

The Stolen Thing: Stephen's Paradoxical Imaginings of the Nation in *Ulysses*

Kyeong-Kyu Im

James Joyce's attitude toward Ireland is characteristically marked by ambivalence or paradox. Many scholars have tended to see it in terms of the creative tension between Joyce as a modernist aspiring to artistic universality, and Joyce as a native subject preoccupied with parochial identity, and the tension has been frequently described in terms of an individual's struggle for universal selfhood. Such a tendency has constructed a myth in Joyce criticism: Joyce's commitment to artistic experimentation is at odds with Irish parochial nationalism that has emerged in various cultural and political forms against English colonialism; therefore, Joyce tries to deconstruct Irish parochialism and take a step further towards cosmopolitanism or transnationalism. Richard Kearney provides a concrete ground for the myth from the context of the development of Irish literary modernism:

In our literature, we ... discern two opposing tendencies. One led by Yeats sponsored mythology. The other, including Beckett, Flann O'Brien and Joyce, resolved to demythologize the pretensions of the Revival in the name of a thoroughgoing modernism; it endeavoured to liberate literature from parochial preoccupations with identity into the universal concern of language as an endless self-creative process. (69-70)

As explicitly revealed in Kearney's formulations, however, the mythical construction of Joyce as a cosmopolitan modernist is predicated upon teleological perspectives that view nationalism in terms of several sets of binary oppositions such as modernity/atavism, universalism/parochialism, and development/regression, and aligns it with "the resurgence of atavistic or pre-modern feelings and practices, at best as a nostalgic longing for irretrievable mythic past." Such a singular narrative of nationalism, as David Lloyd argues, not only substantially dehistoricizes nationalism in its multiple varieties and contexts and consequently is unable to "envisage the progressive moment in nationalisms," but also flattens the psychological and political dynamics of Joycean ambivalence toward Ireland (Lloyd 257).

In order to overcome such a linear narrative in Joyce criticism and restore the dynamics of ambivalence onto the surface of the text, therefore, we need to approach the problematic relationship between Joyce and Ireland from a different perspective other than the alleged contradiction between modernism and nationalism. In this context, Emer Nolan suggests: "If we renounce a certain metropolitan framework for reading modernism, for example, we may be able to regard the disputes which surrounds Joyce in a different light." And she continues to argue: "Modernism is not simply *of* or *about* the metropolis, nor addressed solely to its values; we can indeed distinguish between Joyce's representation of imperialism and nationalism, and see how they function in contrasting ways in his texts" (18-9). That is to say, by disconnecting the link between modernism and cosmopolitanism, Nolan complicates modernism as an open field in which not only cosmopolitanism but also anti-cosmopolitanism coexist. Accordingly, for Nolan, Joyce's ambivalence lies in the conflict between these two apparently contradictory

elements. Her formulation, however, is also problematic not only because her rendition of modernism as an open field is so arbitrary that she makes it nothing but an amorphous system without suggesting any alternative order of modernism, but also because her critique of modernity does not include any insight into the dynamics between imperialism and nationalism in Joyce's texts.

Therefore, I would suggest, we need to locate Joyce's ambivalent attitude toward Ireland in terms of historical and psychological dynamics of national identification, particularly, under the devastating colonial gaze, that is, Joyce's imagined relationship with the nation conditioned and constituted by colonial situation. By doing so, we can not only explain Joyce's ambivalence without repeating the problematic binary opposition of modernism/nationalism, but also explicate the complicated relationship between nationalism and imperialism. To illustrate these dynamics, I will use the Stephen Dedalus of *Ulysses*. Even though Joyce cannot be directly identified with Stephen, the latter's ambivalent relationship with Ireland may well, in a number of ways, mirror that of Joyce.

In this respect, Benedict Anderson provides a good starting-point. In his famous study, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, first of all, he characterizes the nation as an "imagined political community—and imagined both limited and sovereign"—which has emerged from a particular historical, ideological formation (6). However, for him, the nation is not purely a political and ideological construct. Anderson calls our attention to the phenomena that "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." And he continues to claim "it is this fraternity that makes it possible ... for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to *die for* such limited imaginings" (7). Then he asks: "Such deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism: what makes such shrunken imaginings of recent history generate such colossal sacrifice?" Here, Anderson implies that, in nation and nationalism, there is something that cannot be reduced to a set of discursive practices or a mere nostalgic longing for the uncontaminated origin.

