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Robert Spoo

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"Nestor" and the Nightmare: The Presence of the Great War in *Ulysses*

ROBERT E. SPOO

In a recent account of the rise of English studies, Terry Eagleton has energetically claimed that literature, for the English ruling class of the years following the Great War, became "at once a solace and reaffirmation, a familiar ground on which Englishmen would regroup both to explore, and to find some alternative to, the nightmare of history."[1] *Ulysses* is a work too complex to be readily quotable, but it has contributed this single memorable phrase, "the nightmare of history," to our growing thesaurus of crisis. Actually, the phrase occurs nowhere in the pages of Joyce's novel, for Stephen's remark to Mr. Deasy in the "Nestor" episode runs: "History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (34.22–23; 2.377).[2] What is arresting about Eagleton's use of the popular distillation of these words is the way he has appropriated it from its fictive historical context—June 16, 1904—and reinserted it in a wholly different, nonfictive context—the period which many Britons still call the Great War. Even more striking is the appositeness of his appropriation.

The nightmare metaphor, with its associations of oppression and helplessness, of predatory descent upon the innocently slumbering, came easily to those who experienced the breaking of war upon the unusually beautiful summer of 1914. D. H. Lawrence gave the title "The Nightmare" to the long digressive chapter on the war in *Kangaroo,* first published in 1923. Yeats, in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," complained that "Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare / Rides upon sleep."[3] As early as August 5, 1914, one day after the British

declaration of war, Henry James referred to the situation as "a nightmare of the deepest dye"[4]; and in his correspondence during the next eight months he resorted to the word six more times to express his horror and frustration. Writing to Edith Wharton on August 19, 1914, James uncannily anticipated the words Joyce was to put in Stephen's mouth three years later: "Life goes on after a fashion, but I find it a nightmare from which there is no waking save by sleep."[5] Joyce could not have read James's letter before the appearance of Lubbock's edition of the correspondence in 1920, three years after "Nestor" had been sent to the typist.[6] But he need not have read it, for Stephen's remark is as much a part of the climate of the war as James's letters.

The three initial episodes of *Ulysses* were completed in late 1917 while Joyce was wintering in Locarno,[7] and he probably finished "Nestor" in November of that year. While the British were breaking the Hindenburg supporting line from St. Quentin to the Scarpe River, and the Bolsheviks were seizing Petrograd and deposing Kerensky, Joyce sat safely in neutral Switzerland and wrote about the Dublin of his youth, "kuskykorked . . . up tight in his inkbattle house," as the language of *Finnegans Wake* has it.[8] The Joyce of Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* puts the received view quite fairly and succinctly: "As an artist, naturally I attach no importance to the swings and roundabout of political history."[9]

But the text of *Ulysses* is not so indifferent. On careful examination, the "Nestor" episode reveals remarkable traces of the historical situation contemporaneous with its composition, an inscribing of the nightmare of the war within the ostensible neutrality of the 1904 narrative, so that the actualities of 1917 reverberate weirdly, almost allegorically, within the fictive time frame. Only one critic has suggested that the war influenced Joyce's narrative, and this observation is confined to the "disguised World War I imagery" in Stephen's thoughts about the hockey game his students play.[10] But the war is so pervasively present in "Nestor" that this episode bears comparison, as we shall see, with the contemporaneous poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Furthermore, this convergence of history and story within an episode whose symbol, according to Joyce's schema, is "history" raises important questions about Joyce's whole fictive enterprise in *Ulysses* and his place in the larger modernist response to "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."

