ Sarah Davies, a Dublin philanthropist who worked with Ellen Smyly, noted in her *Wanderers Brought Home* that philanthropists asked of poor Roman Catholic boys, 'Are we to train them in the way which they have begun to walk, the way of ignorance and superstition? Are we to hide from them that light which hitherto has only been exhibited to them in a dark lantern?'⁴⁰ Hence one scenario, proposed by Jones, might be that through conversion, 'they could eradicate pernicious customs and dangerous class prejudices from the poor, and to promote acceptance of the moral and political code of their superiors'.⁴¹ Jones also suggests that missionaries were part of the hegemonic process: 'The policeman and the workhouse were not sufficient. The respectable and the well-to-do had to win the "hearts and minds" of the masses to the new moral order and to assert their right to act as its priesthood'.⁴²

However, some amongst Dublin's upper-class, Irish Catholic philanthropists did not need to be converted. They adopted the habits, beliefs and language of the British upper classes, thereby establishing themselves as members of that group known as Castle Catholics.⁴³ The acceptance of nineteenth-century upper-class class ideology comes through explicitly in a number of Dublin's Catholic charities. For example, the [Catholic] Female Penitent Asylum helped

38 As wrote the author about some of the converts from Catholicism in the *Report of the Ladies Irish Association* (1887): 'I called on them to join in giving thanks for being taught better things than bowing down to dumb idols, and some to bog water, when, as they believe it to be, blessed by men, falsely called priests of the New Law' (p. 7).

39 *Report of the Townsend-street Ragged Schools and Girls' Home* (Dublin, 1893), p. 6.

40 Davies, *Wanderers*, pp. 74-75.

41 Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture,' p. 466. See also Vivien Smyly, 'The Early History of Mrs. Smyly's Homes and Schools' (Dublin, 1976).

42 Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture,' p. 466.

43 A term adopted in the late eighteenth century; see Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830* (Cork, 1996).

young women 'from being the disgrace and scourge of society', training them to wash and mend clothes so that they might become 'ranked among [society's] useful and edifying members'. The Asylum believed that these poor women should work 'to repair the scandal [that they have] given to society'. At the same time the charity encouraged them to petition God for their immortal souls and 'to weep incessantly over their sins, and pray without intermission for their pious benefactors'. These benefactors then received benefits since the 'advantages they confer on society' secured them everlasting blessings.⁴⁴

The House of Protection for Distressed Young Women of Unblemished Character, also a Catholic charity, accepted 'poor young women of unblemished reputation who might be ... rendered useful to society'. These women who had been 'reduced to the last degree of danger and distress ... by sickness [or] the wickedness of their superiors were ... now wandering about in tattered apparel, and seeking in vain for employment'. The charity stated that because they needed the House of Protection's help, these poor women must have already 'waded through the abominations that divided them from our Asylums; or, at least, had renounced their virtuous character and the world, in order to be *entitled to admission*' (their italics). The House of Protection trained needy women as laundresses in hopes of their attaining future employment outside the refuge. Viewing the poor as diseased, the charity describes the 'unhappy women who infest our streets and infect society'. By saving a young woman from the mean streets and providing her with some instruction, the House of Protection '[taught] her to walk to a more perfect way, and thereby render her more dear to God, and more valuable to her employers'. As a more valuable employee, she was also a more loyal subject to the British Empire.⁴⁵

The [Catholic] House of Refuge for Industrious and Distressed Females of Good Character tried to save young women from joining that extensive 'class of misery who were unprotected and reduced to distress'. This charity accepted a young woman only after she 'produc[ed] unquestionable vouchers for the propriety of [her] conduct' and then the charity trained her in washing, mangle (ironing) plain-work and 'other branches of Female Industry until suitable situations [could] be provided for them'. The House attempted to aid in their spiritual enlightenment and 'to impress the duties of religion more deeply in their hearts'.⁴⁶ The training of women as laundresses might be considered a metaphor for the spiritual and bodily cleansing of the poor. Possibly the upper classes believed that a clean body and mind would create a benign population of poor persons, more deferent to authority.⁴⁷

44 *Female Penitent Asylum* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 1.

45 *House of Protection for Distressed Young Women of Unblemished Character* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 1.

46 *House of Refuge for Industrious and Distressed Females, of Good Character* (Dublin, 1851), p. 1.