To such a sublime nature of nation, Slavoj Žižek provides a psychoanalytic perspective, more precisely a Lacanian standpoint, from the context of Eastern Europe after the fall of socialism. Above all, Žižek argues that the element that holds together a given ethnic community is “a shared relationship toward a Thing” and that “national identification is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing” (201). Here, we can approach this notion of Nation-Thing in terms of Lacan’s “the Real,” the primary object of the subject’s desire, which exists only as an effect of infants’ imaginary fantasies and, therefore, is marked by absence. For this reason, the Real is a paradoxical entity: as a non-discursive entity, it exists outside language or the symbolic order, that is, fundamentally resists symbolization, yet our access to it is only through symbolization.

Likewise, according to Žižek, the Nation-Thing is a non-discursive entity, yet at the same time people’s relationship with it is always expressed in connection with a certain set of discursive practices—that is, a community’s “way of life” including their traditions and social practices, their rituals and myths. In this respect, the nation is a political artifact constructed by specific discursive practices. Yet the existence of the Nation-Thing basically depends on the propensity of the members of the community to believe in it. The very belief in it, as well as the belief that other members share in it, sanctions its existence. It is nothing, but means something to the people in a community. In other words, the subject’s relationship to the Nation-Thing is “structured by means of fantasies” or what Lacan calls “*méconnaissance*” (201). Within this structure of imaginary identification, insists Žižek, the nation produces “enjoyment,” which consists of a certain underlying “substance,” “the remainder of some real,” or what Lacan would call “*jouissance*.”¹⁾ It is this non-discursive entity “which must be present for the Nation qua discursive entity-effect to achieve its ontological consistency” (202). The members of a community are given back fantasies of autonomy and self-presence, i.e. the enjoyment, by subjecting themselves to the Nation-Thing. Nationalism provides a privileged domain of the eruption of this enjoyment into a social field, and the national cause is the way in which subjects of the nation organize their enjoyment through national

myth. A nation, therefore, would exist as long as its specific enjoyment continues to be materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices.

According to Žižek, the Nation-Thing matters, particularly when it comes to the interethnic relationship in that it carries paradoxical properties: “our Thing is conceived as something inaccessible to the other and at the same time threatened by him” (203). The other’s excessive enjoyment is always bothersome since the other is seen to *steal* our enjoyment “by ruining our way of life” (203).²⁾ In this sense, Žižek maintains that the threat posed by the other resembles the Freudian notion of “castration,” which practically cannot happen, yet we are nonetheless horrified by its prospect. He thus continues to claim, “what we conceal by imputing to the Other the theft of enjoyment is the traumatic fact that *we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us*: the lack (‘castration’) is originary, enjoyment constitutes itself as ‘stolen’” (203, italics in original). Due to such a paradoxical nature, the Nation-Thing resists universalization, but functions, nevertheless, as a “particular Absolute,” by which an ethnic community organizes its enjoyment through national myths and traditions. It is also the very ground of incompatibility between different ethnic groups, which expresses itself through all its usual elements, from xenophobia to anti-Semitism.

It is through this paradoxical nature of the Nation-Thing oscillating between absence and presence that we can not only explore the dynamics of the national identification without reducing the nation into a purely discursive artifact, but also examine Joyce/Stephen’s ambivalent attitude toward Ireland. In *Ulysses*, however, Joyce never directly addresses what the nation means for Stephen (or for himself); yet he allegorically expresses it through various figurative episodes. Particularly, he frequently connects Ireland to feminine figures, especially, mother figures. Stephen’s imagined relationship with his mother, therefore, provides a privileged locus in which we can trace his way of imagining the nation.

