James Joyce: Bas no Beatha

W.J. Mc Cormack

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Abstract and Keywords
This chapter aims to provide comparison of Joseph Conrad's moral irony and James Joyce's stylistic disorientation. Particular attention is devoted to James Joyce and the role of his writings as mirrors of and a lamp on social reality. In this chapter, the relation of Joyce's petit bourgeois inheritance to the suppression of middle class Irish Protestantism is carefully analyzed. The historical continuity of Joyce's fiction from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake* is carefully studied.

*Keywords:* James Joyce, writings, social reality, petit bourgeois, middle class, Irish Protestantism, Dubliners, Finnegans Wake

The Irish language, Mahaffy said
Is a couple of books written clerkly,
A dirty word in a song or two—
‘Matter a damn’ says Berkeley.¹

1. ‘Eveline’
In 1898, writing in the magazine *Outlook*, Joseph Conrad observed drily: ‘Life is life, and art is art—and truth is hard to find in either’.² His official topic was the sea-fiction of Captain Marryat and Fenimore Cooper, but the real object of this thought was Kipling’s notorious line:
Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet ...³

Reading Conrad nowadays we find it easy to assimilate his treatment of imperial expansion and exploitation to a comprehensive criticism of his fiction. Heart of Darkness is a set text in schools and (as Lionel Trilling remarked of Ulysses) it has lost its power to disturb. Comparing Conrad and Joyce, we would want—initially at least—to locate their powers of disturbance in different areas—Conrad’s in his moral irony, Joyce’s in his stylistic disorientation. Here we should stress the continuity which leads from the novels of Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford to the more distinctly experimental canon of modernist fiction.
In considering the Irish contribution to modernist literature in English, we have available an all-too-prominent political timetable in the events which led from the demand for Irish home rule within the United Kingdom to the establishment of the Irish Free State. The recent renaissance of interest in Joyce's politics has not, however, been characterized by any inquiry into the dominant political, social, and economic relationships in which and of which he wrote. Among these the role of language as at once the mirror and lamp of social reality is crucial. In this regard we should stress the essential unity—that is, historical continuity—of all Joyce's fiction from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*. A casual glance at pages from each of these books will apparently jeopardize this claim, but only apparently so—continuity in a period of revolutionary change and frustration may not be confused with constancy. From 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' to the dream of Earwicker, Joyce strove to find forms in which history and technique become a single problem. No doubt a definition of modernism centred on technique could be conveniently introduced here, but definitions in their exhaustive length have the effect of excluding as often as they include. Rather than deal in identifying characteristics, I would approach the process of definition with the problematic relationship between text and world, a feature which is found in diachronic form in the attenuated relation of past and present manifest in various mechanical concepts of history. Hugh Kenner, writing specifically about *Ulysses*, alludes to 'the enchained determinisms in which Western high thought was immobilizing itself at the century's turn', but insists on restricting his insight to space and physics. Textual hermeticism and historical discontinuity—these are not so much principles of modernism as they are underlying anxieties.
In the preface to *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson emphasizes the virtually transhistorical imperative of dialectical thought, ‘Always historicize!’ It is not enough merely to place the object in its historical context: the reader, the subject (so to speak) of criticism is also historically placed. The interaction of these historicized objects and subjects is the proper concern of criticism. Conrad and Kipling serve to remind us of the larger perspective in which modernist literature in English has its genesis, crisis in the Empire, commercial exploitation of Africa and Asia, the arms race in Europe. Joyce's early reading of socialist thinkers should not be seen solely as a personal trait, a sensitive rebel's response to the inadequacies of Irish nationalism. It is intimately part of the emergence of the nexus of political and aesthetic concerns which distinguish the Irish contribution to English modernism. As a metropolitan colony within the United Kingdom, Irish society was especially susceptible to the contradictory movements of British domestic and global policy.

Joyce's own account of the society in which he wrote is well known. Of *Dubliners* he said: 'My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis.' Conventionally, this analysis is taken as being somehow literally true; Dublin in 1904 was static, immobile, devoid of the ability to translate intention into action, that is, *paralysed*. The image was certainly one that appealed to Joyce, for on 7 January 1904 he had concluded the semi-fictional essay ‘A Portrait of the Artist’ with the declaration:

> To these multitudes, not as yet in the wombs of humanity but surely engenderable there, he would give the word. Man and woman, out of you comes the nation that is to come, the lightning of your masses in travail; the competitive order is employed against itself, the aristocracies [*sic*] are supplanted; and amid the general paralysis of an insane society, the confederate will issues in action.
What emerges from this curious manifesto is not so much an impressive politics—far from it—but our renewed apprehension of the metaphorical basis of Joyce's idea of society as paralysed. His devotion to Flaubert and the art of nineteenth-century France is more than a search for *le mot juste*, but implicates that French preoccupation with disease, especially socially reprobated disease, as a total metaphor for social (p.256) reality. The organicist metaphors which constitute Joyce's political longing culminate in ‘the general paralysis of an insane society’, which resounds with the medical shorthand for the terminal stage of severe syphilitic infection—general paralysis of the insane, GPL9 The artist portrayed in the essay, however, will give the word by which sexual generation and the birth of a sane society will issue. If the aetiology of this paralysis be considered, we discover that Joyce's theme is sexual excess as much as it is sexual decay and impotence, that behind the absence of motion implicit in paralysis there lies a history of uncontrolled—because unformulated—motion.

The interaction of sexuality and language in Joyce's fiction is immediately accessible in 'Eveline' which has a good claim to be representative of his short stories. The story is deliberately divided by a single asterisk into two parts. The first is based on a mental present within which Eveline is indirectly reported to meditate on past events in her life:

Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake.10
The indirect reporting of Eveline’s recollection of her father’s threat creates a stylistic feature of great opacity. One might have expected him to threaten in terms of what he would not do but for her mother’s sake. The particular form which Joyce has chosen both emotively intensifies the threat and formally suppresses it, and this is in keeping with Eveline’s ultimate inability actively to quit this life with her father. Technically, the crucial feature here is the implication for Joyce’s narrative of the different conventions governing spoken language and written language. If we say that, with Joyce, technique has thematic ambitions this is not to suggest some internalizing ‘fiction-about-fiction’ quality; on the contrary, this feature is one by which he draws the reader’s attention to the possibilities of revitalized intercourse between language and social reality.

One reason for taking ‘Eveline’ as typical of *Dubliners* is precisely this feature. From ‘The Sisters’ to ‘The Dead’ the characters frequently become engaged in a false consciousness of some crucial moment in their past or conjure deliberately some anticipated moment in the future. Aware of the frailty of their mental present which, paradoxically, binds them with an iron control, they seek to establish their first-person-singular existences more objectively, even if that additional security should take the form of anguish or guilt or pain. In ‘Eveline’ this development is discernible on two levels: psychologically, the girl hears now in the mental present sounds which remind her of her mother’s last night. Stylistically, the reader encounters ‘the odour of dusty cretonne’, a phrase with which the story has opened. Both levels initiate at this point a process of recursus:

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother’s life laid its spell on the very quick of her being—that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother’s voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

—Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape ...
Her ultimate topographical immobility—her inability to join Frank on the boat—is counterbalanced by this fluidity of movement on the temporal plane, ‘she heard again her mother's voice.’ Paralysis at the barrier is the counterpart of an excess of movement between past and present. And within the story this binary opposition is expressed at a further linguistic level, for Eveline who hears words when they are not spoken never speaks.

