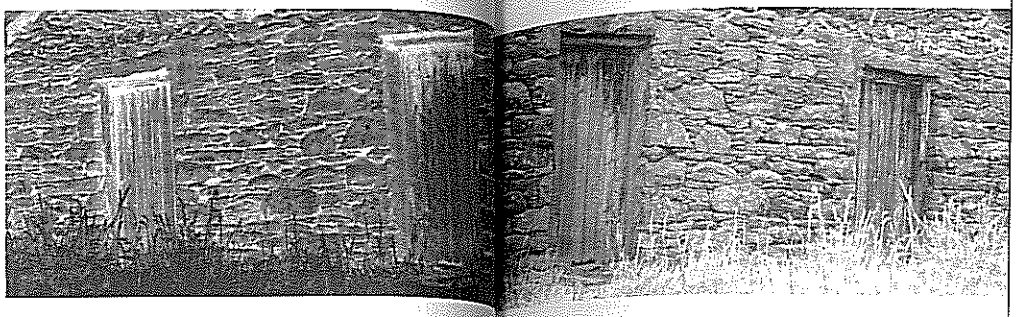
INTRODUCTION



Mental Illness and Irish Culture

Things fall apart;
The center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon
the world.
—W. B. YEATS,
Collected Poems

EACH TIME I have been asked to give a lecture to a university audience on my research, I have approached it with some amount of trepidation. Usually I begin by asking the group (often a lecture hall of two hundred to four hundred people) how many of them are at least partly of Irish descent. Depending on geographical region, from one-quarter to one-third will normally raise their hands. My next response is some version of the theme "*You're* the reason why western Ireland is underpopulated and in distress!" If there is a certain amount of discomfort engendered in the process of addressing an audience about problematic themes from their own cultural background, there is also some satisfaction in demonstrating that anthropologists can bring the exotic home to roost. In learning about the plight of a small Irish village, trapped by circumstances into a state of cultural decline and widespread anomie, we can learn something about ourselves. For it was from such isolated little communities of the western coast that has come a succession of our statesmen and leaders, our local police and our teachers, our clergy and our bartenders—in short, many of those who have guided public and private morality.

The high morale and stunning accomplishments of the Irish abroad are, ironically and sadly, often contrasted to the demoralization of the Irish at

home (see Brody 1974; Healy 1968; R. Kennedy 1973; Lynn 1968). There is little doubt from available statistics (World Health Organization, 1961; 1968) that the Republic of Ireland has the highest hospitalization treatment rate for mental illness in the world. A recent census of the Irish psychiatric hospital population (O'Hare and Walsh 1974) indicates that schizophrenia is the core problem—more than half of the patients are so diagnosed.

The association between Irish ethnicity and mental illness has perplexed the Irish medical profession (see Walsh and Walsh 1968) and social scientists at large (Lynn 1971; Malzberg and Lee 1956; H. B. M. Murphy 1975) for nearly half a century, and they remain divided on the basic issue of etiology: genetic, biochemical, or environmental. In this book, based on a year of fieldwork in a representatively small, isolated rural community of the Kerry Gaeltacht* I attempt a broad *cultural* diagnosis of those pathogenic stresses that surround the coming of age in rural Ireland today. I explore the particularly high vulnerability of young and middle-aged bachelor farmers to schizophrenic episodes in light of such social and cultural problems as the current disintegration of village social life and institutions; the remarkable separation and alienation of the sexes; a guilt- and shame-oriented socialization process that guarantees the loyalty of at least one male child to parents, home, and village through the systematic scapegoating of this (usually the youngest) son; and, finally, cultural attitudes toward the resolution of stress *outside* of family life and through patterns of dependency upon "total" institutions.

This work can be placed within the tradition of earlier "culture and personality" studies (e.g., Benedict 1928, 1934; Erikson 1950; M. Mead 1928, 1935; Powdermaker 1953), which attempted to delineate the cultural parameters of personality development and adult behavior. In addition, it falls into that relatively newer field called transcultural (or ethno-) psychiatry, which explores the interplay of culture and social structure upon the form, frequency, severity, diagnosis, and treatment of mental disorders (e.g., Aberle 1952; Benedict 1935; Boyer 1964; DeVos 1965; Hallowell 1934; H. B. M. Murphy 1965; Opler 1959).

