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The Seim Anew: Time, Memory, and Identity in Joyce and Modernist Literature

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The seim anew, we read in *Finnegans Wake*: and then ordovico or viricordo, and Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle's to be (*FW* 215.23-24). Viricordo, Vi ricordo: I remember you. Remember who? The Anna that was, the Livia that is, or the Plurabelle to be? The seim anew. The same person, or a new person? No one who knows anything of the *Wake* will be surprised to hear that the answer isn't very simple. Nor is it in Joyce's earlier work. For example, in *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus thinks about a debt he owes to George Russell (A.E.I.O.U.). Never the fellow to avoid using sophistry to further his own ends, he decides no doubt with self-directed irony, but that doesn't mean he'll actually pay what he owes that since five months have passed since he received the money, and since molecules all change, he's not the person who incurred the debt: I am other I now. Other I got pound (*U* 9.205-206, 213).

Similarly, Leopold Bloom ever less dogmatic than Stephen, as well as less

self-serving wonders in the Lestrygonians chapter if he's the same person he was ten years before, when he and Molly lived in Lombard Street: I was happier then. Or was that I? Or am I now I? (*U* 8.608-609). Bloom's question is a sincere one: he really does wonder about the effect of time on our lives and our selves.

The contexts for both passages are deceptively simple and devoid of philosophical and psychological terminology: those big words Stephen tells Mr. Deasy he fears because they make us so unhappy (*U* 2.264). And in Stephen's musings of course the reasoning is facetious. Yet the associations in his mind as well as in Bloom's come out of and point to a profound sense of the connection between one's self and time, a fundamental relationship between our sense of self and our conception of our selves in time and, especially, between the concept of self-identity and human memory. I shall explore the ways James Joyce and a number of other important and exemplary writers confronted this apparently ineluctable correlation between our sense of self and our sense of time.

Vladimir Nabokov, for example, conjectures that the beginning of reflexive consciousness in the brain of our remotest ancestor must surely have coincided with the dawning of the sense of time (Nabokov 21). For Jorge Luis Borges, to deny temporal succession is to deny the self and that is futile (Borges 64). When Martin Heidegger argues that we perceive time only because we know we have to die, the inference as well is that we know we have to die have to lose our selves, our identities because we perceive time. Friedrich Nietzsche made a similar connection, claiming that humanity envies the beast, that forgets at once, and sees every moment really die, sink into night and mist, extinguished forever. The beast lives *unhistorically* (Spoo 19).

Mystics too recognize that the sense of self is possible only in time, and that, conversely, as Tolstoy puts it (in a volume translated by Virginia Woolf), our true spiritual life . . . is not subject to time (Goldenweizer 118). The mystical state of the loss of all sense of individual identity can only be attained in timelessness, or eternity. But for many that goal is no more attractive than Stephen Dedalus's contemplation in the *Portrait* of an eternity of bliss in the company of the dean

of studies (*P* 240).

In others too the dissociation from time has been seen less as sacred than as a sign of *psychic* dissociation not as freedom from self but as alienation from it. In schizophrenia and such other psychic illnesses as senile dementia, Korsakov's syndrome, and Alzheimer's disease, which also entail a loss or lessening of the sense of personal identity, that symptom is regarded as profoundly connected to a breakdown in *temporal* awareness.

In areas other than those of mental illness, psychologists have also stressed links between temporal awareness and consciousness itself. Freud long ago postulated that time references are relevant only to the conscious system, and that the processes of the unconscious are, as he puts it, *timeless*, with no reference to time at all (Freud 1966, 187). Later, Freud said much the same about the Id, where, he asserted, there is nothing . . . that corresponds to the idea of time (Freud 1957, 538) just as for Jung the same was true of the collective unconscious. William Faulkner vividly depicts these associations in *The Sound and the Fury*, most notably in the lack of temporal order in Benjy Compson's mental existence, just as, in the same novel, Quentin Compson underscores the connection between self and time by ritualistically tearing the hands off his watch preparatory to destroying his self by suicide.

