

Opening Address by Paul Murray, Ambassador of Ireland, James Joyce Society of Korea*

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Professors and Scholars, Ladies, Ladies and Gentleman, Friends.

It is great pleasure, as well as a great honour, for me to be asked to make the opening congratulatory address to this symposium of the James Joyce Society of Korea. I will be talking at some length in a little while on the subject of Lafcadio Hearn and the Irish literary tradition, so I will keep my present remarks short.

I can honestly say that, since my arrival in Korea last September, I have fallen in love with the Korean people and Korean culture. In the first few months that I was here, I was bracing myself for “culture shock” but it has never happened, rather like the dog that barked in the night in the Sherlock Holmes story. I am not sure myself why I feel so relaxed here but it could be to do with an intangible emotional quality which is, I feel, common to Irish and Korean cultures and which finds expression, I think, in our respective literatures.

It may help to explain the extraordinary interest in Korea in the work of James Joyce, which is reflected in the existence of your Society and the holding of this conference. I discovered Joyce myself in my early teens, when many of the elements of the Ireland described in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* were still intact. I can assure you that I listened to the sermon on hell in many real-life situations!

As a “naturalised” Dubliner, I have always delighted in the manner in which he has woven a literary masterpiece into the fabric of my adopted city.

* 이 연설문은 주한 아일랜드 대사인 Mr Paul Murry가 충북대학교에서 열린 한국 제임스 조이스 학회 2000년도 봄 학술회에서 낭독한 것임

Joyce's relationship with Ireland was ambiguous, an ambiguity which was returned by the Ireland of my youth although, contrary to popular impression, his works were never banned in Ireland. One of the most satisfying cultural developments of the last generation has been the popular embrace of this great artist in his native land. Indeed, while the name of Joyce was taboo to many people in Ireland for years after his death, his characters are now part of the popular culture of Dublin, including even its pubs!

As you know, I am a literary biographer as well as a diplomat and I will speak of Lafcadio Hearn, the subject of my 1993 biography, shortly. I might also mention that there are some connections with Joyce in Bram Stoker biography, on which I am working at the moment. For example, there are references to vampires in *Ulysses* and Joyce had clearly read - and been influenced by - Stoker's *Dracula*. The mansion belonging to Bram's brother, Sir Thornley Stoker, registered with Joyce, who has Mrs Bellingham in *Ulysses* recollecting her carriage door being closed "outside Sir Thornley Stoker's one sleety day during the cold snap of February ninetythree when even the grid of the wastepipe and ballstop in my bath cistern were frozen."

Joyce also immortalised in *Ulysses* Bram's friend and relation, Valentine Black Dillon, who was Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1894 when Bram visited with the actor, Henry Irving. Leopold Bloom cites Dillon as a potential referee, stating, "I have moved in the charmed circle of the highest." At another point, Bloom muses on how Molly had attracted Valentine's attention at a dinner: "Lord Mayor had his eye off her too. Val Dillon. Apoplectic. There she is with them down there for the fireworks."

I might mention that my home town in Ireland, Carlow, also receives honorable mention in *Ulysses*, both through Tom Rochford referring to the old ballad, "Follow Me Up to Carlow" and Nosey Flynn recalling that Myler Keogh "had the little kipper down in the county Carlow."

While literature is my hobby, diplomacy is my trade and I have spent many years dealing with the Anglo-Irish relationship. In *Ulysses*, Irish history is described as a nightmare from which you will never awake. However, since the

Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, the Irish and British Governments have been working together to end the historical nightmare of the divisive politics of Northern Ireland. With the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 we have, hopefully, reached that point and can look forward to peace and prosperity on the whole island of Ireland. The poverty and hopelessness which marked Joyce's Ireland have been replaced in the south of Ireland by one of the most successful and dynamic societies in the world; if we can extend that process to Northern Ireland also, we will have truly ended the Joycean historical nightmare on our island.

I would like to finish by congratulating your Society on your scholarship and your commitment to the cause of James Joyce. I thank for your warm welcome and wish you all the very best of luck in the future.

Thank you