*One of several small enclaves within the Republic where Irish is still the spoken language in many homes.

My orientation is both psychological and social structural, insofar as I shall examine the interplay of historical circumstance and economic determinants with the largely symbolic spheres of beliefs, values, and behavior. Throughout the book I shall emphasize the importance of the antithetical social spheres of the sexes to the quality of the emotional life, as well as the oppositional role of older to younger siblings—both grounded in the basic economic strategy of rural farm families. It is a major hypothesis that these preordained age and sex statuses are pivotal in defining parental expectations for their children, and result in entirely different socialization and later life experiences—weighted in favor of the mental health of girls and earlier-born sons, and against the chances for healthy ego-integration of later-born male children.

I share with other recent ethnographers, among them Hugh Brody (1974) and Robert Cresswell (1969), the belief that rural Ireland is dying and its people are consequently infused with a spirit of anomie and despair. This anomie is expressed most markedly in the decline of the traditional agricultural, sheep grazing, and fishing industries and in the virtual dependence of the small communities of the west upon welfare schemes and the ubiquitous "dole"—this despite marketing improvements through membership in the Common Market and government inducements to production through cattle, dairy, and wool subsidies. The flight of young people—especially women—from the desolate parishes of the western coast, drinking patterns among the stay-at-home class of bachelor farmers, and the general disinterest of the local populace in sexuality, marriage, and procreation are further signs of cultural stagnation. Finally, the relative ease with which a growing proportion of the young, single, male farmers are able to accept voluntary incarceration in the mental hospital as a panacea for their troubles is a final indication that western Ireland, one of the oldest and most continually settled human communities in Europe, is in a virtual state of psychocultural decline.

In chapter one I set the parish of Ballybran (which, like all personal names used, is a pseudonym) in space and in time, examining vignettes of its history from the oral tradition of legend, myth, and folktale. This section is, more properly speaking, an ethnohistory insofar as I allow the villagers to

select and order the significant events of their past as they themselves perceived and remember them. In this way I introduce the reader not so much to an objectively accurate history of the locality, which can be gotten elsewhere,[1] but to the ways in which villagers attempt to validate themselves in terms of a "corrected" and "rewritten" past. Chapter two looks at the present situation of Ballybran: its demographic and economic patterns, the failure of the initially enthusiastically embraced language-revival movement, and its perhaps irreversible decline as a viable and self-sustaining community.

In chapter three I focus on the most visible effect of cultural disorganization and demoralization as I sketch an epidemiological profile of mental illness in the rural west. I suggest that the high psychiatric hospitalization rates must be discussed within the context of what has been called "labeling theory" (see Scheff 1966)—that is, through an examination of community definitions of normal and abnormal behavior, variations in diagnostic usage, and cultural attitudes toward treatment and institutionalization.

Chapter four discusses the relationship between celibacy and mental illness through an ethnographic description of relations between the sexes both within and outside the institution of marriage. I attempt to answer the oft-raised question concerning the source of the Irish antipathy to sex and marriage, and I offer an explanation grounded as much in current social and economic determinants (e.g., the refusal of women to marry into the small farms of Kerry) as in psychological predispositions (including a regressed adult sexuality seemingly fixated on early brother-sister incestual longings).

In addition to participant observation in the lifestyle of Ballybran, two groups of villagers were singled out for particular study—mothers and children. Twenty-eight village parents representing twenty nuclear or extended households were interviewed and observed on the norms of child rearing, following a modified version of the interview schedule outlined in John Whiting, et al., *Field Guide for a Study of Socialization* (1966: 78–82). Like the anthropologists involved in the seminal "six cultures" study of child rearing (see B. Whiting 1963), I was primarily interested in the values and beliefs of the society as revealed through socialization techniques. But beyond that, I was problem oriented, attempting to determine if certain rural Irish child-rearing practices might be contributing factors in the etiology of mental illness.

