

James Joyce and the Anglo - Irish Conflict

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I

Since *Ulysses* was published in 1921, Joyce has been attacked by many theorists, Marxist commentators in particular. One of the earliest Marxists, R.D. Harques, argues:

. . .not only did Joyce restrict himself to 'the narrowest and most intimate kinds of relationships,' but in addition to this he also omitted 'the most obvious of the material and impersonal forces of society.' (quoted in Hawthorn 112)

Georg Lukács, another Marxist, also claims:

Joyce acquired the proportions of the arch-modernist, whose work displayed an exaggerated concern with form and style, and technique in general, along with an excessive attention to sense-data, combined with a comparative neglect of ideas and emotions. (quoted in Scholes 105 - 06)

Furthermore, Phillip Herring, a Joycean scholar, claims that Joyce had nothing to declare but his genius, together with moral

neutrality. (13) All these arguments suggest that Joyce was indifferent to society and political history, devoting himself to art with obsessive emphasis on form, style, and technique. I don't agree with these positions. For Joyce interwove his texts with political contexts and social mores so minutely that careless readers often dismiss them. As Cheng claims, to assume that Joyce is an apolitical (or even regressive), aestheticizing, privileged white male writer in the Great Anglocentric Tradition is the result of the high modernist academic canonizing processes. (3) As far as academic criticism is concerned, New Critical interpretation, which has had an unspoken ideological interest in sustaining an anational cadre of high modernist texts, has also contributed to the making of an aesthetic, apolitical Joyce. (Duffy 3)

However, in the case of Joyce, the act of writing is deeply related with political action because Joyce's stylistic, linguistic and literary movement is based on his sense of ideological, ethnic, and colonial dispossession. (Cheng 4) Even his obscure prose can be explained in terms of the symptom of colonial deprivation. The dark, dismal, and unpredictable reality brings uncertain, undetermined, and unstable language. As often considered, Joyce is not a passive aesthete, but a literary revolutionary for whom writing represents the supreme political act. In this sense Ellmann claims: "Joyce's politics and aesthetics were one. For him the act of writing was also, and indissolubly, an act of liberating." (90)

In this study, I intend to explore the political Joyce who is obsessively preoccupied with the Anglo-Irish conflict: Joyce who

is not only interested in Irish politics and history but also trying to liberate, through his cold steelpen, his country from English colonization.

II

Dubliners and *A Portrait* represent political turmoil after the downfall of Parnell, who was the idol of young Joyce. Political failure pervades all citizens, which explains why Joyce described Dublin as a paralyzed city. Laziness, alcoholism, and debt — symptoms of an 800 - year - old colonial occupation, and of failure in struggles against British rule — connect all Dubliners. Trieste, where Joyce wrote *Dubliners*, shares with Dublin strikingly analogous political situations.

...for Joyce there were striking political resemblances between the two cities. The theme of the occupied city was perfectly represented in them. Trieste had been ruled by the Austrians for almost as long as the British ruled Dublin, and both cities claimed a language different from that of their conquerors...the similarity between irredentism and the Irish independence movement since Ireland too awaited its 'redemption' from British rule. (Manganiello 43-4)

Confronted with imperialist oppression and an independence movement in Trieste, Joyce couldn't help reflecting on the political

situations in Dublin. Therefore careful reading of *Dubliners* reminds us of the Anglo - Irish conflict.

"Sisters," the opening story of *Dubliners*, began with the colonial connection in the form of the priest's address in Great Britain Street when Joyce first published it in *Irish Homestead* in 1904. (Cairns 80) But he erased it and inserted just "Great Britain Street" (D 9) in the middle of the story. For Joyce refused to show the Anglo - Irish connotation overtly, and tried to hide it. The fact that the priest lives in Great Britain Street suggest that the priest, who dethroned Parnell, colludes secretly with imperialism. Father Flynn dies in a mysterious way, suggesting his simony. Materialism is associated with imperialism, which uses its physical power to conquer the third world and seek for material interests. As Frantz Fanon, a race theorist, claims, the colonial native never ceases to dream of putting himself in the place of the settler. (52) The wish to be the victimizer rather than the victim thus often tends to reinscribe the colonial paradigm as a neocolonial paradigm, in which the colonized native can function as the "counterpart" of the former colonial settler, in systemic replications (however minute) of hierarchical domination and hegemony. Father Flynn who lives in Great Britain Street has internalized the hegemony of imperialism, and occupied himself in selling priesthood. Significantly, he dies on the day when in 1690 James II (Catholic) was defeated by William of Orange (Protestant) in the battle of the Boyne. (Fairhall 91) Therefore the case of Father Flynn brings the political importance: since Catholicism's defeat by Protestantism, Catholicism