In the “Nestor” section, we encounter two paradoxical images of the mother figure juxtaposed in Stephen’s stream of consciousness. By the end of the history

class, Stephen presents to the class a riddle, whose answer is “The fox burying his grandmother under a hollybush” (*U* 2.115). Here, the mother/grandmother figure is characterized as something that should be relegated to the realm of oblivion. That is to say, for Stephen, like history as a “homogeneous empty time” (borrowing from Walter Benjamin’s terms) that cannot bring any possibilities to the present, the mother is a discursive prison-house or an eternal nightmare “from which [he] is trying to awake” (*U* 2.377). Stephen, however, soon recognizes that there is something that ties him up to mother so tightly for him not to escape from her. After the class, all the students rush out for the hockey game except one, Sargent, who has to study extra hour for his math. Stephen notes his unkempt unattractiveness, yet teaches him kindly, while thinking that his mother must have loved him despite his ugliness:

Ugly and futile: lean neck and thick hair and a stain of ink, a snail’s bed. Yet someone had loved him, in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. (*U* 2.139-42)

Sargent—however “ugly and futile”—can exist as an independent, autonomous human being, at least, in his mother’s arms and breasts that provide him with a shelter from the brutal feet of the world. Through Sargent, Stephen’s stream of consciousness reaches his paradoxical relationship with his mother. Stephen thus asks himself:

Was that then real? The only true thing in life? His mother’s prostrate body the fiery Columbanus in holy zeal bestrode. ... She had saved him from being trampled underfoot and had gone, scarcely having been. (*U* 2.139-47)

For him, “the only true thing in life” is “*Amor matris*,” the maternal love, with which and with “her weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of others his swaddlinghands” (*U* 2.166-7). It is something that he cannot

deny, yet, at the same time, that he cannot grasp as a completed and finished object: the meaning of *Amor matris* varies from “subjective and objective [to] genitive” (*U* 2.165-6). Therefore, it is “the obscure soul of the world, a darkness shining in brightness which brightness could not comprehend” (*U* 2.159-60). What is crucial is that Stephen’s imagined relationship toward mother is mostly mediated by fragmented images of his mother’s body such as “her arms,” “her heart,” “her weak blood and wheysour milk.” The maternal love, therefore, is not only a figure for the mother’s body as a primary object of the infant’s desire which is constructed in Stephen’s fantasies; but it also points to the what Žižek calls “enjoyment” or *jouissance*, the remainder or the Real as an irreducible substance. To put it other words, Stephen’s relationship with his mother is sustained by fantasies toward the mother qua Thing. The paradoxical images of mother are products of Stephen’s painful encounter with the Thing itself, because the enjoyment can be procured only by identifying with and subjecting to the Thing. On the one hand, therefore, without the Thing, “the world would have trampled him underfoot;” on the other hand, the Thing constitutes itself as a nightmare haunting to his everyday life and thus, for Stephen, it operates much like the nation (“Mother Ireland”).

Here, the figure of Sargent clearly functions not only as an alter ego of Stephen himself; but Sargent as “a squashed boneless snail” also points to the colonial violence over the Irish people. Stephen’s imagined story of Sargent, therefore, is an allegory of the collective history of Ireland, like what Fredric Jameson calls the “national allegory”—“the telling of the individual story and individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the collectivity itself” (69). In fact, Stephen’s sarcastic definition of Irish art as a “cracked lookingglass of a servant” provides a firm ground for such a semantic expansion of the figure of Sargent to a national allegory (*U* 1.146). The crack in the mirror implies fundamental discontinuity between the individual fantasy of self-presence and the discursive formation of Irishness within the dominant discourse. As Lacan formulates in “The Mirror Stage,” the mirror is a locus in which one’s “Ideal-I” emerges through the identification with the mirror image. Even though it is through

a kind of misrecognition, such identification offers individuals a fantasy of autonomy and self-presence. Furthermore, the mirror image itself has a formative effect on individuals since the subject tends to establish imaginary continuity between the mirror image and the social ideal, which in turn allows them to enter the symbolic order of society without any trouble. While others find identity between the self and the world, however, Stephen experiences difference. The dominant discourse during the colonial era has discursively constructed Irish people as racial others who have close kinship with anthropoid apes.³⁾ The radical disparity between individual fantasy and the social construction of identity causes a schizophrenic split within the self. In the mirror in which Buck Mulligan finds a Narcissistic sense of self-satisfaction, therefore, Stephen instead cannot but see a “dogsbody to rid of vermin” with “the rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in a mirror” (*U* 1.136, 143).⁴⁾

Stephen’s Caliban-like self-image finds its prolongation in the figure of Sargent, which, therefore, is at once Stephen’s mirror-image reflected on the colonial discourse and a symbol of Irish people paralyzed by English colonialism. Consequently, Stephen’s exploration of maternal love should be rewritten as an allegory of national identification. Even though Ireland is under English colonial rule, for Stephen, the existence of Ireland and his attachment to it is an undeniable truth to the extent that it gives him a national identity and saves him from being trampled by other nations. Only by subjecting himself to the nation both consciously and unconsciously, Stephen is able to become an autonomous individual.