The "children" interviewed ranged in age from newborns to middle-aged bachelors and spinsters still living under the roof and under the thumb of the "old people." The parents interviewed, consequently, spanned three generations and gave me the opportunity to add a historical dimension and note some dramatic changes in child rearing over the past forty or fifty years. In addition I examined, with the help of Professor Sean O'Sullivan, relevant material on child rearing collected in the form of proverbs, folktales, and "old *piseogas*" (i.e., superstitions) by the Irish Folklore Commission in Dublin. Likewise, I read with care and with relish all the autobiographical literature to have come from the recently defunct culture of the Blasket Islands—once just a short canoe trip from the little market town of Dingle. From the bittersweet and poetic recollections of Peig Sayers (1962), Tomás O'Crohan (1951), and Maurice O'Sullivan (1957), I gleaned a picture of Irish attitudes toward children and the principles of child tending "uncorrupted" by sustained contact with outsiders and prior to the decline of Gaelic culture.

Chapters five and six examine current socialization practice and raise this question: Is there something in the nature of parent-child interactions in Ballybran that might be defined as psychogenic, or more exactly, as schizophrenogenic? A qualified yes is suggested by the data, and in chapter five I discuss the cultural pattern of minimal handling and isolation of the infant, and the absence for the very young of what some psychologists call necessary attachment or maternal bonding behavior (see Bowlby 1969, 1973). The casual aloofness and seeming emotional inadequacy of mothers toward infants observed in some rural homes seem to be related to the austere and puritanical cast of Irish Catholicism with its many restrictions on physical expression, and to the, at times, excessive reliance on corporal punishment both in the home and in the classroom. For the more psychologically fragile, the end product of such a socialization experience, I suggest, may be a tendency for the individual to withdraw from painful interactions into the characteristic delusional state of schizophrenia.

In chapter six I attempt to distinguish the "vulnerable" children from the "less vulnerable" in terms of the differential treatment of daughters and sons

and of later- to earlier-born siblings. The pattern of fixed statuses—pets, leftovers, whiteheaded boys, and black sheep—attendant to sex and birth order is discussed in terms of the economic requirements of farm succession and its ultimate effect on the emotional and mental health of the chosen heir.

As the research progressed, I became directly involved with the rural young adults themselves and with the succession of conflicts, stresses, and ultimate decisions that resulted in emigration, in stoical resignation, or in cyclical maladjustment expressed in mental illness and alcoholism. In order to probe largely repressed attitudes of late adolescents toward marriage, sexuality, achievement, and generativity, I administered a variety of projective tests—among them the Thematic Apperception and Draw-a-Person Tests, and the Values Hierarchy Scale—to a sizable number of young adults in the parish. In addition I assigned essays and compositions on a number of relevant topics to the students at the parish secondary-school. These essays covered a myriad topics, such as "Why Does a Good God Allow Suffering and Sickness?" "Is Violence and Aggression Natural to Man?" "How Does the Idealized Image of Marriage Presented in Films Differ from a Realistic Approach to Marriage?"

Most fruitful of the instruments, and to be discussed in greatest detail, was the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT),[2] which was initially administered to thirty-six average village youths between the ages of fifteen and eighteen (twenty-two young women and fourteen young men). Each was tested individually while I transcribed the responses by hand. Whenever possible, the youths were interviewed following the test, on general topics of life history: schooling, family relations, vocational and other goal orientations. Nine of the fourteen boys tested (ages fifteen to eighteen) were potential, if reluctant, farm heirs, while the remaining five had serious designs for higher education or emigration. By contrast, all but three of the twenty-two girls tested expected to leave the village within the next few years in order to pursue a nursing or teaching career or to work abroad. These differences were not selected for, but were a natural reflection of, demographic patterns in the area.