Eveline cannot be said to act: instead she opts. Her opting for the internally known and structured world of her father's house is consistent with the non-emergence of her ego (grammatically her T) in the narrative. At a further level it is consistent with the strategy adopted by Mr Duffy in that most chilling of the *Dubliners* stories, ‘A Painful Case’:

> He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense.13

It would be quite feasible at this point to adopt Freud's distinction between the manifest and latent content of dreams as a means of analysing the critical and therapeutic function of Joyce's narratives. For, just as Freud takes over the model of a philological hermeneutic in developing the techniques of psychoanalysis—and this at the moment when philology was engaged in its own realignment with ‘Celticism’—so Joyce creates within his characterization dreams of the past (‘nightmares of history’) of which only the manifest content is immediately intelligible to the characters. The reader's function of course involves the elucidation of a latent meaning according to which the narrative is transformed. By means of a technique introduced by Joyce at a late stage into ‘Aeolus’, a newspaper caption provides the title for the story involving Mr Duffy: ‘A Painful Case’ is the subtitle of a newspaper article fulsomely cited in the narrative. The phrase is of course a journalistic euphemism (p.259) for suicide, and Duffy's conscious efforts are directed towards consolidating the euphemistic view, towards repressing the latent accusation of his own moral responsibility. In ‘Eveline’, the recollection of the heroine's mother's dying words results in their apparent meaninglessness, again involving the repression of a latent meaning.
The site of Eveline's traumatic and contradictory opting for escape is the inscrutable recollected phrase, 'Derevaun Seraun'. Brendan O Hehir has written that the words are 'probably gibberish but phonetically like Irish', and proceeds to offer possible original Irish Gaelic words of which these are corruptions. The range of possibilities becomes teasingly wide, but one particular combination would reconstruct the dying mother's words as (with English translations):

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dearbhan   seirean
(small) genuine thing, little sea-anemone
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Here perhaps is a thematically relevant allusion to a creature who, like Eveline, clings to the rocks and will not breast the waves. The distortion of this wr-message might be located at either of two levels, on that of the old woman's deathbed confusion, or on that of Eveline's recollection. As with 'he had begun to ... say what he would do to her' the reader has no access to the formal alternative of further information from the past. The narrative method of the stories mimics the dreamer's censorship of his or her dream, but in doing so by means of meaningless words draws attention to the act of censorship. The words, as Eveline recollects them, both stimulate and frustrate her wish to escape.

‘Meaningless’ is a relative term, and the corruption is more specific than a mere phonological inexactitude. Words of one language are recalled within another, a problem which diachronically involves the largest perspective of nineteenth-century Irish history, the displacement of Gaelic by English as the vernacular language. Nor can the insistent New Critic (p. 260) protect ‘Derevaun Seraun’ from a dialectical relation to history: he can neither integrate the words to a formal analysis nor can he (with any confidence) declare them absolutely meaningless. Officially committed to denying the significance of linguistic change, he is confronted by an enactment of linguistic change at two levels—that of the displacement of one language by another within the story so as briefly to reverse the historical displacement, and that of the corruption of certain words into other words as to require the elicitation of some latent meaning.
The broader historical area in which this feature of Joyce’s work should be read may be illuminated by reference to a hitherto unnoticed metaphor in the story. The first paragraph of ‘Eveline’ reads in its entirety:

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains, and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

The significant, neglected word is of course ‘invade’; the rest of the paragraph can be seen as muted anticipations of the story’s end. The active form of the first verb (‘She sat …’) alters after ‘invade’ to a series of passive and decreasingly concrete forms (‘Her head was leaned …’). The military metaphor operates within the paragraph to initiate stages of Eveline’s opting for inaction. Within the story as a whole it is taken up only once, in the second part, when the crowd on the quays is particularized as ‘soldiers with brown baggages’.

Rather than conclude that the metaphor has simply been exploited in narrative terms, we should note the dialectical operation of technique and theme in Joyce’s fiction, by which means we note also Joyce to be a critical modernist. For the last end of Eveline is a silence which transcends narrative method:

He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.
The invasion of the first paragraph marks the commencement of the English language’s advance within the narrative of Eveline's reverie, which in turn centres upon a disruption of that advance. Richard Ellmann comments that Joyce's 'Eveline' is a counterpart to 'The Countess Cathleen': accordingly Yeats's play 'had extolled the virtue of self-sacrifice' and Joyce's story 'evokes the counter virtue of self-realization'. Though this seems simultaneously to go too far in interpretation and not far enough, we can agree that behind both nominal heroines lies the personification of Ireland as Patient Woman, an tsean bhean bhocht. Yet Eveline's refusal to travel can only be ambiguously related to the troops with brown baggages, for the events of the narrative cannot be elevated to the level of theme if by such a reading we exclude once again the critical function of the therapeutic fiction. If they are departing invaders does Eveline opt for some domestic form of home rule in North Richmond Street; alternatively does she refuse to travel with them and by so refusing acknowledge their continuing power over her—is she an abstentionist?

While resisting such simplified allegories, we still may remind ourselves that in analysing the imagery of Joyce's fiction we attend positively to the concrete social realities both of the text's historical context and of our own historical condition as readers. Joyce was closer than Yeats or Synge to the social realities which made Ireland potentially revolutionary in this period of European crisis. One consequence of this intimacy might be described as Joyce's lack of illusion as to the odds-against chances of revolution in Ireland. A comparison with Yeats in terms of their attitudes to Hitler would be banal; a more profound comparison might focus on the manner in which each responded to the late nineteenth-century legacy of imperialist formalism conveniently represented here by Kipling. 'The Ballad of East and West', with its initial autonomous self-defining easts and wests, rapidly moves to a fourth line assimilable to Yeats's Blue Shirt melodies:

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Birth,

When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!
Deplorable sentiment apart, one notes conflict and cancellation as resulting from the unmediated valorization of east and west. ‘Eveline’ poses equally unmediated and mutually excluding alternatives: instead of conflict and cancellation, we find paralysis.

2. The Death of the Language
The short stories of *Dubliners* take their place in a field already defined by Flaubert and Maupassant in France, and concurrently by Chekhov in Russia. Such a generic context, however, fails to place their author in a cultural context or, rather, the irony of the fiction succeeds in undermining the reader's faith in that possibility. The problem with Joyce, therefore, was his apparent disjunction from any tradition which touched upon his material. Certainly he could be accounted for in terms of genre— but ‘The Dead’ brought *Dubliners* to a climax in which genre was no longer an adequate explanation. It was Joyce's tangential relation to any Irish tradition which gave his early fiction its shock effect for local readers. Nothing was self-evident, nothing was concealed.
Traditionally, this state of affairs is translated into the proposition that Joyce was a Catholic, and that Catholics had little or no place in the Anglo-Irish Renaissance. But Catholicism in Ireland was not (and to a degree, is not) a matter of theology but of the relation between money and culture. In the literary critic's sense Edward Martyn was not a Catholic, despite his piety and his Palestrina choir. What distinguishes the Protestant from the Catholic in cultural terms is his relation with the past, his possession of a history. Protestant Ascendancy provided the late Victorian Irish middle class with an eighteenth-century pedigree in which material and cultural prosperity were rationally linked. It was left to Yeats to transpose this sociological phenomenon into a literary tradition. To the late Victorian Irish Catholic, the eighteenth century meant little apart from echoes of deprivation—the Nugents and the Barnewalls were lost to sight. Intervening between those costume figures and the generation of John Joyce, the nineteenth century dominated the scene. Instead of the ratifying sequence which Protestant Ascendancy supplied to the Protestant bourgeoisie as a possession, history possessed the Catholic imagination in a frenzy of simultaneity. Here, money—cash rather than capital in most cases—was a relatively new element connected to the collapse of a pre-Famine economy in which subsistence outweighed trade for the bulk of the populace. Here, culture found some degree of continuity through the Church and its offices, for the linguistic transformation of the nineteenth century inhibited sequential memory. (Joyce's notions of Irish history, at least prior to the artificially engendered inquiries which were involved in composing *Finnegans Wake*, were little more than commonplace.)
One recent commentator on this ‘death of the Irish language’ has tried to explain it as ‘a millenial or Utopian movement’ characterized by ‘panic, hysteria, or utopianism, or by any mixture of these emotions’. High fertility, combined with dependence on an unreliable diet (based on the potato), produced not only famine but the recurring fear of recurring famine. According to the Utopian explanation, the Irish rural population abandoned the Irish language because it stigmatized them as potential victims, and because the English language was the key to migration, employment, and security. The argument has many faults if it is taken as a causal explanation of socio-economic events, but it is entirely at one with the view that the nineteenth century provided for the Irish Catholic an experience of history as trauma. And by trauma we mean not simply shock but precisely that form of dream-work which evidently contradicts the wish-fulfilling function of dreams.

One problem of comparative analysis arises here. We want to bring together Joyce and some earlier cultural production in which the post-famine trauma is absent. But mid-eighteenth-century Irish-speaking Ireland had not possessed the social or technical opportunities to create a literature. It is true that the poetry of Aodhaghan O Rathaille (1670–1726) makes it clear that in Augustan Ireland the aristocrats remained parvenus, but O Rathaille's poetic conventions are far removed from the theme involved here. Brian Merriman's Cuirt an Mhean Oiche (c.1780), with its employment of liberating dream as a means of permitting sexual frankness, suggests a possible comparison with the ‘Circe’ of Ulysses. Closer to Joyce, however, is the following passage from an autobiographical work in Irish which, for the sake of dramatic effect, I quote initially in the original:

Is cuimhin Horn me a bheith ar bhrollach mo mhathar. Ceithre bliana a bhios sular baineadh de dhiul me. Is me droidar an chruiscin, deireadh an ail. Sin e an reasun ar fagadh chomh fada ar na ciocha me.