In this respect, Stephen’s identification with Ireland, like his relationship toward his mother, is fundamentally sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing—the Thing as a community’s “way of life,” i.e. a national culture as a “constitutive process” (to put it in Raymond Williams’ terms) producing national subjects, which includes traditions, social practices, their rituals, myths and language. In fact, there is no intrinsic or ontological relationship between a particular ethnic community and a particular social practice; thus, there is no such thing like “authentic” or “fixed” Irish culture. Yet the discursive practice achieves a certain

kind of essence-effect or thingness through reiterative performance by the members of a given ethnic community. The collective and repetitive participation in and performance of a specific practice has an interpellative effect—to put it in Žižek's terms, the propensity of the people to believe in the Thing and the belief that others share the belief in it—to the extent that it achieves a formative effect on the members. It is through this reiterated interpellation that a particular practice becomes a normative way of life of the community and consequently achieves a certain kind of fixity or materiality. In this process, the members are interpellated to identify themselves with, and act upon, the normative way of life. The individual performance of a certain practice, therefore, is not so much a conscious or deliberate act as a reiterative and mimetic practice, i.e. the subjection to a normative way of life, in return to which the members are given back a certain kind of enjoyment.

In *Ulysses*, one of the conspicuous Irish cultural practices is *drinking*. Compared to the fictional time span of the novel (eighteen hours of a typical day in Dublin), the drinking scenes occupy a relatively big portion of it (about five hours in two chapters, “Cyclops” and “Circe”). In other words, for Irish people, drinking is a ritualized practice, i.e. part of Irish way of life, through which they organize a specific enjoyment—Irish people regularly drink, and by drinking they become Irish people. As the Irish say, it is “all too Irish.” Alcoholism in Ireland, therefore, should not be measured only through ethical or clinical discourses, but rather by the depth of enjoyment Irish people take from it. Stephen, too, is a son of an alcoholic, Simon Dedalus, and he himself constantly participates in the act of drinking. Even though he consciously denies his Irishness by putting the consubstantiality between father and son into question, he identifies his Irishness through drinking. That is to say, his daily practice is always already dominated by an Irish way of life, and thus it is practically impossible for him to cease to be an Irish as long as he enjoys the specific enjoyment materialized in the act of drinking.

In *Ulysses*, however, the Nation-Thing always already constitutes itself as stolen, i.e. absent. That is to say, for Stephen, the existence of the English colonizer in Irish territory is considered as a threat to the Irish national enjoyment. Yet the

menace does not merely remain symbolic, but it often takes a physical form: the English colonizers steal Irish enjoyment by exploiting Ireland economically and appropriating Irish culture, i.e. “ruining Irish way of life.” The episode of an old milkwoman in “Telemachus” characteristically dramatizes such a theft of the Nation-Thing. Just as Partha Chatterjee argues that women are made to embody cultural authenticity and tradition in the colonial situation, the milkwoman in this episode is meant to symbolize Irish national value and traditions (Chatterjee 115-19). When witnessing the milkwoman pouring milk into the jug in a cringing manner to Haines and Mulligan, the English colonizer and his collaborator, Stephen feels offended, thinking of her as “silk of the kine and poor old woman”—a symbolic figure for Ireland—who is prostituting herself to her conquerors, not knowing her own historical position: “A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean” (*U* 1.403, 404-5). In Stephen’s national imagination, Mulligan and Haines are portrayed to steal Irish people’s enjoyment by exploiting the old milkwoman, i.e., Irish traditions and way of life, and by drinking milk, the very source of life for Irish people, produced by “Old shrunken paps” (*U* 1.398).