When Italy joined the war in May 1915, Joyce decided to move his family from Austro-Hungarian Trieste to Switzerland, and by the end of June they were in Zurich, "a symbol," Ellmann claims, "of artistic detachment, *au-dessus de la mêlée*."[11] Neutrality and detachment are

different matters, and it was difficult even for someone like Joyce to be wholly detached from the events taking place beyond the borders of Switzerland. Joyce's friend Frank Budgen remarked that Switzerland "is a small country with a long frontier and a long memory. At every point of the compass stands a powerful and dangerous neighbour. During the war all Swiss talked war strategy and politics, and in general all were pacifists."[12] We are just beginning to learn the extent of Joyce's pacifism and anarchism, largely due to Dominic Manganiello's important research,[13] but we do know that Joyce at this time had a lively if ironic interest in current events and political developments. In Zurich, he worked as a translator for the neutralist organ, the *International Review,* which had as part of its stated program the intention "to oppose to the campaign of lies a war of minds which shall shatter the unholy legends that are forming around us."[14] Though Joyce claimed to be indifferent to the war, he was not incapable of a real bitterness toward "those states . . . which have drowned the world in a blood-bath"[15]; and when he learned that Thomas Kettle, his boyhood friend and schoolmate, died fighting in the British army in France, he wrote a moving letter of condolence to Kettle's wife.[16]

Joyce had some knowledge of the war poetry of the time, enough at least to claim that a piece by the Viennese poet Felix Beran, "Des Weibes Klage," was "the only poem on the subject that at all interested him."[17] He translated it and gave it the title, "Lament for the Yeomen."[18] Joyce himself composed some comic poems about the war, minor affairs indeed but significant insofar as they register his extra-literary preoccupations at the time.[19] In one poem, he ridiculed an Austro-Hungarian official who he thought was evading military service:

> For he said it is bet—bet—better
> To stick stamps on some God-damned letter
> Than be shot in a trench
> Amid shells and stench,
> Jesus Gott—Donner wet-wet-wetter.[20]

He also wrote a limerick on Lloyd George which he sent to Claud Sykes, the typist of "Nestor" and other early episodes.[21]

Both of these occasional poems were composed in November 1917, roughly at the time Joyce completed "Nestor." They do in a crude and obvious way what "Nestor" does much more subtly: they register, under unlikely formal auspices, attitudes toward the situation of 1917. The second episode of *Ulysses* is, on even a casual perusal, suffused with war. As it opens, Stephen is drilling his students on Pyrrhus' military career. One of the boys, Cochrane, is certain "There was a battle," but when

prodded for more he says, "I forget the place, sir. 279 B.C." He manages, though, to recall Pyrrhus' famous remark, "*Another victory like that and we are done for*" (24.16; 2.14, Joyce's emphasis). Cochrane's poor memory allows the Battle of Asculum to grade into all battles, and though Stephen gives the boy the textbook answer, he silently approves the blurring: "From a hill above a corpsestrewn plain a general speaking to his officers, leaned upon his spear. Any general to any officers. They lend ear" (24.18–20; 2.16–17). Any general to any officers, indeed. In 1917, generals were trying to explain, to themselves as well as their officers, how such a Pyrrhic event as the Somme could have taken place. After the Armistice, Joyce bitterly paraphrased the Greek general's words by asking, "Who won this war?"[22]

Later in "Nestor," Stephen encounters the imperialism and bigotry of his employer, Garrett Deasy, an old schoolmaster of Ulsterite sympathies. Beneath the obvious naturalistic level of their "dialogue" (as Joyce described it in one of his schemata) we can detect the outlines of what Ronald Bush has called the "popular mythology" of the old men and the young soldiers, a mythology by which "the soldier poets of World War I pictured old folks safe behind the lines and youth dying at the front."[23] In *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), Orwell recalls this myth vividly:

> By 1918 everyone under forty was in a bad temper with his elders, and the mood of anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the fighting was extended into a general revolt against orthodoxy and authority. At that time there was, among the young, a curious cult of hatred of "old men." The dominance of "old men" was held to be responsible for every evil known to humanity, and every accepted institution from Scott's novels to the House of Lords was derided merely because "old men" were in favour of it.[24]