has been associated with British oppression rather than political liberation.

"After the Race" is a story about a race, about a sporting competition as well as a story about races, about the competition between races. (Cheng 103) Issues of race and empire are suggested through allusions to the activity of racing. The two kinds of race continue and develop in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in terms of horse races. In the car race, France, Germany and Belgium — they are prominent among European imperialistic empires — win top honours. After the car race, the foreign races — French, English American — exploit Irish money, first in terms of investment (Segouin's motor establishment in Paris), second in card games. In the latter case, we can see the deceptive play:

...Jimmy did not know exactly who was winning, but he knew that he was losing...someone proposed one great game for a finish.

...it was terrible game. *They stopped just before the end of it to drink for luck.* (D 46-7) (my emphasis)

We can anticipate the result of card games because it is a race war rather than games, Anglo-Irish in particular. Adams pointedly remarks:

The game of cards, which lies between Routh the Englishman and Segouin the Frenchman, and in which Farley the American and Doyle the Irishman are the heaviest losers, is a thumbnail sketch of Irish history. (103)

Before this game, at a dinner table, Doyle, the Irishman, confronts Routh, the Englishman, over politics to the extent that "there was even danger of personal spite" (*D* 44). This scene, together with card games, shows a microcosm of the Anglo-Irish political conflict.

"Little Cloud" is a story of a transformed version of the result of the Anglo-Irish conflict though an Englishman doesn't appear. Gallaher returns to Dublin from London. As shown in his "orange tie" (*D* 72,78), he was Anglicized — since James II was defeated by Orange in 1690, the colour of orange has been associated with Anglo-Protestant. Like Father Flynn, Gallaher tries to be a colonial settler. Though Gallaher flaunts his superiority over Little Chandler only in terms of drinking habits (Chandler's habit of mixing water in his whisky) (*D* 73) and sexual titillation (Chandler's limited sexual habit) (*D* 74), Chandler still envies Gallaher and wants to leave Dublin: "A dull resentment against his life awoke within him...Could he go to London?" (*D* 81) This attitude of Chandler's is also anticipated before his meeting with Gallaher. On his way to the bar to meet Gallaher, he dreams of being a poet, recognized by the English critics. This story shows how English colonialism makes the native Irish constitute English-Irish hierarchy within themselves.

"Counterparts" shows various aspects of the Anglo-Irish conflicts. The story begins with the conflict between Farrington and his boss Mr. Alleyne. The latter's "piercing North of Ireland accent" (*D* 86) identifies him as representative of the imperial Ascendancy

and aligns him with England as clearly as does Gallaher's orange tie. Farrington's occupational, financial, and spiritual enslavement to Alleyne echoes the repeated Joycean motif of Irish economic prostitution to England as suggested in the Araby bazaar with its English accents and coins; in the Irish prostitution to England in "two Gallants" as symbolized by the harp, the slavey, and the gold sovereign; and in the financial rape and swindle of Ireland suggested in Jimmy Doyle's card game with the Englishman Routh. (Cheng 120) To release himself, Farrington goes to drink - a symptom of colonialism. There he struggles with an Englishman an English woman again. He tries, in vain, to catch the attentions of an attractive woman with "a London accent." (D 93); He loses in an arm - wrestling match with the Englishman Weathers. As Farrington is forced to do the match "to uphold the national honour" (D 93), Joyce suggests overtly that this story is about Ireland's failure in the political history.