If the self is dependent upon time and Gertrude Stein and others insist that "If you do not keep remembering yourself you have no identity, and if you have no time you do not keep remembering yourself" (Stein 92), what happens when time passes? What is the relationship between the concept of the self as an integral entity and what is past, or passing, or to come? Consider for example Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which illustrates some of the paradoxes encountered in thinking about the self in time. Ostensibly, the original painting is a frozen image representing the Dorian of a particular moment in time: only the Dorian of that moment, for unlike Grecian urns, or such birds as Grecian goldsmiths make, human beings change. For one thing, they age. But Dorian, through the miracle of art, doesn't change. Right.

Also wrong. The Dorian of the end of the novel is no more the same Dorian as at the start than is the hideous image in the picture of the monstrous old man identical to the beautiful image of the young man of the original portrait. But no less identical as well. For the picture is both the same picture and an enormously different picture. Dorian is the same man and an enormously different man. Of all the enigmatic forces that have brought about this perplexing situation, perhaps the strangest and most mysterious is time.

My overall attempt is to place Joyce within what I see as the three basic ways in which writers have tended, in the last few centuries, to approach these paradoxes in regard to the relationship between time and its passing and the sense of the self as integral.[1] I dart about a bit, but after all one of my objectives is to show how Joyce and other Modernists question the linearity of time. (Or as Wittgenstein knew, it's difficult to start at the beginning and not to go further back.) Let me quickly provide an overview of those three temporal approaches, and then look at them in more detail.

In the first approach there's no problem, so to speak: the self is seen as continuous; you're the same self you have been and will be, as long as you can remember or look ahead. That's a bald oversimplification of an idea that's been developed very elaborately by philosophers, of course as in Locke's assertions about the importance of felt unity, or Kant's concept of the transcendental unity of apperception. In *Ulysses*, Stephen associates such a view with Aristotle and entelechy, form of forms: the notion that one's form, one's essence, is constant, however much the body and its molecules change. Stephen thinks:

But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms.

> I that sinned and prayed and fasted.
> A child Conmee saved from pandies.
> I, I and I. I. (*U* 9.208-213)

The second view of time that I'm examining in contrast sees you ineluctably cut off from your past self or, actually, from all your multiple past selves, from all the selves everyone has inevitably been throughout a so-called lifetime. In Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham realizes that in order to preserve her past self she must arrest time, so she has all the clocks stopped at twenty to nine. But of course she can't succeed, and her determination to be her past self makes her a grotesque. In the passage in which Bloom wonders if he and Molly were happier in Lombard street, he goes on to reflect, Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand (*U* 8.610-611).

Joyce then may be connected with both those approaches to time (the continuous and the discontinuous), but it's with a third that, I believe, he is most profoundly associated. That relationship to time entails a sense of, as it were, transcendence, or perhaps pre-existence, a notion that our selves are indeed restricted to time, but not necessarily to this time, or this place. It avails not, time nor place, says Walt Whitman in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry": "Distance avails not, / I am with you, men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence . . . ." (Whitman 180). Similarly, the characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* go beyond memory to what she calls rememory.[2)]

In some cases this basic approach is manifested through what Molly Bloom's reading calls metempsychosis. Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence is even more extreme, for when Zarathustra proclaims that all things recur eternally and we ourselves with them, and that we have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us, he makes it clear that he doesn't mean that we'll return to

> . . . a new life or a better life or a similar life:
> I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things . . . . (Nietzsche 1969, 237-8)

Sounds like the movie *Groundhog Day*. Or, to echo another movie, the

fundamental things apply, as time goes by. We play it, again and again.

Sticking with movies, it's no coincidence that Stanley Kubrick chose Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* as the music for the most dramatic scenes in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in which, at the end, Dave Bowman sees himself as an older and then a still older man, just before the return of the climactic bars of the Zarathustra music accompany our vision of a newly born Bowman, returning to earth. But in Kubrick's hands the effect is less Nietzschean, or Zarathustran, than *Wake*-ean. For the new Bowman is the same Bowman and yet not the identical and self-same Bowman: he is, in those words from the *Wake* again, the seim anew (*FW* 215.23).