This is the mood of "Nestor," wherein Deasy is seen from the point of view of the young, bored, and skeptical Stephen. We are told that Deasy's "old man's voice cried sternly" (29.16–17; 2.193–94) and that with his finger he "beat the air oldly before his voice spoke" (33.26–27; 2.345). At the end of the episode, Joyce's prose vividly captures the schoolmaster's decrepitude: "A coughball of laughter leaped from his throat dragging after it a rattling chain of phlegm" (36.15–16; 2.443–44). John Maynard Keynes, another young man appalled by the treachery of the older generation, used similar language to describe Clemenceau at the Paris Peace Conference: "He spoke seldom . . . he closed his eyes often . . . and the sudden outburst of words, often

followed by a fit of deep coughing from the chest, produced their impression rather by force and surprise than by persuasion."[25] In Canto VII (composed in 1919), Ezra Pound speaks of the "rattle of old men's voices,"[26] which Bush links directly to the old-men mythology. It is possible that, impressed as he was by the initial episodes of *Ulysses*, Pound was drawing in part upon his memory of Mr. Deasy.[27]

Deasy's Homeric counterpart is the old warrior and horse-tamer Nestor, who, in Book III of *The Odyssey*, recounts to Telemachus the events of the Trojan War and after. But Deasy is also a happy warrior of the nineteenth-century type, full of hardy Victorian optimism and high-sounding imperialistic rhetoric, exactly the type who promoted and welcomed the war and continued to defend it even after it had become a nightmare. He could easily double for the old man in Siegfried Sassoon's bitter "They" (composed about a year before "Nestor"), which dramatizes a dialogue between "the Bishop" and "the boys."[28] Invoking Providence " 'a just cause: they lead the attack / on Anti-Christ' "), the Bishop predicts that the boys will be profoundly changed by their glorious battle experience. The boys counter ironically with descriptions of the changes that bullets and mortars have worked on them and their friends. To all of this the Bishop says blandly, " 'The Ways of God are strange!' "[29] Deasy is also a good nineteenth-century providentialist, certain that history moves toward "the manifestation of God" (34.27–28; 2.380–81). When Stephen's bitter contrariness finds climactic expression in his remark about history being a nightmare, Deasy calmly replies, "The ways of the Creator are not our ways" (34.26; 2.380).

Like the bishop in "They," Deasy is not really listening. His responses are like those of Churchill in 1918 when he tried to talk sense into an angry, disillusioned Siegfried Sassoon. The young man was dumbfounded: "Transfixed and submissive in my chair, I realized that what had begun as a persuasive confutation of my anti-war convictions was now addressed, in pauseful and perorating prose, to no one in particular."[30] Deasy's Kiplingesque rhetoric about an Englishman's proudest boast ("I paid my way") and his easy phrases about generosity and justice elicit from Stephen only the cryptic utterance, "I fear those big words . . . which make us so unhappy" (31.12–13; 2.264). This could be Wilfred Owen repudiating big words like "glory, honour, dominion or power, except War."[31] Hemingway's Frederick Henry finds such "abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."[32] And in

Robert Graves's poem "Big Words," a young infantryman bucks himself up for twenty lines with rhetoric supplied by the home front. "But on the firestep, waiting to attack, / He cursed, prayed, sweated, wished the proud words back."[33]

The theme of British imperialism in *Ulysses* links Deasy with Haines, the English Oxonian who appears in "Telemachus" and is, for Stephen, an embodiment of the oppressive British Empire. As Deasy prattles on about "the pride of the English," a memory of Haines's eyes comes to Stephen: "The seas' ruler. His seacold eyes looked on the empty bay" (30.33; 2.246). After Deasy denounces the Jews as destroyers of civilization, we learn that "His eyes open wide in vision stared sternly across the sunbeam in which he halted" (33.41–42; 2.357–58). Haines, too, is anti-Semitic, fearing that his country may fall into the hands of "German jews" (21.21; 1.667). Stephen tackles Deasy head on in "Nestor": "A merchant . . . is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?" (34.1–2; 2.359–60).[34] In "Telemachus," Stephen's silent rebuttal of Haines on the same issue is identical but imbedded so subtly in the narrative as to be almost undetectable. When Haines has delivered his brief speech on "our national problem," the narrative shifts to something Stephen has been contemplating: "Two men stood at the verge of the cliff, watching: businessman, boatman" (21.23–24; 1.669–70).