"The Dead" is a story about "a west Britain" and native Irish women. Gabriel Conroy is associated with the former not only because he writes for *The Daily Express*, a pro - English newspaper, but also because he wants to go to "France or Belgium or perhaps Germany" (D 186) —western imperialistic countries—, instead of the Aran Islands, where the Irish language and culture still remain comparatively unpolluted by the English culture. The latter is represented by Molly Ivors, a nationalist, who suggests to Gabriel an excursion to the Aran Islands that summer to keep in touch with the Irish languages. Gabriel's attitude toward his wife

Gretta also shows that he represents an imperialistic aspect. Joyce was deeply influenced by an Italian socialist Guglielmo Ferrero, who associates militaristic activity with the art of gallantry. (Manganiello 50) For Joyce the brutalism of love and politics is interconnected. The male tradition of militarism and bellicose chauvinism results in sexual relationships being dominated by the brutality of the male rather than by the gentility and gallantry desired by the female. Gabriel represents the male tradition of militarism and bellicose chauvinism. He sees Gretta in terms of object of male desire. When he sees Gretta on the stairs, he hopes to paint a picture of her: he thinks of her in terms of aesthetic objectification of women as art and symbol, as object rather than subject. (Cheng 142) "The Lass of Aughrim," a song which attracts Gretta's attention, also represents the Anglo-Irish conflict because this song is about mastery, domination, and mistreatment. Furthermore, it was the Irish defeat at Aughrim a year after the Boyne that finally sealed English domination of Ireland. (Cheng 144) This political history reveals the relationship not only between Gabriel and Molly Ivors, but also between Gabriel and Gretta.

A Portrait is full of symbolic imperialistic threat. Joyce, in *A Portrait*, removed the overt political problems, which had occupied *Stephen Hero*, the first draft of *A Portrait*. Joyce thought that literature can usher in the spiritual liberation of the people, but this must be done through innuendo rather than through ponderousness. (Manganiello 158) In *A Portrait* Joyce symbolically created the oppressive atmosphere given by imperial presence. For instance,

when Stephen is a baby, he is threatened by his aunt Dante: "if not, the eagle will come and pull out his eyes." (P 8) In the school, he becomes the object of students' derision and is pandied by Fathe Dolan unfairly. Especially when he, after his first sexual experience, participates in the retreat, he is told the curse of hell by Father Arnall:

...the lake of fire in hell is boundless, shoreless and bottomless...this terrible fire will not afflict the bodies of the damned only from without, but each lost soul will be a hell unto itself, the boundless fire raging in its very vitals...The blood seethes and boils in the veins, the brains are boiling in the skull, the heart in the breast glowing and bursting, the bowels a redhot mass of burning pulp, the tender eyes flaming like molten ball. (P 121-22)

These threats force Stephen to leave Ireland to "forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race" (P 253) Race, which is repeated 11 times in *A Portrait*, has a significant meaning in Stephen because his race is the victimized. In Ireland he can't look for male authority figures, whose absence is associated with worldly or political impotence. (Nolan 174) Throughout *A Portrait* and even *Ulysses*, he tries to look for fatherhood. Adopting Daedalus as a spiritual father, and thinking of spiritual liberation of his race made possible by art, he leaves Ireland for France, which has been thought of as their saviour throughout Irish history by Catholic Irish people.

Stephen, however, is on the side of the victimizer in terms of art and women. In chapter 4, his response to the mortal reality of a Dove girl is a turning away into imperishable art. For Stephen, women are merely a passive element, "sluggish matter," transformed by men into immortal art. (Doyle 164) He doesn't listen to what his mother says. He doesn't understand "what the heart is and what it feels." (P 253) For him, artistic male figure — old artificer (Daedalus) — is meaningful as is shown in his last cry: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." (P 253) In short, As far as women are concerned, Stephen is another patriarchal type of Gabriel.