I was born on St Thomas's day in the year 1856. I can recall being at my mother's breast, for I was four years old before I was weaned. I am ‘the scrapings of the pot’, the last of the litter. That's why I was left so long at the breasts. I was a spoilt child, too.

Four sisters I had, and every one of them putting her own titbit into my mouth. They treated me like a young bird in the nest. Maura Donel, Kate Donel, Eileen Donel, and Nora Donel—those were their names. My brother was Pats Donel, and I am Tomas Donel.  

I intend no disrespect to the translator if I point to certain discrepancies between the original and the English version—there is no fixed rate of exchange between languages. But the most monoglot reader can see that the first sentence of the translation has no equivalent whatever in the original. It may be that Robin Flower was discretely providing his English reader with a necessary historical pointer in providing a date; alternatively, he is shaping the passage by implying a connection between the writer's birth-day and his name. What he has modified, however, is the simplicity with which suckling at the breast is established as primary memory, as memory which depends on no ‘can recall’: ‘I remember being on the breast of my mother. Four years I was before I was taken from suckling’.

Moreover, the list of siblings is by Flower modulated stylistically so as to break it down, reduce it. These are probably inevitable consequences of translation but they underline the immense psychic difficulty of rendering in English the potency of O Criomhthain's words. No English-language memoir of this kind was possible within Joyce's lifetime, and yet An tOileanach was published in 1929.

The atmosphere in which O Cruimhthain's book was received was conditioned by two powerful and contradictory motifs. One was the familiar (perhaps, tactically exaggerated) puritanism of semi-independent Catholic Ireland, in which official censorship was hyper-active. The other was the establishment of the Irish language as the inert primum mobile of the new state. But the embarrassment which this conflict of values generated from time to time had a larger and older source upon which to draw. That earlier reservoir was the propagation in the nineteenth century of a sectarian schematization of the emotions which reinforced the sense of history as trauma:
All Protestants are not virtuous, nor are Protestant peoples without their share of irregular sexual intercourse, self-stupification by alcohol, and so forth; but, bad as their backsliding may be, it is not as characterkilling as the sensuality engendered by the Roman system; and whenever Protestantism is in the ascendant [sic], there also health, energy, (p.266) integrity, and industry will be found in the ascendant. This is stated as a fact, and not for the purpose of insulting the Catholics. Nothing could be further from the thoughts of one, like myself, whose kith and kin are all Catholics. Roman sensuality debases the mind, because it is more in thought than in action ...23

Thus, although O Criomthain was a native of the most westerly islands and so might be dismissed as culturally marginal or residual, the aftermath of linguistic trauma was turned to provide the complementary ideology to Protestant Ascendancy. If this sounds tiresomely like local broadcasting from darkest Ulster, it is worth noting that, in the year of Joyce's hegira (1904), Max Weber commenced publication of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Joyce's greatest fiction, Ulysses, demonstrates how symbolically effective marginal Dublin might be in the unmasking of western capitalism.

In 1904 ‘the death of the Irish language’ was already a cliche, and attempts to revive Gaelic were already under way. As a student at the Royal University, Joyce remained unimpressed by the arguments of the Gaelic League though he briefly attended League meetings. Pressure from this quarter is not prominent among the difficulties young Stephen Dedalus encountered. Though Stephen’s diary records that he fears the old man with red-rimmed horny eyes who had spoken Gaelic to John Francis Mulrennan, the entry significantly ends, ‘no. I mean him no harm.’24 The controversies aroused by the Gaelic League’s revivalism produced significantly paradoxical reactions. Thus, two professors in Trinity College sought to show that Gaelic was purely a scholarly concern, involving venerable texts rather than contemporary speakers.25 The Gaelic League and associated revivalist language movement are significant not solely for some mystical ‘volk-ish’ quality inherent in the residual vernacular, but as the corollary to the emasculation of English as spoken and written in the metropolitan colony. Of course, related (p.267) developments affected Victorian England, where genteel speech among the
middle classes came increasingly to resemble the conventions of written language. But in Ireland language change took place against the background of that larger transformation—the displacement of Gaelic by English. The historical causes of that larger phenomenon are complex—the penetration of rural Ireland by commerce, the demographic upheaval of the Famine, populist politics, and journalism might be relevantly cited. However, if we look for more than a descriptive analysis we should consider if the underlying characteristic of the Gaelic language central to its eclipse is not sexual. High fertility, illegitimacy, early marriages, and large families were associated with those southern and western areas in which the 1840s Famine had been most devastating. For the most part, these were also Gaelic-speaking areas. To speak Gaelic was to identify oneself with the stricken, dangerously fecund community, to distance oneself from charity and relief. Moreover, the Gaelic language did not distinguish—and English increasingly did—between polite and coarse registers in describing bodily functions, in swearing, and so forth. (To speak Gaelic was to make explicit aspects of human biology which English was tending to disguise.) Within the United Kingdom, where its political role was anomalous and its economy divergent, Ireland experienced an intense cultural trauma through the medium of linguistic change. Other areas of Britain underwent similar if less intense alterations of convention—Thomas Hardy's fiction provides eloquent evidence on this point—but the close bond between moral, economic, and linguistic change is distinctively Irish. Nevertheless, this pattern is not uniquely Irish nor is it the result simply of famine: increased fertility in the nineteenth century was common in Europe, and the abandonment of Gaelic necessitated by migration had already commenced prior to 1845. The Famine, however, provided a traumatic account of social and economic change and rendered it capable of interpretation as cultural change.\textsuperscript{26} In turn, the cultural significance (p.268) of the Irish experience is not its uniqueness but precisely the manner in which it impinges upon the development of British society, both domestic and imperial, at the turn of the century.
The mobility engendered by mid-century famine and its consequences contributed signally to the perception of a Catholic middle class in Ireland as a category rather than as a formation. For the most part such ‘perceivers’ were of course members of a bourgeoisie which had since 1792 sailed under the colours of a Protestant ascendancy. Yeats’s Celtic Twilight sought a ‘dream of the noble and the beggarman’, and thus sought both to acknowledge the immiseration of the nineteenth century and to leap-frog back across the Famine to an era of Whiggish hegemony. In more specifically linguistic terms, he sought a cultural synthesis under the guise of ‘a written speech’. This synthesis longed to exclude the middle classes and urban life, the material which Joyce chose for all his fiction. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, he integrates one potent image of rural life by way of Davin's account of his encounter with the young woman in the Ballyhoura mountains. The fertility and guilelessness of the woman, as described to him by Davin, prompts Stephen to see her ‘as a type of her race and of his own, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness …’. The immediately succeeding pages chart important stages of Stephen's development—his response to the slogan Vive Irlande, his acknowledgement of the Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space, his discussion with the English dean of studies first of Thomistic aesthetics and then of the notorious discriminations on the English language itself, as spoken in England and Drumcondra.

In the days immediately prior to his ‘flight’ Stephen returns in his diary to an image of residual Gaelic Ireland, this time in the form of John Francis Mulrennan's interlocutor rather than the bare-breasted revenant of Davin's recollection. By this point Stephen has achieved some solider hold upon the ordinary world, and with it a more relaxed attitude to the rural, recently-Gaelic world reported upon by Mulrennan/Synge. Nevertheless, the aesthete has not been dissolved, though his aestheticism is directed against a specific target, the early poetry of W. B. Yeats:

April 6, later. Michael Robartes remembers forgotten beauty and, when his arms wrap her round, he presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. Not this. Not at all. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world.
Together with the parody of Synge and the paraphrasing of Yeats, the recurrent tabulation of dates serves to draw attention to the historical moment of the novel's climax. Furthermore, Joyce's aesthetic (as distinct from Stephen's superficial aestheticism) indicates that the meaning of the work of art lies not only in its historical genesis but also in its future reception.