47 See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York, 1980).

Finally, the annual report for the Committee of the Catholic Ragged Schools discussed many of the poor children it helped, but the charity noted that it had special affection for that class of children who

through the indolence or vice of their parents, ... are thrown on our streets to beg their food ... or who, in order to sustain a miserable existence, are compelled to attend those schools opened for their perversion by the enemies of our holy faith.⁴⁸

The charity went on to note that if these children were exposed to the enemy, then they would 'grow up in ignorance, vice and irreligion, and as they approach maturity, are liable to get so inured to crime, so hardened to infamy, as to become pests to society, a disgrace and reproach to their country'.⁴⁹ Thus it appears that some upper-class Catholics of Dublin accepted the efforts of British hegemony and worked diligently toward moulding a benign Dublin poor.

Irish Protestant charities, too, discussed the Dublin poor in contemporary class and, as the documentation suggests, racial terms. For example, in one *Report of the Committee of the [Protestant] Dublin Female Penitentiary*, the asylum noted that it was 'for the reception of unfortunate females plunged in sin, but, from conviction, willing to quit the paths of vice, and to whom might be afforded the means of earning a subsistence by honest industry'. When the women found this honest subsistence, they would then no longer be the 'pests of their respective stations in society'. The charity hints at an essentialist notion of class when it noted that it found indigent, Irish women 'herding among the lowest orders of profligate and abandoned characters'.⁵⁰ The Penitentiary hoped to save such women from the 'dreadful contamination hardening into the same debased image ... and to teach the unhappy and guilty female to remember what she was'.⁵¹ Thus it appears that while trained and given aid, she was *not* to forget the class from whence she came; a state within which her benefactors may have believed that she could be only somewhat improved, but from which she could never be changed.

Within prostitution reform, however, charity workers attempted to erase the penitent's past completely. Linking these two apparently contradictory

48 *Second Annual Report of the Committee of the Catholic Ragged Schools* (Dublin, 1853), pp. 5-6; the enemy were Protestant proselytizers.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. What country they are referring to here is, of course a legitimate question and one for a longer paper. If the term country refers solely to Ireland then it identifies nationalistic loyalties and throws ambiguity into my argument. However, if country refers to England, then, I argue, that Irish philanthropists furthered the process of British hegemony in Dublin. Further research on these types of references within both Protestant and Catholic charities must be attempted before drawing any conclusions.

50 *Report [first] of the Committee of the Dublin Female Penitentiary* (1813), p. 7.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

routes of reform appears to be the overwhelming desire by reformers to eradicate penitents' individuality and proscribe their ability to act independently. Thereby, stripped of her independence, she was more easily disciplined. Magdalen asylums stifled penitent's identity, calling them by a number ('Mrs One', 'Mrs Two', and so on), or if in a religious charity, by the name of a saint.⁵² *The Report of the Committee of the [Protestant] Dublin Female Penitentiary* explicitly stated that the Penitentiary tried to restrict inmates' autonomy by keeping them 'secluded from the world ... [and they] should have their thoughts as much as possible turned from the contemplation of its scenes'.⁵³ Thus Magdalen homes (and this was true of many charities) kept the penitents under a strict regimen of work and reflection.⁵⁴ By stifling their singularity, disciplining them through a strict daily schedule and training them for service-oriented positions, reformers furthered the rule of the state by attempting to create a benign population of working-class persons.⁵⁵

While reformers believed that they could improve the lives of the Dublin poor, the language of charity indicates that they did not feel that their class status could substantially be changed. Because of their conviction that the poor were less intelligent, charity workers had limited expectations of the indigent's ability to learn a skill. Most charities provided training that could qualify persons for a position in the service industries, thereby making them honest, though certainly keeping them unequal.⁵⁶ As Davies emphasized in *Wanderers Brought Home*, reformers had limited expectations of the mental and physical capabilities of the poor. For example, orphanages trained boys for 'occupations suited to their tastes and capacities. They become sailors, soldiers, servants, tradesmen or teachers'.⁵⁷ To be a teacher, however, did not necessarily place one in a higher class status. As Richard Johnson notes of teachers in the nine-

52 Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 114.

53 *Report [first] of the Committee of the Dublin Female Penitentiary* (1813), p. 8. The Dublin Providence Home was little different as it carefully watched the inmates' 'temper and conduct' in order to ascertain in what industry they could be trained; *Dublin Providence Home* (1839), p. 4.