Finally, one day each week for a period of three months I observed, interviewed, and tested young patients of the district mental hospital in Killarney and at the psychiatric clinic in Dingle. Through intensive interviewing of these young adults, already demonstrating early signs of a basic inability to cope, I hoped to identify the major stresses surrounding the coming of age in rural Kerry today. A total of twenty-two patients—eleven of each sex—were tested and interviewed on their life histories. These patients were selected at the discretion of the clinic and hospital directors. My only stipulations were that the patients be young, come from a rural Kerry background, and volunteer for the testing. The latter stipulation (in order to comply with federal regulations for the protection of human subjects) necessarily resulted in a "natural selection" of the most sociable, outgoing, cooperative, and least disturbed patients. The average length of hospitalization for these patients was short—just under one month—and for most it was their first admission to a psychiatric institution. Ten of the twenty-two were diagnosed as schizophrenic or paranoid.

There was a decided advantage to using written and verbal projective testing among the rural Irish. Forced to generalize, one could say that Irish villagers are extremely reserved and unused to, as well as uncomfortable with, the task of discussing feelings and attitudes relating to personal relationships. If asked directly, for example, how he got along with mother or father, the rural Kerryman will invariably answer with a stylized "Yerra, nothing to complain about," or will reverse the question into a question of his own: "And why would ye be wanting to know that, may I ask?" Needless to say, direct questioning often resulted in stalemate. However, the Kerryman is particularly adept at innuendo, ambiguity, and metaphor. All but two of the fifty-eight respondents *thoroughly* enjoyed the testing, which gave them an opportunity to express, indirectly, their feelings on topics such as family relations and religious beliefs, which would have been socially taboo were they brought up in a direct manner.

The fifty-eight youths told a total of 835 Thematic Apperception Test stories, which were later coded according to the ten basic motivational concerns suggested by George DeVos (1973: 20–21). Five of the dimensions are instrumental (goal-oriented) and five are expressive (directly related to feeling).

Instrumental Concerns
Achievement-Anomie
Competence-Inadequacy
Responsibility-Negligence
Control (Dominance-Submission)
Mutuality (Competitive-Cooperative)

Expressive Concerns
Harmony-Discord
Affiliation-Isolation
Nurturance-Deprivation
Appreciation-Disdain
Pleasure-Suffering

Each story is characterized by one dominant theme, but often contains from two to five additional subthemes, depending on length and complexity of the tale. In coding the stories I avoided themes that were implied and relied only on material that was expressly stated. In addition to thematic coding, I noted the sequences and outcomes of the stories and paid particular attention to the roles played by family figures. The results of the test are used illustratively throughout the book, and in detail in Appendix D (tables D-I to D-6).

In general the Irish records reveal large areas of feeling and motivation locked into conflict. Ambivalence is a dominant psychological mode for all the youth, as village lads vacillate between achievement orientation and anomie, and as village girls and boys debate their responsibility to home and parents versus their own personal drive for escape from home and village. A sense of shame and incompetence blocks male strivings for achievement, and an oppressive guilt often interferes with their need to excel *or* escape. A certain superficiality in interpersonal relations is expressed in the desire of village and hospitalized males to be affably sociable without the pressures of intimacy. And throughout all the records runs a strong current of sexual repression and personal asceticism—one that interferes not only with intimacy between the sexes, but with the nurturant and generative aspects of personality as well. With the exception of the schizophrenic patients, whose stories are readily distinguished on the basis of their more idiosyncratic

themes, the greatest statistical differences were found between the sexes, rather than between the "average" and hospitalized villagers. Given the separate social realities occupied by males and females in County Kerry (see chapter four), it is the culture of sex rather than the culture of mental illness that is most recognizable in the TAT records. Most poignantly, the tests illustrate the differential stresses experienced by girls, often forced into premature emigration, and by village boys, frequently the casualties of this same female exodus.