3. Nightmares of History

Joyce's letters often give the impression of being written by Gerty MacDowell; they hang their little displays of fabric and fabrication on the most tenuous associative line. In this they also reveal their genuine profundity. Writing to his brother Stanislaus in January 1907, he recorded his reaction to Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills*:

If I knew Ireland as well as R. K. seems to know India I fancy I could write something good. But it is becoming a mist in my brain rapidly. I have the idea of three or four little immortal stories in my head but I am *too cold* to write them. Besides, where's the good. Ibsen, of course, may have liked that kind of sport [i.e. total absorption in his work regardless of his environment]. But then he never broke with his set. I mean, imagine Roberts or Fay, with an allowance from the Irish Republic moving round Europe with correspondence tied at his heels like a goat's tether and you have H [enrik] I [bsen], 33
Joyce did not live to see an Irish Republic established. The letter to Stanislaus, however, indicates that as early as 1907 he envisaged no very positive relationship between the artist as an old man and any newborn state. In 1922, after the publication of *Ulysses*, he was indeed approached by Desmond Fitzgerald (an Irish Free State minister) who proposed advancing Joyce's name to the Nobel Committee. Of this scheme he was highly sceptical, and in the event Yeats got the government nomination and the prize, Joyce being the first to send a telegram of congratulation.\(^{34}\) The historical ‘gap’ between the setting of *Ulysses* (1904) and its eventual publication (1922) is crossed by the electrical charge of these altered relations between Joyce and his native land. The stories of *Dubliners*, like *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, posit a future by means of the placing of the reader in relation to the therapeutic narrative, a future which is in the simplest sense real. *Ulysses*, on the other hand, looks forward to the present. And (one is tempted to add) *Finnegans Wake* looks forward to what's past, or passing, or to come.

Joyce's fiction after *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* consists of two historical novels. The point, a crude but necessary one, is clarified if juxtaposed with T. S. Eliot's familiar description of the Homeric parallel as a way of ordering ‘the immense panorama of futility and anarchy (p. 271) which is contemporary history’.\(^{35}\) Theodor Adorno's response to Georg Lukacs's dismissal of Joyce as a decadent is worth recalling in the context of a discussion of the historical character of his fiction:

Even in Joyce's case we do not find the timeless image of man which Lukacs would like to foist on him, but man as the product of history. For all his Irish folklore, Joyce does not invoke a mythology beyond the world he depicts, but instead strives to mythologize it, i.e. to create its essence, whether benign or maleficent, by applying the technique of stylization so despised by the Lukacs of today. One is almost tempted to measure the achievements of modernist writing by inquiring whether historical moments are given substance as such within their works, or whether they are diluted into some sort of timelessness.\(^{36}\)
Generally speaking, one welcomes this kind of discrimination, especially Adorno’s insistence that ‘art exists in the real world and has a function in it, and the two are connected by a large number of mediating links. Nevertheless, as art it remains the antithesis of that which is the case.’ However, ‘man as the product of history’ is one version of the overwhelming question that Stephen Dedalus asks himself on his visit to Dublin from Paris.

In 1908, during his pre-Marxist phase, Lukács defined a condition of emergent modernism which in his subsequent work he strove to dissolve sometimes with subtlety, sometimes with other means. ‘Every written work’, he observed, ‘even if it is no more than a consonance of beautiful words, leads us to a great door—through which there is no passage.’ As a general principle this urgently needs to be historicized and particularized, first by emphasizing its reference to emergent modernism rather than ‘every written work’, and secondly by pointing to its status as a description of a condition implicit in the modernist aesthetic—as Lukács sees it—rather than as an objective account of modernist texts. It is of course cognate with Conrad’s dictum on the elusiveness of truth in either ‘Life’ or ‘Art’ when these are hermetically isolated and hypostasized. The essential quality which is jeopardized is that mediated access to history which Joyce’s critical method in Dubliners had sought to reestablish. In seeking to historicize Joyce’s contribution to European modernism we cannot afford to neglect the colonial condition of the society upon which he chose to concentrate, and its potential transformation in the years between 1882 and 1922. In the case of Dubliners and A Portrait the temporal discrepancy between historical setting and composition is minimal, though in the later of these it is perceptibly widening through the agency of the biographical narrative. With Ulysses the discrepancy achieved structural proportions—‘16 June 1904’ in Ulysses embodies a function far more significant than ‘April 6, later’ in A Portrait. In political terms, the transition encompasses the emergence of the Free State and the modification of Ireland’s colonial relationship to Britain.
Hugh Kenner has likened one interpretation of *Ulysses* to Laplace's cosmos—‘all chains of action and reaction are folded in, coupled end to end, determined.’ Such a cosmos, he adds in a telling metaphor, ‘perpetually trembles in its sleep while undergoing no real events’.39 When we meet Stephen in the opening episode of *Ulysses* he is ‘displeased and sleepy’.40 His night's rest has been disturbed by moans emitted by the dreaming Haines who shortly summarizes Anglo-Irish relations in the phrase ‘It seems history is to blame.’41 Haines is a Laplacian. Stephen, on the other hand, has a different account to offer though it is mediated only to the reader by means of the famous *monologue interiure*:

In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes.

Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed (p.273) on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat.*

Ghoul! Chewer of corpses!

No, mother! Let me be and let me live.42

The substance of this passage has reached us just five pages earlier:

Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes.43
The repetition certainly constitutes one element of Stephen’s developing rhythm in the prose, the curve of his emotion. But rhythm here is not simply a matter of musical approximation in verbal form; it has specific conceptual effects also. In addition to the newly introduced liturgical quotation, we are now given an intensified evocation of the ghostly figure, in phrases devoid of finite verbs and hence seeking temporarily to abolish time. When, in ‘Circe’, we encounter by way of phantasmagoric stage-direction another variation upon this passage, it is to inaugurate Stephen’s apocalyptic reconciliation of Time and Space, the rigid polarities of both his aesthetics and his anxious metaphysics:

(Stephen’s mother; emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word. A choir of virgins and confessors sing voicelessly.)

THE CHOIR

Liliata rutilantium te confessorum. …

Iubilantium te virginum. …

[…]

THE MOTHER (with smouldering eyes) Repent! O, the fire of hell!

STEPHEN (panting) His noncorrosive sublimate! The corpsechewer!

Raw head and bloody bone.

[…]

(p.274) THE MOTHER (in the agony of her deathrattle) Have mercy on Stephen, Lord, for my sake! Inexpressible was my anguish when expiring with love, grief and agony on Mount Calvary.

STEPHEN Nothung!
(He lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier. Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry.)

Just as the grammatical immediacy of ‘Her eyes on me to strike me down’ does, not mimic a scene in the novel, so the conclusive imagery of ‘Circe’ records no resolution of Stephen’s psychological difficulties—Ulysses is no pseudo-biographical study in realism. These variations on the rhythm of Stephen's nightmare serve, however, to relate other themes in the fiction, and indeed the focus here is central to Joyce's work as a whole: just as ‘Let me be and let me live’ recalls Stephen’s ultimate ability to face the horny-eyed Old Man of the Portrait diary, so the deathbed recalls Eveline's mother and her ‘secret words’. Joyce had begun to orchestrate a sentence on the theme of the revenant mother as early as 1904; its passage to 1922 is also its passage through the styles of Ulysses.

These themes are in essence history and aesthetics which, at the outset, are for Stephen the imposed starting-point and longed-for destination of his search for authenticity. But, as problematic hero, Stephen's most potent characteristic is his recognition of the polar interaction of these values in his particular situation. Dream, the involuntary experience in a subjective present of events which ostensibly occurred in the past, is the dominant metaphor employed in Ulysses to represent this crucial condition. The novel opens with a disagreement between the wakened dreamers, reaches its climax in a stylistic transformation of matter into manner, quantity into quality when the ‘Circe’ episode adopts the literary equivalent of dream and its analysis. Finally, Molly's soliloquy transforms the monologue interieure (which has earlier detained Stephen within his search) into a renewed balance of past and present and future. Yet it is as early as ‘Nestor’ that Stephen makes explicit, with a grammatical precision we neglect at our peril, the importance of this pervasive metaphor:

—History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.
Commentators have been casual in referring to Joyce and ‘the nightmare of history’. That misquoted phrase contains an ambiguity Stephen is anxious to avoid, though he explores its grammatical base in another context. Meditating on the words _amor matris_ he notes and implies the coexistence of a subjective genitive (the love of a mother for X) and an objective genitive (the love of X for a mother) in the Latin construction. ‘The nightmare of history’ offers a parallel at least within the different conventions of another language: it may point to a nightmare which history endures (say, the Reign of Terror, Senator McCarthy’s ascendancy, or the plagues of Egypt, according to your taste); or it may point to the enduring of history by X in the manner of a nightmare. The distinction is less than absolute, just as history and the life of an individual may not be absolutely distinguished—and here the parallel between Latin and English genitives reveals its limitations. But the form of words which Joyce has Stephen adopt, together with Joyce’s obsessional elimination of perverted commas, makes it clear that Stephen refers to the second category. If we recall Stephen’s recollected dream, we know that the revenant mother is his dominant image of history, and thus in speaking to Mr Deasy he identifies himself with a particular reading of Irish culture.