54 Anonymous, 'The Magdalens of High Park' in the *Irish Rosary* (April, 1897), pp. 180-1. Luddy also notes that the success rates of these asylums are questionable, a fact she attributes to their harsh regime and invasive tactics. See Maria Luddy, 'Prostitution and Rescue Work in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in (eds), Cliona Murphy and Maria Luddy *Women Surviving* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 51-84.

55 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York, 1995), pp. 219, 192-3.

56 Domestic, however, were often taught to read and write as it was important to their position in the home. See *Report of the Female Orphan House* (1881), p. 10; Mona Hearn, *Below Stairs: Domestic Service Remembered in Dublin and Beyond 1880-1922* (Dublin, 1993) and L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life, Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England' in *Journal of Social History*, vii (1974), pp. 406-28.

57 Davies, *Wanderers*, pp. 74-5. See *The Report of the Female Orphan House* (1851), p. 10.

teenth century, 'they should be raised but not that far out of their own class'.⁵⁸ Many charities advocated that if the poor were 'caught' young, or prostitutes were aided after a 'first fall',⁵⁹ they could more easily be made honest. The General and First Annual Report of the St Joseph's Reformatory School for Catholic Girls stated that the school could save young girls by separating them from the older ones. 'The peculiar training which that most difficult class, criminal children of tender years require, can be fully developed, whilst they are saved from the contamination too often springing from association with those older in years'.⁶⁰ Here, too, charity workers attempted to control the behavior of poor children in attempts to mould them into a placid population of persons trained to serve.

Finally, the discourse on philanthropy also provides a glimpse of how society viewed upper-class female philanthropists. While the upper classes considered the characteristics of the poor to be permanent, they also believed that gentewomen were literally born into their role as 'civilizer'; as Edward Sieveking wrote,

There are qualities of the heart – tact, gentleness, consideration – qualities that distinguish the true gentlewoman, and the diffusion of which among all classes of women render it so peculiarly desirable that ladies by birth, who feel a vocation ... [should serve the needy].⁶¹

Using these inherent qualities, said Matthew Hill, gentewomen could delicately influence and alter the behavior of the poor, thereby making them into honorable, benign members of the lower classes.

These ladies, in addition to their intelligence, firmness, judgment and kindly disposition ... exercise the potent influence derived from the refined manners and the chastened habit of command which belong to their social position – an influence gently enforcing the prompt obedience of all who have the good fortune to be under their control.⁶²

Thus not only were charity women trained to help others, it was this to which they were bred.

58 See Richard Johnson, 'Education, Politics and Social Control in Early Victorian England' in *Past and Present*, xlix (November 1970), p. 113, and *Dublin Providence Home* (1839), p.4.

59 A term used for young prostitutes who were seen to be still redeemable – unlike hardened prostitutes for whom charities felt there was little hope.

60 *General and First Annual Report of St. Joseph's Reformatory School for Catholic Girls* (Dublin, 1862.), n.p.

61 Edward H. Sieveking, 'Thoughts on Nursing' in a paper read at the Annual General Assembly of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, London, St. John Baptist's Day, 1873.

62 Matthew Davenport Hill, *A Paper on the Irish Convict Prisons* (London, 1857), pp. 22–3.

This essay has suggested that through the language of charity, many members of Dublin's elite, both Protestant and Catholic, accepted the nineteenth-century British ideologies of class. Yet this situation is made more complex by essentialist notions of race which, at times, appeared to be applied to the poor as characteristics of class. The language also suggests that those who saw themselves at the apex of the racial and class pyramid believed that through training, the poor could be made honest though certainly never equal. As the author of the *Social Service Handbook* stated of the Irish poor, 'if properly treated, [the poor] have a fair chance of becoming useful citizens of the state; but who, if not so treated, will in the future, grow up to be an additional burden on the ratepayers'.⁶³ Thus, by teaching the poor to behave as the upper and middle classes did, Dublin's upper classes attempted to further the establishment of Gramsci's 'permanently organized consent' while Dublin philanthropists endeavored to mould the city's poor into proper, loyal and innocuous subjects of the British Empire.⁶⁴

63 J.P. Smyth, *Social Service Handbook Issued by Church of Ireland Social Service Union* (London, 1901), p. 70.

64 Foucault called it a *society of normalization* in which 'the procedures of normalization came to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonization of those of law', *Power/Knowledge*, p. 107 (his italics).