Deasy and Haines are linked by their views of history as well. Haines placidly remarks that "It seems history is to blame" for the Irish problem (20.40; 1.649); and Deasy refers all the turmoil of the past to "one great goal, the manifestation of God." Jon Silkin's analysis of the Bishop's hypocrisy in "They" applies equally to such abdications of historical responsibility: "The earthly doings of the Church (encouraging enlistment) may bring earthly consequences, but the responsibility for them is passed on to God who, as most sceptics know (the Bishop perhaps among them), can be relied on to keep his mouth shut."[35]

"England is in the hands of the jews," Deasy announces to Stephen. "As sure as we are standing here the jew merchants are already at their work of destruction. Old England is dying" (33.28–34; 2.346–51). There is something pathetically foolish about this pronouncement once we consider the double time frame of "Nestor." England was indeed dying as Joyce wrote this, dying by the thousands in a fiasco from which its aristocracy has never recovered. But the causes of the war, as Joyce well knew, were more along the lines of Stephen's analysis than Deasy's. There is a disorienting moment in "Nestor" when a more honest interpretation of the war breaks suddenly into the naturalistic narrative,

a dislocation of language and temporality in which Joyce's words seem to speak in ghostly diagnosis of his times: "May I trespass on your valuable space. That doctrine of *laissez faire* which so often in our history. Our cattle trade. The way of all our old industries. Liverpool ring which jockeyed the Galway harbour scheme. European conflagration . . . " (33.1–4; 2.324–27). This is Stephen skimming Deasy's letter about foot-and-mouth disease, but it is also an unidentified ironic voice reading out a kind of fragmentary, laundry-list synopsis of the international market competition that lay behind the "European conflagration" of 1914.

Compare that fragmentary summary with a passage from the Epilogue (not published until 1971) to D. H. Lawrence's *Movements in European History* (1921); Lawrence is talking about the recent war:

> At first, plenty of room for all, and competition is the best thing possible, and equality of opportunity is the ideal. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Then some nations forge ahead, and get a stranglehold upon the natural resources around them. Still there must be progress, expansion, progress, expansion, free competition. All very well. But you can't progress upwards if another great tree has risen and sent out branches above you. . . . Then you've either got to give in, and gradually, gradually have the light of day taken from you. Or you have to fight.[36]

In "Eumaeus," Leopold Bloom makes the same point:

> All those wretched quarrels, in his humble opinion, stirring up bad blood . . . erroneously supposed to be about a punctilio of honour and a flag . . . were very largely a question of the money question which was at the back of everything, greed and jealousy, people never knowing when to stop. (643.34–39; 16.1111–15)

That Bloom's view of the causes of war agrees with the strange intruding voice in "Nestor" is one more example of the authority Joyce vested in this Dublin Odysseus.

In *The Odyssey*, Telemachus seeks out Nestor for information about his father. For Stephen in *Ulysses* Deasy is both the aged counselor and the first in a series of potential father-figures that includes Bloom as its most promising and fully rendered member. Though Stephen is harried by the memory of his dying mother, the reality and dependability of maternal love are never really questioned in the novel. It is the father's devotion that poses the real problem. *Ulysses* seems continually to be asking, What should a father do for his son? What does a son owe his father? Is there a vital connection, beyond blood, between them? Or as Stephen puts it in "Scylla and Charybdis," "Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?"