It is no accident that the Latin phrase on which Stephen effects his distinction of objective and subjective genitives invokes the maternal relationship, and the correlation greatly advances our attempts to historicize Joyce’s fiction. Stephen’s dream-revenant is implicitly cannibalistic, the vengeance wrought on the author of that aphorism which defined (p. 276) Ireland as ‘an old sow that eats her farrow’. Immediately before the recollection of his dying mother’s secret words, Stephen recalls playing the piano for her: the song he has played is Joyce’s setting of a poem by Yeats:

> A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green. It lay behind him, a bowl of bitter waters. Fergus’ song: I sang it alone in the house, holding down the long dark chords. Her door was open: she wanted to hear my music.
The relationship between the poem in ‘The Countess Cathleen’ and the decisive action of the titular heroine is contrapuntal: Fergus has been king of Ireland but chose the vocation of poet so as to find peace in the woods; the countess sacrifices her serenity and risks her soul in order to save a starving and plundered tenantry—she acts symbolically as mother to her people. Throughout Ulysses Stephen is preoccupied with the larger implications of his mother's death, for his ‘nightmare’ is located at the scene of her death and his (non-)involvement in it. Stephen, to be sure, is faced with less drastic alternatives than those personified in Yeats's play by Cathleen and Fergus; but, just as he all but concluded his diary in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man with an allusion to Yeatsian nostalgia, so here at the beginning of Ulysses we find his dilemma dramatized by reference to a Yeatsian brooding on ‘love’s bitter mystery’. At the end of the fourth chapter of A Portrait Stephen had resolved that the artist's mission was ‘to recreate life out of life’. At the beginning of the first chapter of Ulysses he is tempted to the re-creation of second-hand art out of art.

Fergus's song is significant for Stephen because it may be a point of departure from the world of history, process, and consumption. Yet what it offers is not so much a retreat from life as a conveniently arty terminology for nature—‘the deep wood's woven shade’. Yeats's poem exemplifies in a thoroughly unconscious way Lukacs's diagnosis of art as a great door through which there is no passage. Stephen's introspection, intensified as the revision of the early episode was effected, is a structurally introspective representative of the novel's latent hermetic closure. Traditional accounts of Ulysses have interpreted Stephen's meeting with Bloom as providing, for both men, a renewed access to reality and release from their interior preoccupations. But as Stephen has painstakingly revealed to Deasy, the material of his introspection is history itself: his experience within the novel will involve a comprehensive adjustment of relation both to text and world. These preoccupations are given their head in the third episode when Stephen walks on Sandymount Strand. Characteristically, his meditations on his family, his trip to Paris, his fellow lodgers in the tower, are introduced by a meditation on the nature of art:
Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling
wrack and shells. You are walking through it
howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space
of time through very short times of space. Five, six: the
*Nacheinander*. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable
modality of the audible. Open your eyes. No. Jesus! If I
fell over a cliff that beetles o’er his base, fell through the
*Nebeneinander* ineluctably! I am getting on nicely in the
dark. My ash sword hangs at my side. Tap with it: they
do. My two feet in his boots are at the end of his legs,
*nebeneinander*.\(^{51}\)

The art of this episode, according to Stuart Gilbert’s schema,
is philology, and the second sentence is ‘Signatures of all
things I am here to read ….’\(^{52}\) The allusion to Jacob Boehme
offers a possibility of dynamically rendering nature intelligible
to a degree only approximated and mocked by nineteenth-
century philology. Stephen in *A Portrait* had listened silently to
Donovan’s glib citation of Lessing’s aesthetics: now he is led to
recall his differentiation of the verbal arts which deal with
objects one after another (‘nacheinander’) in time, and the
visual arts deal with objects next to one another
(‘nebeneinander’) in space.\(^{53}\) By alluding to Hamlet, Stephen
translates this distinction into an analogy of movement on two
axes—if you walk over a cliff you cease to move on the
horizontal axis though you move (p.278) with increasing
rapidity through it, on the vertical axis. *Nacheinander*, we
might say, characterizes that mechanical order which Kenner
calls Laplace’s cosmos; *nebeneinander* the simultaneity of all
events in the ‘nightmare of history’. In colonial Ireland
sequence and simultaneity are rival experiences of history.

Stephen’s aesthetic meditation has its complement in Bloom’s
recurring puzzlement by the phenomenon of parallax, by
reference to which we explain the apparent displacement or
difference in the apparent position of an object caused by an
actual change or difference of the position of the observer.\(^{54}\) In
a sense, what Time is to Stephen, Space is to Bloom. One is
tempted to see the novel as requiring a resolution based on a
time/space concept similar to that proposed initially by
Einstein in 1905, were it not for the fact that ‘resolution’ is
precisely what such a continuum jeopardizes. As a
consequence, many approaches to *Ulysses* are actually
directed at a nonexistent, or recently extinct, target. The
reconciliation of father and son, which critics of the archetype-
and-myth school fondly celebrate, is more properly considered as the effort of Joyce’s critical modernism to overcome the urge towards autonomy that characterizes so many modernist texts. Strictly speaking, Stephen without Bloom is unthinkable, Bloom without Stephen unthinking; thus the structuralist may read *Ulysses* as Joyce’s effort to bring together the problematic author (Stephen) and the problematic reader (Bloom). But in what sense is such fiction historical? None that Walter Scott would immediately recognize. If the composition of *Finnegans Wake* outlasts Scott’s entire career as prolific novelist, that of *Ulysses* more clearly reveals the historical nature of the fiction. To Carlo Linati in September 1920 Joyce declared his attitude to the Greek myth in terms which make the point effectively, ‘My intention is to transpose the myth, *sub specie temporis nostri.*’ The contrast here is not between then and now but between Eternity and time, between the *metaphysical beyond* into which Stephen fears he may walk on Sandymount Strand and the world of historical time to which the movement of the novel restores him. Fifteen years earlier Joyce had conceived his Odyssey as a short story for *Dubliners*, and its evolution as a long novel had necessarily brought alterations of conception and execution. Kenner has written of the ironic mood which the novel would have had if it had ended with ‘The Wandering Rocks’, and written also of the increasing uncertainty and unreliability of the narrators’ methods, as ‘The Sirens’, ‘Cyclops’, ‘Nausicaa’, ‘The Oxen of the Sun’, and ‘Circe’ progressively illustrate. To demonstrate his point Kenner cites the cheating reference to ‘Mr Bloom’s dental windows’ which is only cleared up eighty-five pages later with a denial that Leopold is any relative whatever of Bloom the dentist. Such red herrings certainly multiply—how can C. B. O’C. F. T. Farrell frown at the Metropolitan Hall when he halts at Wilde’s corner, for the Hall is three-quarters of a mile away on the other side of the river? What has happened is not just that Joyce is extending a naturalist novel (episodes 1–10) in a different mode; the novel comes to acknowledge the historical nature of its attention to 16 June 1904. With reference to Bloom the dentist Kenner observes:
True, we can imagine a reader from whom ‘Mr Bloom's dental windows’ would have instantly invoked the actual Marcus Bloom, dentist, who practised in 1904 at 2 Clare Street: a reader who would have known that vanished, pre-rebellion Dublin as intimately as do Joyce's Dubliners. But not even in 1922 can there have been many left alive who both commanded such lore and were capable of reading 250 pages into the difficult *Ulysses*.59