I hope my basic categories are sufficiently clear, for I'll now go beyond them to argue that there are illuminating connections between each category and either Modernism or Romanticism or both. The Romantics or the Romantic turn of mind would seem to stress the first approach, which sees continuity in the self or at least believes that you can go back to or revive (or be revivified by, helped by) your past self. Modern sensibilities often seem to stress the contrasting view of the self as discontinuous (I am other I now, in Stephen's terms): that you are cut off from your past selves. The third approach, however, has been embraced by both important Romantics and a number of the major Modernists, notably Joyce, who seek identical selves outside the boundaries of any single lifetime.

In the short sketch "A Portrait of the Artist" that ultimately led to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce claims that while the mechanical bases for the life of his era are novel and progressive, the spirit of the age is everywhere preterist stressing, that is, the past. And he repeats that appropriately archaic term when he asserts that his era is both romantic and preterist (Joyce 69). To the Romantics, certainly, the past is alive in the self, a single self: past, present, and future selves are continuous. Inevitably, that's also how we operate our lives on a daily basis. Otherwise, our personal histories would truly be nightmares from which we would try to awake. So it's no surprise that it's also the view of time that most people have: the sense that if you could just bring up some remnant of a dinosaur from aeons ago, some bit of DNA preserved in amber, you could with

a little trouble have a Jurassic Park filled with present-day dinosaurs.

Similar attitudes in Joyce's age made some philosophers and others see history as a linear development toward some inevitable outcome as in Marxism, for example, or as in Mr. Deasy's confident assertion that all human history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God (*U* 2.380-381). I don't mean to make the Romantics sound as simplistic as Mr. Deasy in their presentation of the continuity between past and present. Wordsworth, for example, tells us in *The Prelude* that:

> . . . so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That sometimes when I think of them I seem
> Two consciousnesses conscious of myself
> And of some other being. (Wordsworth 1979, 66)

Yet in spite of his reference to two consciousnesses, there's never much doubt that Wordsworth's approach stresses the continuity of the past self with the present: even in the passage I've quoted he speaks of how those past days still have self-presence in his mind. The subtitle of *The Prelude: Growth of a Poet's Mind* indicates in strong terms the basic assumption of continuity of self behind the poem. There's a single mind, which grows (and changes insofar as it does), but which remains the *same* mind. Similarly, the speaker affirms in the famous passage in "My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold that the Child is father of the Man, and one's days are bound each to each" (Wordsworth 1950, 462).

In my terms, Wyndham Lewis was quite correct to label Henri Bergson and other twentieth-century figures Romantic. Jay Gatsby comes to seem in this way as in so many others the arch-Romantic. When Nick Carraway remarks, "You can't repeat the past, Gatsby replies incredulously, Can't repeat the past? . . . Why of course you can! And he looks around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand" (Fitzgerald 73). Lewis's

most notable target in *Time and Western Man* is Joyce, whose *Ulysses* Lewis attacks as a *time-book*. He claims that while Proust *returned* to the *temps perdu* reprehensible enough, it seems Joyce never left it. According to Lewis, Joyce discharged it as freshly as though the time he wrote about were still present, because it was *his* present (Lewis 91).

Whether or not one agrees with Lewis that it's deplorable, this sense of Joyce's Romantic approach to time is surely an accurate one for Joyce at certain stages of his career, or in certain moods. He begins that early sketch, A Portrait of the Artist, with a rejection of the view that we cannot or will not conceive the past in any other than its iron memorial aspect (Joyce 60). In the final version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as Stephen Dedalus realizes at the Bull Wall that now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy, he also feels that so timeless seemed the grey warm air, so fluid and impersonal his own mood, that all ages were as one to him (*P* 168). Nevertheless, he can respond to Cranly's question about whether he wasn't happier when he was a believer, in school, by saying I was someone else then. . . . I was not myself as I am now, as I had to become (*P* 240).