The research team was the family—myself, my husband, and our three children: Jenny, aged five, Sarah, aged two, and Nathanael, five months at the start of fieldwork. We could hardly avoid being *participant* observers in the community as we shared with the hardy villagers day in and out their lifestyle, their celebrations, their ennui and depressions during the seemingly endless winter, their fear of the truly awesome wind storms that rocked the peninsula, and their joy at the coming of spring—the flowing of cow's milk and the birth of the calves and lambs. We worshipped with them on Sundays and holy days; we confessed our sins to the same curate; we visited their old and sick, and mourned with them their dead. My elder daughter attended the local primary-school, where she learned bilingual reading, math, her prayers, sewing, Irish dancing and music, and how to duck the bamboo rod. She admired her strict Scottish highlands-trained teacher and enjoyed her peers. Although for the first few weeks Jenny was able to relate fascinating tidbits of information to me about school and yard activities, before very long she was socialized by her friends to the extent that she adopted their worldview and joined the conspiracy of silence that separates Irish children and their parents. From that time on I lost her as a prime "informant." All the children, however, served as "rites of entry" into the normally closed lives of villagers, and remarks and criticisms of the way in which we handled our children, as well as comments on their behavior vis-à-vis their own children's, were an invaluable source of information with regard to socialization.

My husband was the second member of the team to withdraw somewhat from the research, particularly after he was given the highly sanctioned role of secondary-school teacher. His identification with the school and the Church and his shared perception with some of the villagers that there was

something a little sacrilegious about the way I took notes at wakes and enquired about personal and intimate aspects of religious belief, sexual practice, and emotional life made him a rather reluctant coworker and informant—particularly when it concerned sharing with me the jokes, stories, and opinions exchanged with village men at the pub. As Jenny was socialized into the children's world, Michael joined the circle of "round"-drinking and tale-swapping bachelor farmers. And my presence at the pub, silent though it was (with the exception of singing an occasional ballad), put his companions ill at ease. So, after a few months, I resignedly left the pub mates in peace. I had in any case learned by then all that I wanted to know (and then some) about the "culture" of Guinness stout. Nonetheless, my husband with the cooperation of the schoolmistress gave me free access to his secondary-school classes and agreed to assign the essays and compositions on topics that I suggested. He accompanied me on the long trip each week to the county mental hospital, where he assisted in interviewing and testing mental patients. Finally, and most importantly, Michael's natural sensitivity and kindred spirit with the reserved rural Irish served as a foil and a censor, correcting me when I delved too far or pushed too hard or too quickly, and constantly reminding me that my primary obligation was not to "science" or to the academic community at large, but to the community—protecting the villagers' dignity, reserve, and sensitivities, and guarding them from embarrassment or emotional injury of any kind. And for these gentle reminders I am grateful to him beyond words.

There was, at first, some confusion over the nature of my research. When one village publican learned that I was in Ballybran to conduct an "anthropological survey," he informed me that this had already been done some twenty years before, and to come right to the point, he did not want to have his nose and lips and skull measured again! While at first I explained to villagers in the broadest of terms that I was a social anthropologist interested in the culture and way of life of the parish, I was soon pressed by some of the village schoolteachers to give the exact nature of the research and to inform them in advance the title of the book I would write and its contents. To this just enough demand, I would reply as honestly as I could at the time: "Interpersonal Relations in a Rural Irish Community." Like most anthropologists, I began my research with the broad areas of interest mapped out, a "sense of problem," and a rather flexible methodology that would allow for that fortuitous creative process, which some call "serendipity," to take over at will. As it became increasingly apparent that I was concentrating on mothers, children, and adolescents, the village seemed to relax somewhat.

However, there were a few very tense incidents with regard to the research—both occurring in a pub during the summertime, and both taking place under the encouragement of outsiders—specifically Irish tourists from Dublin. In one rather trying experience, a local shepherd made belligerent by alcohol and losses at the local sheep market announced to all and sundry that he had been told by some Dubliners that "the anthropologist" was only interested in the villagers' sex practices and that I would write a book that would convert "people into numbers," and that I would ultimately degrade the Irish way of life. When my attempts at reversing the accusation into jovial banter failed, I promised Brian the shepherd a copy of Arensberg's *The Irish Countryman* (1939), which I thought might be to his liking, and told him that part of my aim in coming to Ballybran was to "modernize" the Yankee's image of Ireland because there had been such vast changes since Arensberg's time. Brian read at least parts of Arensberg, asked to keep the book, and offered magnanimously, "There's lots of truth in that book; the man didn't lie." From that day on, Brian and I were on a first-name basis, and the shepherd even offered to recite some political verses and songs into my tape recorder.