III

While Joyce was writing *Ulysses* (1914-1921), Ireland was struggling towards the last moment of independence. A series of conflicts between Ireland and England had ensued unpredictably until one of the two sides gained its aim. Joyce, however, appeared to elude in his art the claims of the troublesome aspect of contemporaneity by choosing a date that was more than a decade before he began to write. (Duffy 16) With the result, it is liable for readers to see only the 1904 political situation in *Ulysses* without considering the most important time in Irish history. Unlike *Dubliners* and *A portrait*, with *Ulysses* the temporal discrepancy between historical setting and composition achieves structural

proportions. (McCormack 87) Therefore it is desirable to read *Ulysses* with double viewpoints. The fragmentations of character, style, and meaning represent the life of a nation semierased by the Anglo - Irish conflict. Instead of telling us directly the political history in Ireland, Joyce invites us into the minds of Stephen and Bloom, who see the streets that witnessed the events in question. This process supplies readers with the informative historical fact only if they can connect numerous minute allusive webs with political references.

"Telemachus" shows us the Anglo - Irish conflict overtly. Haines, who stays in Stephen's tower without his permission, represents imperialistic England. Just as British empire defends itself against the native's riot with weapon, Haines unconsciously uses his gun to shoot the black panther in his dream. In addition, he is a son of a man who made his fortune by colonial exploitation, that is, "by selling jalap to zulus or some bloody swindle or other." (*U* 1.156-57) He stays in Ireland to collect Irish folk sayings just like anthropologists or ethnographers from European empires doing field work on tribal peoples in native colonies. Mulligan, who willingly helps Haines find out primitive Irishness for money, represents an informer who has betrayed Irish patriots in Irish history. Conscious of Haines' imperialism and Mulligan's collaboration with him, Stephen naturally calls them "Usurper." (*U* 1.744)

In "Nestor," the Anglo - Irish conflict is concretized in Stephen's dialogue with Deasy, an Orangeman. Stephen is paid by him with "crowns," (*U* 2.220, 221) that is, "sovereigns." (*U* 2.217, 219) As

Englishman's proudest boast, Deasy said, is "I paid my way, " England has sovereignty over Ireland. Stephen, as Irishman, is indebted to many people, so Ireland has no sovereignty.

"Cyclops" contains the most overt political conflict between Ireland and England. This episode establishes linkage between form and content by means of its dramatization of verbal invectiveness, invective, and parody as aggressive response to colonial power. (Nolan 120) Citizen, who is antagonistic against England, represents violent nationalism, which Bloom/Joyce doesn't support. However, whatever Citizen say isn't wrong completely. His account of the English attitude to the Famine has some basis in truth, and his blaming of England for the collapse of the Irish economy is Joyce's. Nolan suggests that Citizen's view of history concurs with Joyce's own rehearsal of the Irish nationalist historical case in his 1907 essay, "Ireland, Isle of Sanits and Sage." (99) The Anglo - Irish conflict, which Citizen suggests, is Joyce's obsession in his writings. The boxing match between Bennett, an English soldier, and Keogh, and Irishman, reflects the extreme violent opposition when Joyce was writing *Ulysses* - the 1916 Easter Uprising and the Anglo - Irish War (1912 - 21). Joyce's negative parody of Citizen doesn't mean Joyce's opposition to Ireland's independence. As Ellmann claims, Bloom/Joyce supports Irish independence, but he challenges the Citizen on the use of force. (82)

"Circe" shows another boxing match between Stephen and Private Carr, and English soldier. Actually this story is based on Joyce's private war against the British in Zurich. Over a salary

dispute, Joyce was threatened by Henry Carr, an employee of the British Consulate. (Manganiello 148 - 49) In this episode his experience is expanded into the political Anglo - Irish conflict. This confrontation, however, can be explained in terms of Irish political history. Cheng claims that the redcoat violence against the helpless and unresisting Irishman replicates in microcosm the hopelessness of Irish insurrections in a colonial history. (234) Especially the Easter Uprising and its limitation are ingeniously veiled. This scene concludes —at least in Stephen's hallucination— like the Rebellion in violent conflagration as Dublin, under heavy military bombardment, erupts in flames (Nolan 121):