Yet even into *Ulysses*, as Stephen accepts for the third time his salary from Mr. Deasy, he thinks to himself, The same room and hour, the same wisdom: and I the same. Three times now. Three nooses round me here (*U* 2.233-234). And, still within the Nestor chapter, Stephen can so feel himself in the historic past that, as he remembers those who suffered in the Irish Famine, plague, and slaughters, he thinks to himself, Their blood is in me, their lusts my waves. I moved among them on the frozen Liffey, that I, a changeling, among the spluttering resin fires (*U* 3.307-309). Yet even the phrase that I suggests a different I, a person with whom he can associate, but to whom he may not feel identical. In Oxen of the Sun, the Romantic notion of historiography is satirized in a passage parodying Walter Savage Landor, as Stephen remarks to Costello that You have spoken of the past and its phantoms . . . . If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call? (*U* 14.1112-1114). But, he also asks,

Why think of them at all? For by *Ulysses* Joyce himself had come to be suspicious of obsessive identification with the past and its ghosts with the dead. For Stephen, as he shows in his conversation in the *Portrait* with Cranly, the crowning sign of Simon Dedalus's futility is that he is a praiser of his own past (*P* 241). While living in Rome, Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus that that city's dependence on the interest of tourists in its ruins and ancient sites reminded him of a man who lives by exhibiting to travellers his grandmother's corpse (*Letters II* 165).

So in certain other moods, or at certain stages, Joyce's sense of the discontinuity of time could stress the irrecoverability of the past, the horrible realization of King Lear that Cordelia "will come no more,/ Never, never, never, never, never" (V, iii, 307-308). Many theorists, like me in the crude breakdown I've given you, have associated this stress on discontinuity, the break between the past and the present, with some essential aspects of Modernism.[3] For Freud, the repetition compulsion is a central sign of the death wish. Gatsby's refusal or inability to recognize that the Daisy of his past is not the Daisy of his present (and perhaps never existed) destroys him. For more reflective figures in Modernist fiction, relating to one's past self is often increasingly difficult. In Nausicaa, Bloom compares the problem to that of Rip Van Winkle: Twenty years asleep . . . . All changed. Forgotten. Bloom has been reflecting on Gerty's youth: Never again, he muses. My youth. . . . Returning not the same. . . . The new I want. But, he immediately adds, Nothing new under the sun. . . . So it returns. Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home (*U* 13.1101-1115). Doris Lessing's Anna, in *The Golden Notebook*, says that "trying to remember is like wrestling with an obstinate other-self, and as she thinks about her youth in Africa she reflects that it seems such a long time ago that I can't *feel* myself doing any of these things. . . . It happened to someone else" (Lessing 137). In The Dead, even as the past comes forcefully into Gabriel's life, he also recognizes that Gretta's face was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death (*D* 222).

The pervasive Modernist sense of the discontinuity of time also led to a

widespread stress on certain discrete and telling moments as in Virginia Woolf's moments of being or, of course, Joyce's epiphanies. In them and in many other Modernists, notably Proust, those frozen moments of time can often yield up the past; for in a number of writers the third of the relationships to time within my breakdown provides a world that is both diachronic and synchronic, if you will.

At one time or another, in his encyclopedic work, Joyce embraced each of the approaches I've been summarizing, including the sense of the full and unambiguous continuity between past and present, and past and present selves though my own sense is that this approach is not taken fully seriously in his mature work, where full and unambiguous *dis*continuity is more prominent. But it's the third approach, which recognizes a validity in both the other two but also discovers a transcendence, that provides the sense of the relationship between the self and time that distinguishes the worlds of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake,* the world of Molly Bloom's metempsychosis, or the commodius vicus of recirculation of the *Wake* (*FW* 3.2). As Edna St. Vincent Millay claimed, life isn't one damn thing after another, it's the same damn thing, over and over. The portrait of the artist that begins with the words once upon a time has on its final page the words for the millionth time (*P* 7, 253). Bloom again: Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home.

Obviously, there are connections between that view and the Romantic stress on continuity, but Einstein and others such as the philosophers I have mentioned have intervened to put new twists on it: twists that the philosopher de Selby, in Flann O'Brien, totally misapprehends. At the risk of offering my own distortion of Einstein's views of the relativity of time, let me observe that I gather that an essential component of them is an implication that what is past isn't in some absolute sense past at all, since contrary to our ordinary conception of clock time, past events are still happening and will happen. A misconception of that basic notion leads de Selby, in O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, to distort Einstein's concepts in regard to the speed of light by claiming that if you set up enough mirrors, you could eventually see what you used to look like as a child, say. What

de Selby doesn't realize (one of the many things he doesn't comprehend) is that because of the relativity of time, the child you used to be still exists, in fact. Whether accurately or not, the metaphors prompted by such notions of the relativity of time have suggested in many modern works the sense of eternally recurrent patterns we've already seen, and will see again.