The second incident occurred some weeks later when a Dublin tourist himself offered to "introduce" me to my drinking mates of some time by explaining at a pub session the basic thesis of Irish Catholic sexual repression presented in John Messenger's recent ethnography of the Aran Islands, *Inis Beag* (1969)—a book that incurred the wrath of several Irish social scientists and received a bad press in Dublin papers as well as censorship at libraries in the west. Luckily for me, the villagers were embarrassed by the flamboyant personality of the Dubliner and, as confirmed celibates, could not relate at all to the outsider's brash charges that "anthropologists are 'peeping Toms' who write that the Irish take only the 'missionary position.'"

The perhaps apocryphal days of yesteryear, when the anthropologist was

accepted and adopted as "hero" into the local kinship of an innocent and guileless people, are over—for the best, I am certain—as once isolated villages and small communities throughout the world become more enlightened as to the uses and abuses of anthropology. Today each anthropologist must confront the awesome task of slowly proving himself or herself blameless and worthy of acceptance and confidence, despite the increasingly "bad press" accorded the profession. Hence, I became keenly aware of the sensibilities of the people in Ballybran, who were not only suspicious of social science research, but who were still angered over the "stage Irishman" impression given by the films *Playboy of the Western World* and, more recently, *Ryan's Daughter*—both of which were filmed in part on the Dingle Peninsula. I worried about their reaction to a book dealing with the death of the countryside, anomie, and mental illness, topics that were not designed before the research had begun, but that grew naturally out of immersion within the depressed community.

After a particularly revelatory and intimate conversation with a village mother for whom I had a great deal of affection, I returned home one evening in Ballybran to fall into a fitful sleep during which I dreamed that a villager invited me in for tea and insisted upon giving me a suit of armor that had belonged to the family for generations, since the time of the Norman Conquest. I reluctantly accepted the unwieldy present, but as I was walking home through the bog with it, a group of strangers appeared and began to chase me, yelling that I had "stolen" the armor of the village. The dream brought to consciousness my still-lingering anxiety over whether it is defensible behavior to befriend and ultimately "disarm" a people and "steal," as it were, their guarded secrets. While I never asked intimate questions of villagers until I felt that they had extended to me the role of "confessor," knowing that what passed their lips to my ears would be considered a sacred trust and used with discretion, yet often even the closest of friends would laugh at the impertinence of a particular enquiry: "What?" demanded the tailor of Ballybran with false gruffness, after I had asked him why he had never chosen to marry, "What, my girleen? Will you even have the darkest secrets of my soul?"