(207.28–30; 9.844–45). The war poets, and others who were articulate and honest about the European situation from 1916 on, were also asking these questions. The classic formulation of this war topos is Wilfred Owen's "Parable of the Old Men and the Young," a retelling of the Abraham and Isaac story in which a latter-day patriarch is preparing to sacrifice his son amid "parapets and trenches." Suddenly an angel bids him, "Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him." "But the old man would not so, but slew his son."[37]

Osbert Sitwell also united the old-men mythology to the theme of the father's betrayal when he wrote of "These grand old men, who still can see and talk, / Who sacrifice each other's sons each day."[38] In "Canzone à la Sonata," Ford Madox Ford put the question that was being asked more and more as the war went on: "What's left behind us for a heritage / For our young children? What but nameless fear?"[39] And Kipling, whose war poetry changed dramatically after his only son as killed in action at Loos, asked, in the persona of a dead statesman, "What tale shall serve me here among / Mine angry and defrauded young?"[40] In "Nestor," the general theme of the father and his responsibility is partly informed by these more urgent and immediate questionings of paternity. Leopold Bloom, the novel's honorary paternal ideal, becomes Joyce's spokesman for all fathers when, in "Eumaeus," he denounces "the misery and suffering [that war propaganda] entailed as a foregone conclusion on fine young fellows, chiefly, destruction of the fittest, in a word" (657.17–19; 16.1600–02).

The destruction of the fittest is a grim potentiality lurking behind the schoolroom scene in "Nestor," for the boys Stephen teaches in 1904—most of them from well-to-do families with English or Scottish names like Cochrane, Talbot, and Armstrong—will be officer material in ten years. They were being killed as Joyce created their fictive counterparts. Just as the 1904 setting contains the horror of 1917, so the boys in Deasy's school carry their future tragedy within them, implicitly and potentially. They are like Jacob Flanders in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), whose death in the war is foretold in his name from the beginning of the novel. Woolf was still working with the traditional novel form which reports a "history" spanning a conventional number of years, so what is implicit in the first chapter can convincingly be made explicit in the last (as Jacob's death and the full significance of his name become "facts" fully prepared for by the whole course of the novel).

But Joyce could only gesture at such "explications" of the implicit, since he had restricted himself, on the naturalist level, to the narrative

of a single day. *Ulysses* is committed to intensive rather than temporally extensive revelations of plot and character, and it relies upon symbol and theme as gestures toward potentialities when character development is forced to recede. The narrative present therefore becomes saturated with the past and the future, in some cases overdetermined by them, so that the present naturalistic moment is never quite itself and cannot be taken simply at face value.[41] Stephen's students are both hockey players and infantrymen, schoolboys and victims.

Joyce intimates this potential victimization through the restless mind of the young schoolteacher. As E. L. Epstein has suggested, Stephen thinks of the boys' hockey game in imagery that blends medieval warfare with the horrific accounts of trench conditions and bayonet-fighting: "Jousts. Time shocked rebounds, shock by shock. Jousts, slush and uproar of battles, the frozen deathspew of the slain, a shout of spear spikes baited with men's bloodied guts" (32.33–36; 2.316–18). As early as *Stephen Hero* Joyce had his main character deprecate field sports as "mimic warfare."[42] When Stephen first sees Deasy, the old man is returning to the schoolhouse "from the scrappy field where sharp voices were in strife" (29.6; 2.184–85). Deasy has been sorting the boys into teams, and as he and Stephen converse, the crack of hockey sticks can be heard from the field. A nearly allegorical configuration begins to emerge here, with the young poet confronting the old man/father while the boys engage in a "joust" which the old man has arranged: exactly the structural paradigm, implicit or explicit, of most of the war poems we have been discussing.