Few writers have been so aware of the loss of the past self as Marcel Proust, yet probably none has been so keenly aware of its presence as well. Two of the themes for which he's most famous, the effect of time on human character, and the power of the memory to recapture the past, would seem to be at least in part contradictory. As Andr Maurois puts it, Proust's first theme . . . is "Time the Destroyer; the second, Memory the Preserver" (Maurois 160). (In *Four Quartets* T. S. Eliot writes that Time the destroyer is time the preserver (Eliot 133).) Proust's Marcel becomes, in his own phrase, one of those amphibious creatures who exist in both the past and the present (Proust 757). But what isn't always fully grasped is that this dual existence is achieved by his ability, ultimately, to be or at least to feel *outside* of time, to transcend it.

At times, such notions produce semi-mystical or at least mysterious intimations of immortality. In Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, a Nietzschean concept of eternal recurrence enables Hans Castorp in the Snow chapter to remember scenes among cypress groves in Sicily and Naples that he could never have experienced in this life. Much earlier, Mann had Thomas Buddenbrook undergo a similar experience, in which Thomas understands, I shall live! For *it* will live and that this *it* is not I is only an illusion, an error which death will make plain. Moreover, he realizes the shallowness of a preoccupation with passing on his family heritage to descendants, in an illumination that might well have come to Leopold Bloom: "Somewhere in the world a child is growing up . . . . *He* is my son. He is I, myself . . . " (Mann 512-3).

Much more casually, Virginia Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway, walking along Bond Street, asks herself "whether it matters that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling

to believe that death ended absolutely? but after that comes a but: but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other . . . " (Woolf 9).

In Samuel Beckett, such a fate would seem awful, although in his work the goal of self-annihilation seems less Buddhist than suicidal. It's possible that the unnamed state of the Unnamable is some form of existence after death. Such a calamity is, to the Unnamable, unthinkable: To saddle me with a lifetime is probably not enough for them, I have to be given a taste of two or three generations (Backett 330).

The connection in Beckett between death and birth is reminiscent of the linkage between the tomb and the womb in Dylan Thomas, who also knew that the force that through the green fuse drives the flower drives our green age and that it's the same force that blasts the roots of trees and is our destroyer. Again, as in Proust and Eliot, time the destroyer is time the preserver. But the sense of comfort that we see in them and in Thomas is rare in Beckett. Thomas could be comforted by the belief that after the first death, there is no other(Thomas 10, 112). Beckett's characters would love to be able to believe that, but instead they feel condemned to a cycle of life and death, to an everlasting karma, with no real hope of nirvana or of nothingness of escaping from time and the self. So it's inevitable that the Unnamable compares himself unfavorably to those who are lucky, born of a wet dream and dead before morning (Backett 1991, 383).

Beckett's Krapp, listening to his last tape, thinks aloud in wonder about that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that's all done with anyway (Backett 1960, 24). Later in Beckett's career there is a more poignant presentation of the attempt to find comfort in the past and one's past self, in his short play *Ohio Impromptu*a work that comes out of his relationship to James Joyce. The scene directions tell us that the two characters (the Reader, and the Listener) are both wearing a *long black cloak*, while at the center of a table in front of them is a *black wide-brimmed hat.* The Reader reads aloud from a book on the table, about a long-lost friend: Day

after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather and old world Latin Quarter hat (Backett 1984, 11; 13). A well-known photograph of Joyce on the back of a photo-postcard he sent J. F. Byrne from Paris during his first trip there in 1902 shows Joyce in a long black cloak and his own Latin Quarter hat. In *Ulysses* Stephen recalls trying to impress people in Paris with *his* Latin Quarter hat, thinking to himself in the Proteus chapter, My Latin quarter hat. God, we simply must dress the character (*U* 3.174). The islet referred to in the passage being read by Beckett's Reader is the Isle of Swans, in Paris.[4] Beckett and Joyce used to go on long walks together on the Isle of Swans; the picture we get of their friendship in the play is genuinely touching, as it also plays upon the sense of self, of identity. Of the two friends we are told that with never a word exchanged they grew to be as one. We see a no-doubt unexpectedly paternal figure in Joyce the ghost of Joyce, really, the dear face who says the unspoken words: Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you (pp. 17, 14).[5]