One could hardly discuss data gathering among villagers without mentioning the Irish love of *blas*—skill with words—and the recreational arts of blarney (flattery) and codding (teasing). What about the reliability of my data given that peculiarly Irish form of banter that says one thing and means another? Wouldn't the naive anthropologist, notebook in hand and indiscreet question on tip of tongue, be a sitting duck for the tall tale and other useful evasions of the Irish?[3] Without a doubt, communicating with the Irish is tricky for the plodding, literal-minded Saxon, and in many an initial encounter I would think myself to be following a linear path of conversation, only to find myself lost on a forked road, waylaid by shortcuts and switchbacks, and invariably led up a blind alley or cul-de-sac. In short, I was being *had*, Irish style. Well, no matter. Reputation of the Irish aside, I'd also been had in the past by Mexican and Brazilian peasants (and more than once found myself on the wrong bus en route to nowhere), and I had eventually learned to crack *their* code. Yes, the Irish lie, and lie they do with admirable touches of wit and ingenuity. Add to the normal defensiveness of the peasant, a folk Catholic moral code that is quite "soft" on lying, and a lack of tolerance for *overt* acts of aggression, and you have a very strong propensity to "cod" (sometimes rather cruelly) the outsider. Beyond cross-checking information, the only safeguard the fieldworker has against "converting the lies of peasants into scientific data" (as one critic of the participant-observation method commented) is simply getting to know the villagers well enough to read the nonverbal cues that signal evasiveness or lying. Unfortunately, those villagers who are most eager to talk to the outsider from the onset are often the most mischievous informants. Weeding out the "unreliables" from the initially small coterie of "gifted informants" can be a painful procedure. An important point, however, and one that statistically oriented social scientists often miss, is that lies *are* data, and very essential data at that. Once I am able to figure out to what extent villagers lie, when and to whom they are most likely to lie, and who in the community have the dubious reputations of being the greatest liars, I go about systematically analyzing the values of villagers as demonstrated by what they want to believe about themselves; what they want me to believe about them; and what they think I want to believe about them. I compare these findings against my own observations and perceptions of what actually does go on in

the village—the way people behave "as if" things were, even though they may define the situation quite differently.

No anthropologist likes to depart from his time-honored conventional stance of "cultural relativity" in order to ask the kinds of questions that come more easily to the clinical psychologist, the medical doctor, and the social worker, such as, What has gone wrong with this organism (or this society)? or, What is so pathogenic about the quality of interpersonal relations in this family (or in this village)? The anthropologist is the product of a historical tradition and a moral commitment dedicated to seeing the "good" in every culture. Few colleagues today would defend a traditional "functionalist" view of human societies, such that whatever exists in the culture is there by virtue of its necessity to the operation of the whole, and hence if it exists it is by definition "good." Yet there is still some calling into question the objectivity of those social scientists, such as Oscar Lewis (1951), Edward Banfield (1958), and George Foster (1967), who noted dysfunction as well as function and who, in particular, describe peasant social life as often characterized by suspiciousness, greed, envy, uncooperativeness, and interactions as charged with hostility and aggressiveness.

Even more difficult is it to embark on an ethnographic study of a subject as delicate and normally shielded from the gaze of outsiders as mental illness. In raising such questions as whether there is something in the nature of rural Irish socialization practices that might be diagnosed as schizophrenogenic, some may wonder whether I am looking to assign blame on parents, teachers, priests, and social institutions. They may ask whether I am engaged in a perverse, cultural witch-hunt. It might be wise, therefore, for me to begin with a few caveats regarding my orientation and choice of subject matter. My interest in Irish madness is an outgrowth of an earlier research interest in rituals of racial and sexual pollution (Scheper-Hughes 1973). The following pages should be taken not so much as a thesis on mental illness as a book about rural Irish society seen in part through the eyes of its indigenous outsiders. By this I mean that I am not so much interested in the phenomenon of schizophrenia, the disease, as I am in schizophrenics, the social outcasts or social critics (as the case may be), and in the rituals of definition, inclusion, and exclusion that surround them.

In this regard, I am heir to the insights of Michel Foucault, who has suggested that madness be seen as a projection of cultural themes. In his brilliant work *Madness and Civilization* (1967), Foucault documents Western society's search for a scapegoat—the leper, the criminal, or the madman—whose existence emphasizes, by contrast conception, the "normalcy" of others. Madness, like racial and caste categories, is one of the ways of drawing margins around the psychological reality of a social group. But even as a society refuses to recognize itself in the suffering individuals it rejects or locks up, it gives eloquent testimony to the repressed fears, longings, and insecurities of the group. And that particular configuration of Irish schizophrenia, as revealed through the life histories of young mental patients, expresses the continuing dialogue between the repressed and unfulfilled wishes of childhood, and the miseries of adult life in devitalized rural Ireland.