Stephen's compassion for the student who stays behind for help with his algebra is partly explainable in terms of this pattern. For Stephen must order the boy, whose name is Sargent, out into the fray at Deasy's command (29.3–4; 2.182–83). Stephen pities Sargent for his weakness and awkwardness, and senses that, had it not been for the boy's mother, "the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail" (27.35–37; 2.141–42). This last image is reminiscent of the words spoken by the Chorus of the Years in *The Dynasts* as the two armies encamp on the eve of Waterloo: "The snail draws in at the terrible tread, / But in vain; he is crushed by the felloe-rim."[43] Stephen's compassion for Sargent has some of the overtones of the English officer's concern for his men, a concern which, as Bernard Bergonzi shows, often resembled paternal responsibility (Owen's poetry of pity is the classic example).[44] Caught as he is between Deasy and the schoolboys, Stephen becomes a kind of officer-figure, and his feeling for Sargent adds to the developing theme of fatherhood

in the novel. There is a faint hint of the military relationship between Deasy and Stephen in the latter's thinking, "Any general to any officer. They lend ear," and when he leaves the schoolhouse with Deasy's editorial in hand, he muses, "Still I will help him in his fight" (36.1–2; 2.430).

The war enters "Nestor" also through the rich ambiguities of the word "goal." The "goals" which the boys score on the hockey field are contrasted with Deasy's claim that "All history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God." Stephen drives this contrast home with his rejoinder that God is "A shout in the street," by which he is indicating, specifically, a cheer that has gone up after another goal (34.28–34; 2.380–86). But "goal" acquires a special resonance once its military sense is taken into account. In his discussion of Great War euphemisms, Paul Fussell explains how "goal" was high diction for "the objective of an attack" (as in Edmund Blunden's "Come On, My Lucky Lads": "The dawn that hangs behind the goal").[45] The usage drew upon the quasi-military associations of public-school football, exploited in Henry Newbolt's popular "Vitaï Lampada" ("Play up, play up! and play the game!"). In *Lord Northcliffe's War Book* (1917), English tank crews are said to "enter upon their task in a sporting spirit with the same cheery enthusiasm as they would show for football."[46] Even C. E. Montague, whose *Disenchantment* (1922) explores the demoralizing effects of the war, instinctively reaches for a cricket simile to illustrate the impersonality of modern warfare: "With eleven a-side a Grace or an Armstrong may win a game off his own bat. He will hardly do that in a game where the sides are eleven thousand apiece."[47] It is not surprising, then, that Captain Neville commenced his ill-fated attack at the Somme by having his men kick footballs toward the German trenches.[48]

Deasy's providentialist use of "goal" is a different matter, but it too has war resonances. Of course, imperialistic rhetoric in 1904 as well as 1917 drew on such respectable sonorities as the final lines of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, which speak of

> That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves.

Matthew Arnold's "Westminster Abbey" offers the same assurance:

> For this and that way swings
> The flux of mortal things,
> Though moving only to one far-set goal.
> (11.160–62)[49]

But the war gave a special flavor to this theology. Kipling's famous "For All We Have and Are" merges the Tennysonian telos with the other senses of "goal" we have been examining: "No easy hopes or lies / Shall bring us to our goal."[50] It was this complex fusion of meanings drawn from various aspects of English life that made the word so emotionally potent, so easy for patriots and patriotic poets to conjure with. Wilfred Owen attempted to deflate the word entirely in "Disabled," a poem about a legless convalescent soldier: "Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal."[51]

Deasy's ostensibly prewar use of "goal" picks up these resonances, especially as his pontifications have the schoolboys' mimic warfare as a backdrop. The invoking of Providence for military victory was so natural during the war years that Douglas Haig could write his wife on the eve of the Somme, "I feel that every step in my plan has been taken with the Divine help."[52] The tragedy that extended from the first of July into November of 1916 cruelly undermined this assurance, making even patriots ask themselves what kind of God was presiding over the war. Stephen's remark to Deasy—that God is a "shout in the street"—implicitly asks the same bitter quesiton, for the God Stephen refers to as he gestures toward the hockey field has more in common with Mars than with the Christian deity. In "Scylla and Charybdis," Stephen describes this being as "the lord of things as they are . . . *dio boia*, hangman god . . . ostler and butcher" (213.22–24; 98.1047–50). Joyce expressed the very same notion in the last line of his limerick on Lloyd George, written during the period in which he completed "Nestor":