The theft of enjoyment again takes a form of theft of language. Haines addresses something to the milkwoman in Gaelic which ironically she takes for French. This time, Mulligan asks her again, employing an Irish colloquialism: “Is there Gaelic on you?” (*U* 1.427) In this exchange, Stephen keeps silent and his only response is a sarcastic question: “Do you understand what he says?” (*U* 1.424) His silence is an expression of his own resentment on Haines’ Orientalistic cultural appropriation to undercut the colonial culture in Ireland. The Gaelic language has already lost its linguistic currency even in Ireland throughout the long history of English colonial rule over Ireland. Yet Haines revives and fetishizes it, only to recuperate his own identity in a Narcissistic way. Additionally, by thinking that Irish people “ought to speak Irish in Ireland,” he implicitly not only renders Irish culture fixed and stagnant, but also homogenizes the complex subject positions of Irish people. In this sense, as Vincent Cheng thoroughly analyzes, Haines is “the

British anthropologist [who] ventures out in the wilderness to study the primitive ‘wild Irish’ and their folkways” (Cheng 152). His museum mentality and Orientalistic gaze reifies Irish people’s way of life and in the end ruins the enjoyment embedded in it. For Stephen, therefore, Haines is but a “usurper” of the Nation-Thing (*U* 1.744).

Furthermore, such a theft of the Thing always evokes the castration anxiety. At the very opening passage of the milkwoman episode, Mulligan abruptly says to Haines: “The islanders ... speak frequently of the collector of prepuces” (*U* 1.393-4). The term, “collector of prepuces,” provokes the fearful prospect of castration, and, therefore, is ironically connected to what Stephen later refers to as “two masters”: on the one hand, it refers to God as a religious ruler, and, on the other, it is unavoidably connected to the English colonizer, Haines, as a political ruler (*U* 1.638). The “two masters” of Ireland exist not only as the transcendental “Other” who usurps the spiritual and political sovereignty of Ireland, but also as an ultimate threat of castration to Irish people. The castration is symbolically dramatized by Mulligan’s act of striping Stephen of the key to the Martello tower, in response to which the only thing Stephen can do is helplessly giving it away: “He wants that key. It is mine. I paid the rent. Now I eat his salt bread. Give him the key too. All He will ask for it. That was in his eyes” (*U* 1.630-2).

Such a symbolic castration figuratively embodies the stolenness of the Nation-Thing, which in turn belies the traumatic fact of the original lack or absence of the Thing itself. By voluntarily giving the key away, Stephen reconstructs the lack of the Thing into “stolen,” and thereby implicitly reconstitutes its fundamental absence into “lost” presence—that is, he once possessed such thing as the Irish nation but it is now stolen by the outside rulers. What is crucial is that the stolenness or the imposed lack of the Thing necessarily provokes a profound desire for the presence. This nostalgic hankering, however, does not take an explicit textual form in *Ulysses*, but is symptomatically registered in Stephen’s political unconscious. In this sense, very suggestive is Stephen’s “Shakespearean algebra,” “that Hamlet’s grandson is Shakespeare’s grandfather and that he himself is the

ghost of his own father" (*U* 1.555-7).

In closing this essay, I would like to make a polemic argument: Stephen's algebra works pretty much like what Freud named "Fort-Da game"—just as the child masters anxiety of loss of mother through the game, Stephen sublimates the agon of colonialism through the Shakespearean algebra. To put it in other words, Stephen's conscious commitment to Shakespearean universality is not at odds with his Irish national identity, but rather is a compensatory act to regain the stolen nation in an imaginary way. This argument is still tentative because it calls for further research and deeper speculation. Nevertheless, it can offer a different model through which we can attempt at rethinking the traditional view of Joyce's ambivalent relationship with Ireland. At any rate, the Shakespearean algebra can be seen as a symbolic act—one that enables Stephen to reinvent his identity as all-encompassing. By proving "that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father," Stephen draws an *impossible* conclusion that Shakespeare "is all in all" (*U* 1.555-7, 9.1018-9). He thus transfigures Shakespeare into a model artist—an artist who achieves universal selfhood.