Professor Kenner’s fundamental anti-historicism here takes the form of historical exaggeration: after all, the six years between the Easter Rebellion and the publication of *Ulysses* had not seen the death of so many Dubliners and potential readers, nor had the Rebellion and its suppression caused the city to Vanish’. Such sentiment distracts us from a more thoughtful consideration of events occurring between the conception and publication of the novel—among them, massive labour unrest in Dublin, the Rebellion, the murder of Joyce’s friend Sheehy-Skeffington, the Great War, the internment of Stanislaus Joyce in Austria, Revolution in Russia and Germany. Across Europe and within Ireland, historical change had rendered 16 June 1904 no longer contemporary. Seen in this light the changing styles of *Ulysses* do not so much chronicle the events of one specific day as they seek to come to terms with the changing perspectives upon a ‘fixed’ day which a revolutionary period generated. *Ulysses* is thus historical in two senses, first in that it takes as its setting a date which is progressively seen as historical; and second, as a stylistic consequence, the process of composition itself is historicized.
Both *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* posited a future reader whom the texts awaited: Joycean irony and the conventions of *Bildungsroman* contributed to that perspective. *Ulysses*, on the other hand, is in danger of containing its author and reader. Or to put it in different terms, *Ulysses* appears all but ‘posthumously’: in 1922 old Troy of the D.M.P. is virtually an anachronism and the Citizen is on the point of assuming his functions. Joyce's youthful notions (of 7 January 1904) concerning the masses in travail and the end of a competitive social order find no fulfilment in the Irish Free State. This local timetable has its European tabulation also in the irresolution of 1918 and the failure of revolution in Germany and the West. To relate modernist literature to the crisis of western society is hardly original: nevertheless we await some dialectically satisfactory account of the disproportionate Irish contribution. Yeats's Anglo-Irish tradition is a classic instance of wisdom after the event, and the Parnellite trauma the symbol (manifest content) rather than the source of cultural energy. A dialectically thorough analysis of the Anglo-Irish Renaissance would take into account the contradictions implicit in the incorporation of a colonial and metropolitan system within the *United* Kingdom, and relate this feature to the function of sectarian ideologies in Ireland. The Great Famine, with the broader socio-economic pattern of which it is part, assisted in translating these contradictions into cultural terms, indeed gave occasion to that linguistic disjunction we have noted in homeopathic form in ‘Eveline’. At the aesthetic level such an account of the Anglo-Irish phenomenon would have many tasks, but in the present context we may specify one element. Yeatsian and Joycean paradigms are conveniently summarized in two slogans—the Celtic Twilight, the nightmare of history. These are of course problems to Yeats and Joyce as much as they are programmes, but they illustrate the centrality of the sectarian conflict to the elaboration of Anglo-Irish literature. For Yeats, typical of that self-conceived and self-deceived bourgeoise element known as the Protestant Ascendancy, history passively awaited formulation, invention, faith. For Joyce, urban inheritor of an abandoned language, history excelled itself, being prolific, obsessive, intolerable. To see these rival experiences of history in terms of *colon* and *colonise* is tempting but grossly so; a more profoundly historical inquiry will reveal their mutual interaction within a larger political strategy.
Hence the significance of academic criticism's reluctance to consider Joyce and Yeats together in a fully comparative analysis. The uncritical acceptance of Yeats's rewriting of literary history, like the refusal to acknowledge the metaphorical nature of Joycean 'paralysis', perpetuates convenient myths. The role imposed on Joyce at least as far as his reception is concerned resembles that of the academic portrayal of Gaelic revivalism—he is at once pedant and pornographer, who gave us 'a couple of books written clerkly' and restored a dirty word or two. Similarly, we should note that Ulysses's renowned openness to life is not without its problematic aspect, its contextual limitations, though here too we may take the opportunity to establish a Yeatsian comparison. It is specifically in 'Hades' that Bloom provides us with thoughts that at once qualify any naive acceptance of the novel as celebration and reveal a positive disposition in any comparison with Yeats:

Plenty to see and hear and feel yet. Feel live warm beings near you. Let them sleep in their maggoty beds. They are not going to get me this innings. Warm beds: warm full-blooded life.\(^{60}\)

(p.282) The parallel is obvious, the Old Man in 'Purgatory':

I saw it fifty years ago
Before the thunderbolt had riven it,
Green leaves, ripe leaves, leaves thick as butter,
Fat greasy life.\(^{61}\)
The enclosure dreaded and desired by modernist literature is perhaps never so fully and awe-fully enacted as in Yeats's play where the speakers know not their own death. ‘Purgatory’ as a meditation on Irish history, the Big House, and sectarian mesalliance subversively and persuasively reveals the manner in which those who formulate their history and consciously invest their faith in it are ultimately enclosed in all that they unconsciously exclude and repress. Yeats's 'Purgatory' is Hell, and by a pleasing corollary Joyce's 'Hades' is processive, purgatorial. Bloom, by winding the adage 'The Irishman's house is his coffin' out of his funereal mood, puts both Englishmen and castles in their place; furthermore we note that Bloom returns to his house and to his warm bed. Yet the distinguishing, Joycean *mot juste* is Bloom's 'yet', a possible continuity of that critical modernism which history called forth and frustrated between 1904 and 1922.


Where is this continuity to be traced—in latter-day Irish literature written in English or Gaelic, in the *nouveau roman* of Robbe-Grillet and Beckett, in Joyce's own *Finnegans Wake*? Beyond these literary texts there lies a vast tract of critical discourse whose existence is scarcely conceivable without the *Wake* and the earlier Joycean preludes to the *Wake*. No adequate treatment of even one of these Joycean legacies can be attempted here: instead we may be content with emphasizing the continuity which links *Finnegans Wake* to the earlier work in which Joyce's critical modernism (p.283) first bravely manifested itself. In discussing the *Wake* one necessarily discusses its critics for Joyce's compositional method guarantees that every reading of his novel is a critical response and not a passive acceptance. Of course some commentators have striven to reduce their response to the level of a naturalist appreciation: J. B. Lyons, for example, labours sedulously to prove that Irish priests were immune to venereal disease and crowns his argument by citing as evidence of Joyce's modified and softened attitudes to his early environment the following passage from *Finnegans Wake*:

Since the bouts of Hebear and Hairyman the cornflowers have been staying at Ballymun, the duskrose has choosed out Goatstown's hedges, twolips have pressed togatherthem by sweet Rush, townland of twined-lights, the whitethorn and the redthorn have fairygeyed the mayvalleys of Knockmaroon ...

62
To fear and yet practise a literal reading of ‘The Sisters’ leads Lyons to see this passage as ‘vivid with life’, a rebuke to those who cling to the stultifying idea of paralysis, and not to see that his example is Joyce’s parody of Edgar Quinet’s rhapsody on botanical survival and human mortality.63

Generally speaking, we may regard literalism as the least bothersome of the approaches adopted towards Finnegans Wake. The static application of the very philology Joyce strove to defeat is more characteristic. Adeline Glasheen, in the preface to A Census of Finnegans Wake, insists that ‘Joyce did not forsake received religion in order to enslave himself, as most rationalists have done, to received history.’64 Hence, in her interpretation of Finnegans Wake ‘Waterloo and the Resurrection are events of the same order.’65 From this dubious if seemingly harmless observation Miss Glasheen (p. 284) advances towards the dehistoricizing of all Joyce’s work. Let us take a sample passage:

So This Is Dyoublong?

Hush! Caution! Echoland!

How charmingly exquisite! It reminds you of the out was hed engravure that we used to be blurring on the blotchwall of his innkempt house Used they? (I am sure that tiring chabelshoveller with the mujikal Chocolatebox, Miry Mitchel, is listening) I say, the remains of the outworn gravemure where used to be blurried the Ptollmens of the Incabus. Used we? (He is only pretendant to be stugging at the jubalee harp from a second existed lishener, Fiery Farrelly.) It is well known.66

In fairness, it should be noted that Miss Glasheen's annotation relies on information from another source, Mrs Christiani's Scandinavian Elements of 'Finnegans Wake'. Nevertheless, as the form in which the Census presents its case is itself significant I quote Miss Glasheen verbatim:

* FARRELLY, Fiery, and Miry Mitchel—Mrs Christiani says: ‘Fiery’ = French fier, ‘proud’; ‘Farrelly’ = Danish farlig, ‘dangerous’; she, there-fore, identifies FF with Nicholas Proud (q. v.), and Miry (Russian mir-'peace’) Mitchel (q.v.) with St Michael (q. v.). I am sure there is a lot of truth in this explanation.67
As Nicholas Proud is identified with the Devil (Nicholas = Old Nick = Lucifer = Pride), this reveals Fiery Farrelly and Miry Mitchel to be an eternal opposition of Devil and Archangel, as in Milton (q. v.). Not only does the lexicographical arrangement of information mimic the metaphysical interpretation it implies, it also suppresses the indicative shapes and tones of Joyce's prose. Rhyme (cf. ‘miry’) tells us to pronounce ‘Fiery’ as adjectival of English ‘fire’, and Fiery Farrelly thus begins to sound and look like a plausible Irish name. In the Annotations, Roland McHugh glosses it as ‘Feardorcha O'Farrelly (fl. 1736), Ir. poet’ and (p.285) offers no suggestion for Miry Mitchel.68 He does however interpret ‘So This is Dyoublong?’ as an allusion to M. J. MacManus's So This is Dublin (1927) which derides Joyce. However, ‘Hush! Caution! Echoland!’ echoes a passage in George Moore's A Drama in Muslin (1886) which, significantly, is set in Dublin in the year of Joyce's birth, 1882; the paragraph parodies characteristic stylistic flourishes of Moore’s.69 If this echo is recognized, it becomes feasible to see in Miry Mitchel a reflection of Susan Langstaff Mitchell (1866–1926) who satirized Moore in verse and who wrote a mock biography of him.70 As rhyme links Miry and Fiery, Fiery Farrelly might then be treated as an allusion to Agnes O'Farrelly, a Gaelic League enthusiast and sometime professor at University College, Dublin. Both women are gently mocked in Moore's Hail and Farewell, thus forming a perfect circle of literary allusion.71
The result of this exegesis is not some claim that *Finnegans Wake* is about Irish literary skirmishes rather than the war in Heaven. It is however salutary if we recognize that the crucial element in reading *Finnegans Wake* is not the identification of referents but the elucidation and advancement of relationship between various levels of allusion. That Joyce should refer to a novel dealing with ‘the moral idea of Dublin in 1882’ indicates the degree to which his last great novel conforms to the programme announced to Grant Richards in 1906—‘to write a chapter of the moral history of my country’. Superficially, the *Wake* looks unlike *Dubliners*, and yet the technique of forcing the reader to change roles (and become momentarily, a speaker) so as to perceive the relationship between Fiery Farrelly and Miry Mitchel was employed by Joyce as early as 1904 in writing ‘Eveline’. (p.286) Moreover, between 1904 and 1939, Joyce’s country had undergone drastic historical adjustments. It had, to be sure, failed to realize the liberation of the ‘masses in travail’ and it still laboured within the competitive order of western capitalism: nevertheless it had formally inaugurated the revolt against the imperial and colonial system of the great powers—Joyce’s interest in African colonialism is manifest in *Finnegans Wake*, and rubs shoulders with deft allusions to the fratricidal violence of post-1921 Ireland.72 *Finnegans Wake* is necessarily cryptic, obscure, and baffling, because its underlying concern is subversive and its tactics those of retrenchment and renewed silence, exile and cunning. *Finnegans Wake* extends Joyce’s critical modernism not in its alleged ‘experimentalism’ but in its self-conscious examination of the processes of history and language, history in language. Once again one might emphasize that Joyce’s method may employ the rituals of philology but his ends are far removed from such scholasticism; so too his theme in *Finnegans Wake* is guilt and failure for the very reason that such a rendering articulate is a stage within the process of liberation. The naive programme of release from ‘the general paralysis of an insane society’ announced in 1904 is itself subjected to a scrutiny of its sexuality in the festive comedy to which *Finnegans Wake* looks forward.
Speaking at the third Conference on Irish Politics and Culture at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, Professor Joachim Krehayn charted the turning tide of Marxist attitudes towards Joyce. He had been unfairly neglected in the past, and now editions of his works were in progress: Joyce had been reconsidered, and reissued, but in the long run he remained distinctively an Irish author whose relevance in the German Democratic Republic must be limited. As editor (p.287) of the new edition of *Dubliners*, Krehayn was clearly not speaking from a position of hostility or reluctant approval.73 His relegation of Joyce as distinctively an Irish writer has a symptomatic value which extends far beyond the frontiers of Germany. And this must stimulate a confession of deep unease on the part of the present writer. For, if Joyce is rescued from the New Critics, the mythologists, and the philologists, and is instead regarded as an exemplary subject of literary history, should not one concede the *marginality* of the history which he in turn works upon? Certainly, English critics have been notoriously reluctant to commit themselves at length, as if their commentary might constitute some form of trespass in the affairs of a friendly and neighbouring state. Dr Leavis on Joyce scarcely amounts to a slim pamphlet, and much of it repetitious as if the bother of considering a second example were excessive.74 The same might be said of Raymond Williams, who transfers the *apergus* of *The English Novel* (1970) to *The Country and the City* (1973) almost verbatim.75 Such embarrassment in confronting Joyce might in itself form the material for an analysis of cultural relations between Britain and Ireland, but for the moment we should concentrate on the immediate issue of Joyce's obsessive exploitation of the minutiae of Irish topography, the arcana of local affairs in Dublin, the sounds and smells of Chapelizod, all that an outsider might justifiably complain he cannot master.

In what sense—or, perhaps one should say, to what ends—can Susan L. Mitchell, the Metropolitan Hall, and ‘Derevaun Seraun’ concern the contemporary reader and writer? An answer could be provided at length, in which the (p.288) culture of ‘secondary’ nations is shown to have been crucial in shaping twentieth-century cosmopolitan art—Strindberg’s Sweden, Sibelius’s Finland, and Picasso’s Spain are not the ‘great powers’ of August 1914. But this indiscriminate listing of small nations and irredentist provinces is really little more than sentimentality. More precisely, one should point to
Ireland’s early experience of independence and neocolonialism and the prior history of that status, and to Ireland’s late experience of linguistic trauma in the colonial period. This, together with the contradictions of the disunited kingdom, provides the crude framework for an analysis in terms of Althusserian ‘overdetermination’. Of course, all this is true of Yeats as well as Joyce; as we have seen, the two Irish authors adopted drastically different attitudes towards history, genre, and language. Approaching Joyce’s texts more closely, one might specify a particular feature of Irish colonial experience which is taken up in *Ulysses* and which is given structural status there. In the prolonged and bitter ‘lock-out’ of 1913, the leader of the Employers’ Federation was William Martin Murphy, a newspaper magnate: in 1916, the same Murphy used his press to insist upon the execution of the socialist James Connolly who was consequently shot in his wheel-chair. Ireland’s underdeveloped industrial sector was well known, and the absence of genuine workers in *Ulysses* cause for complaint by primitive Marxists. But the centrality of the press in the organization of Irish capitalism in the revolutionary period is at once a sign of industry’s undeveloped state and its advanced consciousness, for control of communications takes the place of the steel-mills or the manufactories. Joyce’s Citizen knows Murphy as ‘the Bantry jobber’, and Murphy’s hostility to Parnell is the cause of his animus. The ‘Aeolus’ episode, however, transcends the simple attention to the press as topic, and its language achieves the ‘ruination of the referential powers of language’. Moreover, ‘Aeolus’ perfectly demonstrates the historical quality of Joyce’s composition for, having published the episode in *The Little Review* in October 1918, Joyce further expanded it and its catalogue of rhetorical devices and broke it up with sixty-three journalistic captions or headlines. ‘Aeolus’ opens with trammen’s cries, Guinness barrels, and advertisements: communications and consumerism dominate with all their unreal promises of fulfilment. Far from missing the essential features of industrial society, *Ulysses* concentrates upon the most potent features of life in such a society.
The development of language implicit in Joyce's radical revision of 'Aeolus' totally undermines the classic notion of the work of art as an end in itself, the sort of creation the Stephen of A Portrait aspires to. In terms of character, we have seen that the Stephen of Ulysses does not simply achieve a renewed access to reality via Bloom's kitchen. But Joyce's revolutionary practice here distinguishes him drastically from Yeats, and the distinction embraces concepts of history as well as art. In Yeats one finds repeatedly that, within a poem or play, a figure is presented as achieving form by assimilation to some further level of art; thus, in 'Easter 1916', the concluding lines of the poem ritualize names which, by being written out in verse, are changed utterly. This metaformalism does indeed undergo a sea-change in the later work (where its effects are more ironic), but in 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' its compensatory function is clear. The Old Woman, having prophesied that 'many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked', proceeds to move from prose to verse and with this shift to offer an aesthetic immortality in legend for those who support her cause:

They shall be remembered for ever,
They shall be alive for ever,
They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.
Considered in terms of plot, this curtain line of the disguised Countess anticipates the imminent defeat of the rebels—the setting is Killala, 1798. If Yeats's late plays reveal the manner (p.290) in which those who formulate their history and consciously invest their faith in it are ultimately enclosed in all that they unconsciously exclude and repress, then 'Cathleen ni Houlihan' (written on the eve of Yeats's explicit adoption of the Ascendancy view of Irish history) lays the ground for this ultimate irony. The play attempts to advance two unrelated and unrelatable perspectives upon history; for the family in the cottage there is all the freedom and unpredictability of the future, the sense of potential and participation; for the lyrical Countess, there is the metadramatic knowledge of history and its closures, the certainty, indeed predetermination of an illusory future. And here we find in Yeats the counter-truth to Stephen's experience of history; for, having observed that colon and colonise are too exclusivist in their implications to describe the formulator and the recipient of history respectively—and Stephen is recipient by virtue of his nightmares—we find in Yeats an antithetical statement of the polarity. The Old Woman's song is a significant point of reference and comparison because it too lies behind the passage from *Finnegans Wake* we have taken as our focus; the paragraph continues:

Lokk for himself and see the old butte new. Dbln. W. K.O. O. Hear? By the mausolime wall. Fimfim fimfim. With a grand funferall. Fum fumfumfum. Tis optophone which ontophanes. List! Wheatstone’s magic Iyer. They will be tuggling foriver. They will be lichening for allof. They will be pretumbling for over. The harps dis chord shall be theirs for ollaves.80

McHugh's *Annotations* offer real aid here, for he tells us that Wheatstone invented a box 'shaped like a lyre, into which piano's vibrations passed, & which then appeared to play itself'.81 In other words, the Aeolian Harp in mass-production. The art of Moore and the early Yeats offers illusory compensations for the disappointments which its history imposes. Joyce's critical modernism fully acknowledges the defeat of his idealistic 1904 programme of culture liberation, yet it proceeds through *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* to (p. 291) interrogate the terms of that defeat and to assume (and so render possible) a future readership.
I have spoken of Joyce as offering a possible continuity of that critical modernism which was called forth and frustrated in the years between 1904 and 1922. Continuity, of course, is not simply a matter of futurist extension, and it may be equally valid to look to an earlier moment of literary history for an effective placing of Joyce's achievement. 'Wise passiveness in time' is in part a definition of Wordsworth's Christian stoicism, but it also catches the frustrations of a young man whose faith in revolution was (in his view) betrayed. That the great revolution of Joyce's time was Bolshevik rather than bourgeois must be noted, together with the confusedly bourgeois-and-more promptings of the Irish rebellion. Yet while it was never Bolshevik, Joyce's attitude to revolution, as to history, was not permitted to be one of privileged faith. The dialectical transformation of quantity into quality, function into symbol, is seen in essentially romantic terms in lines from 'Michael' which may none the less be quoted in this Joycean context:

The length of full seven years from time to time
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.\(^82\)

In the more exposed position of Irish modernist in the age of Russian revolution, Joyce's image of literary conscience, literary conservation cannot be the sheep-fold. In *Ulysses* we have seen that even in Hell, Bloom can assert the dignity of the common man, though in a style which we should progressively read for its limitations. Wordsworthian pastoral, which might be called the formalism of Nature, similarly claims to be the language of men speaking to men. At the conclusion of the second chapter of Book III in *Finnegans Wake*, the narrator provides a superficially similar and attractive vision of natural rhythms re-emerging:

Brave footsore Haun! Work your progress! Hold to! Now!
Win out, ye divil ye! The silent cock shall crow at last.
The west shall shake the (p.292) east awake. Walk while ye have the night for morn, lighbreakfast bringer, morroweth whereon every past shall full fost sleep.
Amain.\(^83\)
It is true that west and east are here restored to some mutually defining rhythm, and true too that the ‘lightbreakfastbringer’ lightly knocks on the head that domesticating myth of *Ulysses* interpretation whereby Leopold’s patriarchal stature is restored in his ordering of breakfast from Molly. But Book III is described by Campbell and Morton as ‘the book of the desired future; not the future really germinating in the nursery upstairs ... but the mirage-future of the idealizing daydreams of the half-broken father’. Once again, Joyce obliges the reader of *Finnegans Wake* to change roles, this time in order to recognize the specific speaker of the words on the page. It is true that the passage is comic, but with this higher recognition its comedy approaches that critical revelation of a festive conclusion which is the end of history. In the first version of the passage Shaun is hailed ‘heart & soul you are of Shamrogueshire’ and the entire rhetoric here is a parody of *biedermeier* Free State self-sufficiency, a hermetic and deluded protectionism. Joyce’s mimicry, in *Dubliners* as much as in *Finnegans Wake*, mocks a mockery. Thus it draws the reader towards his creation of an order which is not competitive and in which life and art positively define each other.

**Notes:**


(12) Dubliners, p. 41.

(13) Ibid.


(15) Dubliners, p. 37.
（16）Ibid.

（17）Ibid.

（18）Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 170. I refer above to critical silence on the metaphoric ‘invade’ of ‘Eveline’s’ opening paragraph: it may be useful to note one critic who has ventured an opinion on its tone. Warren Beek, in *Joyce's Dubliners: Substance, Vision and Art* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969), suggests that ‘The word ‘invade’, especially connoting the dusk, suggests a suspended mood without stressing it’ (pp. 112–13). Given the American presence in Vietnam at the time Beek was writing, it is only fair to point out that since those days academic criticism has provided a less myopic perspective on modernist fiction and global politics—cf. Conrad’s Kurtz in full US army regalia in *Apocalypse Now*.

（19）Kipling, loc. cit.


（22）Translated by the present writer.


（24）*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Cape, 1968)
(25) Ruth Dudley Edwards, op. cit., pp. 38–41. books by Louis Cullen provide valuably broader contexts for the crisis—*An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660* (London: Batsford, 1972), and *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600–1900* (London: Batsford, 1981), the latter providing far more commentary and analysis on cultural matters than its title might initially suggest. In relation to the interaction of language and sexuality, such commentaries as McCarthy's are highly revealing. In Irish, Peadar O Laoghaire's *Mo Sgeal Fein* (1915) and the diary of Amhlaigh O Suilleabhain provide excellent primary material.


(31) Ibid.

(32) Ibid.


(34) op. cit.


(37) Ibid.

{39} op. cit.

{40} Ulysses (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969)

{41} Ibid.

{42} Ibid.

{43} Ibid.

{44} Ibid.

{45} The James Joyce Archive - 'A Portrait ...', etc., pp. 33,


{47} Ulysses, p. 40.

{48} Portrait, p. 208.

{49} Ulysses, pp. 15–16.

{50} Portrait, p. 176.

{51} Ulysses, pp. 42–3.

{52} Ibid.


{55} Letters of James Joyce, 146–7 (cited hereafter as Letters I).

{56} Kenner, Ulysses, p. 151.

{57} Ulysses, p. 249.

{58} See Appendix E.

{59} Kenner, Ulysses, p. 65.

{60} Ulysses, pp. 116–17.

(62) *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber, 1964), pp. 14–15. This view of the passage as parody is reinforced if we note a similarity to the moment in *Ulysses* (p. 79) reporting Bloom’s murmured version of Martha Clifford’s love-letter, ‘Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don’t please poor forgetmenot ...’, etc.


(65) Idem.


(69) See Appendix F for ‘the moral idea of Dublin’ etc.

(70) See S. L. Mitchell, *Aids to the Immortality of Certain Persons in Ireland* (Dublin; London: Maunsell, 1913), and *George Moore* (Dublin; London: Maunsell, 1916; also reissued by Talbot Press, 1929). If purists argue that *Finnegans Wake* refers to Miry Mitchel (not Mitchell), it might be pointed out that Miss Mitchell misspells John Mitchel as Mitchell, thus endorsing Joycean error— see Mitchell’s *George Moore*, p. 60.

I am grateful to Dr Pieter Bekker for his comments in conversation on African elements in *Finnegans Wake* and on Joyce's interest in the history of colonialism. Some time around 1909–10 Joyce ironically noted in an address-book:

*England*

She is successful with savages, her mind being akin to theirs (*James Joyce Archive 'A Portrait ...', etc., p. 123).

As in so many other areas, Joyce's relation with the primitivist side of modernism is deeply critical.


op. cit.


W. B. Yeats, 'Cathleen ni Houlihan', *Collected Plays*, p. 86.

*Finnegans Wake*, p. 13;

op. cit.


*Finnegans Wake*, p. 473.


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