The "madhouse" of Killarney is not altogether dissimilar from the menstrual hut of Lesu or the "Blacks Only" entrance at the back of the dentist's office in Selma, Alabama. And, just as Black sharecroppers from Gees Bend taught me more about rural economics than the county extension agent (Hunt and Scheper 1969), I thought that I would learn as much or even more about Irish society from the patients of the district mental hospital than I might from the village curate or schoolmaster. Every culture has its own "normality threshold," and a society reveals itself perhaps most clearly in the phenomena it rejects, excludes, and confines.

Others may question to what degree fieldwork observation and analysis are influenced by the personality of the researcher. Ralph Piddington observed in this regard that "a critic once remarked that the Trobriand Islanders are very much like Malinowski and the Tikopia very like Professor Raymond Firth" (1957: 546). Similarly, when Reo Fortune published his *Sorcerers of Dobu* (1963), in which he described a tribal people torn asunder by seemingly paranoid accusations and counteraccusations of witchcraft and when Oscar Lewis published his contradictory restudy (1951) of Robert Redfield's original ethnography of Tepotzlan (1930), critics were quick to make reference to the largely subjective element in the interpretation of behavior. Redfield defended his original description of an almost idyllic social life in Tepotzlan (1955) by offering that, where he was concerned with villagers'

enjoyment of life, Lewis was concerned primarily with their woes and sorrows. By implication, Redfield was a romantic optimist and Lewis was an unremitting pessimist in search of the evil and tragedy of human existence. However, the question of subjectivity based on the personality dispositions of researchers should not be so simply dismissed. Social scientists, despite their biases and temperaments, should be able to describe with some amount of objectivity the actual nature of social relations in any given community.

Certainly, psychologically oriented anthropologists tend to look with a more studied eye on the unconscious content of interpersonal relations, child rearing, religious institutions, and so forth, and thereby introduce sets of data different from those of a social structuralist looking at the same community. My own biases—grounded in the experiences of growing up in a New York City slum, community organizing among sugarcane cutters of Northeast Brazil, and civil rights work in rural Alabama—can be summarized in the belief that nowhere is the human condition very good for the great number, nor free from pain, either physical or psychological. Yet, I maintain a faith in the possibility for positive change and social healing so long as individuals can be alerted to and moved by the needs of their fellow human beings. To romanticize, ignore, or whitewash the darker side of the life of the peoples we study contributes to the perpetuation of social ills.

Finally, there is the question of the degree to which the remote little parish of Ballybran is representative of the Irish, or even of the rural or western Irish—terms I use interchangeably with the more restrictive terms parishioners and villagers. Are not anthropologists notorious romantics, drawn to the exceptional and exotic in human societies? How peculiar, then, to the rest of Ireland are the Seans and Paddys and Peigs written about here? While not wishing to overextend my expertise on the Irish, my observations, psychological testing, and interviewing went beyond the parish of Ballybran. Through the weekly visits to the mental hospital and psychiatric clinic, I had in-depth exposure to the lives of individuals and their families from villages throughout rural Kerry. In addition, I shared my perceptions on "the rural Irish" with psychiatrists who worked with patients throughout the western counties. In a culture area as small and homogeneous as western Ireland, I feel relatively confident in generalizing, within limits, from the village I know best. Unfortunately, Ballybran is not an exception—there are hundreds of Ballybrans just like it up and down the rugged coast of western Ireland.

In the final analysis, I am less concerned with what my anthropological colleagues and critics will think and say than I am about what my friends in Ballybran will *feel* about what is written here. I trust they realize that although I stress some of the more dismal aspects of their life—the death of the countryside, the seemingly irreversible desertion by young people, the alienation between the sexes, the high rates of anxiety and depression—that they will accept the large measure of my concern for their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and my appreciation of their warmth and double-edged humor. Their children were beautiful—their scrubbed ruddy faces and perpetually muddy Wellington boots, their quixotic smiles and shocks of hair that refused to stay in place, their bread and jam sandwiches—and are engraved permanently in my memory. I only lament that in another decade there will be so many the less of these beautiful children born into Ballybran—a loss not so much for this little community as for the world at large, which has been, for generations, the recipient of some of the best of these lads and lasses as they reached adulthood.