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the presence in a poem about modern London of figures such as Tiresias, Tristan, and Philomel indicates that there too these characters out of the past are not lost in some *irretrievable* past. We have there not withered stumps of time, but living perennials that first blossomed aeons ago. So we see the narrative voice hail his friend Stetson not as one of his chums from World War I, but as somebody who fought with him at Mylae, the naval battle of 260 B.C. At least for those of us of a certain generation, the associations between past and present selves can only be uncannily and terribly intensified as we have to resist the impulse to pronounce Mylae as if it were My Lai.

The reference to metempsychosis within Molly Bloom's reading introduces the most famous examples in Modernist literature of identifications between contemporary figures and ancient ones. *Ulysses* goes on to quote Maeterlinck: *If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep. If Judas go forth tonight it is to Judas his steps will tend* (*U* 9.1042-44). Or we think of the eternal recurrences of *Finnegans Wake*, with what it calls the multiplicity

of personalities . . . down the long lane of . . . generations, more generations, and still more generations (*FW* 107.24-35). The trouble is, concepts such as metempsychosis and eternal recurrence complicate Santayana's well-known truth that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it, for, it turns out, so are those who can so are we all. That's one reason why time and history are a nightmare from which one might well wish to awake. But cannot.

Toward the end of *A Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen reflects in his diary on a poem by Yeats, "He Remembers Forgotten Beauty", originally published as "Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty". The first three lines read:

> When my arms wrap you round I press
> My heart upon the loveliness
> That has long faded from the world . . . (Yeats 60).

Stephen writes:

> 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. (*P* 251)

William Faulkner, at least as a young man, seems however to have agreed with Yeats; he used to say his favorite lines from Yeats were the ones I've quoted (Blotner 203). In Faulkner, identifications by contemporary people with figures out of the historical past are frequently complicated, and often deadly, as in Gail Hightower's confusion between himself and his dead grandfather in *Light in August*. Less clearly negative are the especially baroque series of identifications in *Absalom, Absalom!* by Quentin and Shreve with Henry and Charles, until now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither, smelling the very smoke which had blown and faded away forty-six years ago . . . (Faulkner 1936, 351). The resulting compound is, in my

terms, a Romantic / Modernist one. When in *Requiem for a Nun* the older Temple Drake tells Gavin Stevens, Temple Drake is dead, she's obviously being, according to my categories, a Modernist. Gavin is that too in some respects, but he's also a Romantic in a blend or compound rather like the one that exists in the writers I've identified with my third category. So Gavin replies, The past is never dead. It's not even past (1951, 92).[6]

To that extent, Gavin seems to believe that we can conquer time. Joyce, like his Gracehoper in *Finnegans Wake*, is less sure: *Your genus its worldwide, your spacest sublime!* the Gracehoper chants, *But, Holy Saltmartin, why can't you beat time?* (*FW* 419.7-8). Actually, Joyce provides hints about the possibility of doing so in all of *Finnegans Wake*, at least arguably, or in the Penelope chapter of *Ulysses*. In the Linati schema for that book, under the rubric Time is the inverted figure 8, the symbol of eternity (Ellmann 188-9). And in a letter Joyce said that in that chapter he tried to depict the earth which is prehuman and presumably posthuman (*Letters I,* 180). But Molly's connection to eternity is hard to grasp: in another letter Joyce wrote that Molly is human, all too human (*Letters I,* 160).