Brimstone fires spring up. Dense clouds roll past. Heavy
Gatling guns boom.
Pandemonium. Troops deploy. Gallop of hoofs. Artillery.
Hoarse commands...Cries of valour. Shrieks of dying.
(U 15.4661 - 65)

Furthermore, by using the word 'national' and 'race' slyly: "the national hurdle handicap" (U 15.4674), "a race of runners" (U 15.4675), Joyce highlights that this is a national and racial conflict. (Doyle 162)

Like "Two Gallants" and "The Dead," *Ulysses* shows the relationship between militarism and sexual politics. Boylan, who is a son of a man who, like Haines' father, made his fortune by using an imperialistic situation: by selling "the same horses twice over to the government to fight the Boers" (U 12.997 - 99),

represents a male sexual imperialist over Molly. Boylan shows a violent aspect and physically in the sexual relationship with Molly, especially, when he slaps Molly's bottom as she doesn't call him Hugh. (*U* 18.1369 - 70) This is in contrast with Bloom's kissing "the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump." (*U* 17.2041) Thus Boylan and Bloom constitute another the Anglo - Irish aspect within the Irishmen themselves.

IV

Joyce's intention to describe the Anglo - Irish conflict is not to strengthen the binary opposition, but to mirror the social structure of the period when he was writing. This is evident in Joyce's satirizing of violent nationalistic movement. In "Circe," Tweedy, member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers of the British army, confronts Citizen, a violent Irish nationalist. At this moment two patriotic national anthems, "Garryowen and God save the king" (*U* 15. 4630), are played by massed bands. Ironically Garryowen is an Irish drinking song. (Nolan 55) Actually in "Cyclops," Citizen is not working for the nationalistic cause, but is cadging free drinks. Though Joyce detests the British imperialism, Irish violent irrationality is the main target in this scent. So Citizen is described more ludicrously than Tweedy.

Throughout Irish history, Citizen's resorting to violence was materialized in the violent unfruitful struggles of Emmet, Croppy

Boy, and Joe Brady. In "Sirens," Bloom refuses this history by farting simultaneously with his reading of Emmet's famous last words. In "Cyclops," conflated with Brady, Emmet's image undergoes further indignities when Joyce parodies the sentimental legend of his romance with Sarah Curran. Significantly, Sarah appears with the name of Sheila. Since Sheila-ni-Gara was an allegorical name for Ireland, Emmet here is allegorically engaged to Ireland. (Cheng 202) When she accepts the proposal of a young Oxford graduate, the crowd cheers. This scene exemplifies the Irish betrayal suffered by Emmet, the Shears Fitzgerald, Parnell and other patriots. Fairhall claims that *Ulysses's* double visions anticipate the hero-martyrs' political descendants —Pearse and Easter Rising leaders. (178) In "Circe," Croppy Boy, conflated with Emmet and Joe Brady, is executed in front of a crowd. Joyce emphasizes his sexual organ's erection after his death: "a violent erection of the hanged sends gouts of sperm spouting through his deathclothes on the the cobblestones." (*U* 15.4548-49) The whole episode brings out and undermines the union effected by sentimental patriots of hero-worship and eroticism—that is, "heroticism." (Fairhall 25-26) By the erection and ejaculation of the hanged, Joyce places emphasis on the sterility of the hero-martyr: wasted are the seeds of the future.

Then, what is the alternative to the violent revolution of Joyce? One of the puzzles *Ulysses* provides us with, is that Bloom is the secret mastermind of Arthur Griffith, a leader of Sinn Féin. (*U* 12.1574-77, 1635-37) This is revealed by Nolan and Cunningham

who try to allay angry Citizen. In "Penelope" Molly also implies the relationship between Bloom and Griffith. (*U* 18.383-87) It is plausible for Bloom to support Griffith's Sinn Fein program of working toward independence by means of nonviolent revolution, because Joyce respected Parnell's peaceful parliamentary struggle. But Joyce refused Griffith's anti-Semitism and the use of Irish language. Ultimately Joyce, through the adoption of Jewish Bloom as a main hero in *Ulysses*, asks Griffith for a change of the Irish political agenda.

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