This impossible transfiguration reflects Stephen's (un)conscious effort to identify himself with Shakespeare, which also makes an impossible thing possible—that is, to depersonalize himself to be "all in all" so that he can transform himself to a cosmopolitan artist who is able to *universalize* the Nation-Thing that resists universalization. Through this process, Stephen gets the stolen presence of the Nation-Thing symbolically reconstituted as something that can be shared. Now, he has to neither be pathologized by, nor mourn for, the absence of the Nation-Thing, since he can share whatever nation he wants to. In this sense, Stephen's (or even Joyce's) cosmopolitan gesture can be seen as a compensatory act to restore the lost presence of the Nation-Thing and its enjoyment, and as an endeavor to reconstruct his own integrity and autonomy as an artist damaged by English colonial rule. Within this psychological and historical dynamics, Stephen's and Joyce's ambivalent attitude toward Ireland can be illuminated.

Notes

- 1) According to Žižek, enjoyment is “not to be equated with pleasure (Lust)... it designates the paradoxical satisfaction procured by a painful encounter with a Thing that perturbs the equilibrium of the ‘pleasure principle.’ In other words, enjoyment is located ‘beyond the pleasure principle’” (280, n. 1).
- 2) Referring to the hatred of the Others enjoyment, Žižek quotes from Jacques Alain Miller who suggests that: Why does the Other remain Other? What is the cause for our hatred of him, for our hatred of him in his very being? It is hatred of the enjoyment in the Other. This would be the most general formula of the modern racism we are witnessing today: a hatred of the particular way the Other enjoys. The question of tolerance or intolerance is not at all concerned with the subject of science and its human rights. It is located on the level of tolerance or intolerance toward the enjoyment of the Other, the Other as he who essentially steals my own enjoyment. We know, of course, that the fundamental status of the object is to be always already snatched away by the Other. It is precisely this theft of enjoyment that we write down in shorthand as minus Phi, the mathem of castration. The problem is apparently unsolvable as the Other is the Other in my interior. The root of racism is thus hatred of my own enjoyment. There is no other enjoyment but my own. If the Other is in me, occupying the place of extimacy, then the hatred is also my own. (203)
- 3) See Vincent Cheng’s *Joyce, Race, and Empire*. In Chapter II, "Catching the Conscience of Race," Cheng gives thoroughgoing examination about the discursive racialization of Irish people. And in *The Subaltern Ulysses*, Enda Duffy, too, discusses this issue in relation with the "Cyclops" episode.
- 4) Enda Duffy also points out the psychological split of colonial subject in the late colonial period during which decolonization movements were taking place, and thus the colonial native subject makes way for a version of post-colonial subjectivity, yet still conflicting each other. Such a split of self-image is represented by the Citizen versus Bloom (or metaphorically, Caliban/Ariel, savage/civilized, black skin/white mask).

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Abstract

The Stolen Thing: Stephen's Paradoxical Imaginings
of the Nation in *Ulysses*

Kyeong-Kyu Im

This paper aims at reexamining James Joyce's troubled relationship with Ireland, one that is characteristically marked by ambivalence or paradox. Many scholars have tended to see it in terms of the creative tension between Joyce as a modernist aspiring to artistic universality, and Joyce as a native subject preoccupied with parochial identity. Such a tendency has mythically constructed Joyce as a metropolitan modernist. In countering this canonical formulation, this essay recontextualizes the question in terms of the psychological dynamics of national identification, by using Slavoj Žižek's conceptualization of the nation as the "Nation-Thing." To illustrate these dynamics, this paper uses the Stephen Dedalus of *Ulysses*. Even though Joyce cannot be directly identified with Stephen, the latter's ambivalent relationship with Ireland may well, in a number of ways, mirror that of Joyce.

Through a close reading of first three chapters of *Ulysses*, this paper argues, after Žižek, that Stephen's relationship with Ireland, or his national identification, is sustained by a relationship toward "the Nation qua Thing." Here, the Nation-Thing—as a non-discursive entity like Lacan's "the Real"—exists outside language or the symbolic order, yet our access to it is only through a certain set of discursive practices, that is, a community's "way of life" such as traditions, rituals and myths. This paradoxical nature of the Nation-Thing—oscillating between absence and presence—would enable us to explore the dynamics of national identification without reducing the nation into a purely discursive artifact, and

thereby to give a historical and psychological justification to Joyce/Stephen's ambivalent relationship with Ireland.

■ **Key words:** James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus, Ireland, Nation qua Thing, English colonialism, Shakespearean universalism.