Similarly paradoxical is Stephen's relationship with time and eternity in the Proteus chapter: he begins by walking through time and space, seeing how they affect his senses and his sense of self, *Nacheinander* and *Nebeneinander*. But he almost immediately imagines himself walking into eternity along Sandymount strand. The world, however, unlike Stephen, is there all the time . . . and ever shall be, world without end (*U* 3.13, 15, 18-19, 27-28). Recent popular historiography in the West postulates the end of history: no such luck, the Stephen Dedalus who finds history a nightmare might say.

The *telling* of history is in Tom Kernan's phrase one that becomes a motif of sorts through *Ulysses* a retrospective arrangement (*U* 10.783, 11.798, 14.1044, etc.). Bloom notices, in Eumaeus, history repeating itself with a difference (*U* 16.1525-26). (In that view, it's not quite the same damn thing over and over.) As if forecasting the fascination of recent historiographers with counterfactual history, or a prominent theme of later science fiction, *Ulysses* explores the prospect of

alternative histories: Stephen ponders the possibility that Pyrrhus might not have fallen by a beldam's hand in Argos or Julius Caesar not been knifed to death. . . . . But can those have been possible seeing that they never were? Or was that only possible which came to pass? (*U* 2.48-52). *Ulysses* itself tries an experiment in alternative history in Ithaca, by seeing what Bloom's and Stephen's educations would have been like had they changed places, or become Blephen and Stoom (*U* 17.549-554).

Joyce's work that most intensely explores the world of atemporality is of course *Finnegans Wake*, with its fulfillment of Coleridge's expressed desire to make all *narrative* . . . convert a *series* into a *Whole*: to make those events, which in real or imagined History move on in a *strait* Line, assume to our Understandings a *circular* motion the snake with its Tail in its Mouth (Coleridge 956). Not coincidentally, it's also in the *Wake* that we see a bewildering breakdown in personal identity, so that it seems almost as if everyone is everyone else when they're at home. Before the *Wake*, and almost as pervasively as in it, the threat to one's sense of an integral identity appears in the Circe chapter of *Ulysses*. So it's fitting that there, too, the early sensation felt by Stephen in Proteus, of the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame, takes on a phantasmagoric yet somehow genuine reality as, in Circe, Stephen shouts *Nothung!*: *Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry* (*U* 2.9-10, 15.4242-45).

The relationship between time and the self, the complex interplay between identity and entelechy, and the ways in which time seems to come round, providing a structural circularity, pervade the Circe chapter but have appeared elsewhere in Joyce's work and, as I hope I've shown, elsewhere in Modernist literature as well, and will appear again. And will appear again. And will appear again. And will appear again.

Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home.

(The Ohio State University)

Notes

1) Even as I examine a number of other writers and thinkers, I presume that, as Stephen Kern observes, *Ulysses* provides a superb embodiment of a generation of developments in literature and philosophy on the nature of human consciousness and its nature in time (*The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, p. 28).
2) Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, pp. 35-36. *Cf.* Stephen in *Ulysses*: The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh (*U* 3.37).
3) According to Paul De Man, for example, Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier . . . (*Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed., revised [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983] 148).
4) In another passage the Reader reads: In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans (*Three Plays*, p. 12).
5) James Knowlson reports that in addition to the connection with Joyce, there is also a strong association between the dear face and Beckett's wife Suzanne. See *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) 585.
6) *Cf. FW*: waz iz (4.14).

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Abstract

The Seim Anew: Time, Mand Identity in Joyce and Modernist Literature

Morris Beja

I explore the ways James Joyce and a number of other important writers confronted the correlation between our sense of self and our sense of time. I place Joyce within what I see as the three basic ways in which writers in the last few centuries have tended to approach the relationship between time and its passing and the sense of the self as integral. In the first approach the self is seen as continuous; one is the same self one has been and will be, as long as one can remember or look ahead. The second view in contrast sees one as ineluctably cut off from one's past self or, actually, from all our multiple past selves, from all the selves everyone has inevitably been throughout a so-called lifetime. Joyce may be connected with both those approaches to time, but it's with a third that, I believe, he is most profoundly associated. That relationship to time entails a sense of transcendence, or perhaps pre-existence, a notion that our selves are indeed restricted to time, but not necessarily to this time, or this place.

■ Key words: Joyce, Time, Self, Identity, Romanticism, Modernism, Eternal Recurrence