> There's a George of the Georges named David
> With whose words we are now night and day fed.
> He cries: I'll give small rations
> To all the small nations.
> Bully God made this world—but I'll save it.[53]

This ruffian God is Stephen's shout in the street, and in "Nestor" the notion is thoroughly conditioned by the disenchantment with providentialist certainties prevalent by 1917. In that year Wilfred Owen wrote "Exposure," with its richly ambiguous lines on Providence:

> For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
> Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
> For love of God seems dying.[54]

That last line is susceptible of several readings, but the mood of Stephen's rejoinder to Deasy will be present in every one.

Of what significance is this double time frame in "Nestor"? First of all, it is important that we recognize, as Joyce critics are more and more

asking us to do,[55] that Joyce's texts frequently give the lie to his pose of indifference to any history or politics not directly concerned with his picture of the Dublin of his youth. Joyce's "inkbattle house" was not quite so inhospitable as has been supposed. Shira Wolosky, in a similar corrective reading of a major figure, has argued that the horror of the Civil War can be detected in Emily Dickinson's "hymnody of the attic":

> Her personal conflict takes on military proportions, and in this it reflects actual events in the world of history. That the personal is foremost does not obviate the fact that, in 1862, the bodilesss campaign within the poet's soul had an objective counterpart in physical and palpable warfare.[56]

Wolosky emphasizes not the transformative powers of Dickinson's lyric soul but, quite properly, those actualities through which she, like everyone else, lived and suffered and which she was unable to translate wholly into a private idiom. An entire school of Joyce criticism, led by Hugh Kenner, has been concerned with the historical and empirical Dublin in Joyce's writings; it seems but a logical step from there to examining the impingement of other historical matters on those texts.

Henry James's war letters reveal a sensitive mind responding with almost inconceivable rapidity and prescience to the nightmare of history. No sooner had England declared war than James was deploring the situation as

> a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering, that to have to take it all now for what the treacherous years were all the while really making for and *meaning* is too tragic for any words.[57]

For James, the fact that history had betrayed its latent meaning posed a special problem for serious writers. On February 14, 1915, he wrote to Hugh Walpole that he was, after many months, returning to work. He wondered, however, whether it was possible to write under the changed conditions:

> The subject-matter of one's effort has become *itself* utterly treacherous and false—its relation to reality utterly given away and smashed. Reality is a world that was to be capable of *this*—and how represent that horrific capability, *historically* latent, historically ahead of it? How on the other hand *not* represent it either—without putting into play mere fiddlesticks? [James's emphases][58]

These questions are impressively profound and entirely to the point in our discussion of "Nestor." James wants to know how, if literature is supposed to reflect reality—and we must remember that, up until the

war, he had been working on *The Ivory Tower*, a novel about the "present"—how it can do so without also acknowledging reality's latent treachery, a treachery which had recently become all too overt. In other words, how write a novel about the modern world, with men and women as we know them, without somehow figuring the war into the account? There is no going back, James feels, no blinking at the facts, for we know what we know. His concern is also, characteristically, with literary form. *How* represent such a nightmare as the one that has descended upon us? Which window of the House of Fiction will give properly onto this scene?

Joyce must have ruminated these issues too, and with a special sense of the difficulties involved, for he was writing a novel that had to pretend, if it was to have the courage of its fictions, that by "the War" was meant the distant Russo-Japanese conflict or the recent suppression of the Boers. Joyce's solution was a radical one: to allow historical verisimilitude to accommodate, even to be ruptured by, elements foreign to its texture. Here Joyce's dependence on themes reveals its importance, for the themes of "Nestor"—fatherhood; the conflict between youth and age; the terror of history—become repositories for the actualities of 1917, just as those same themes gather into themselves historical matters previous to 1904 (the incidents of *The Odyssey*, for example). *Ulysses* is, in this sense, uninhibitedly transhistorical, already tending toward the vertiginous spontaneity of temporal movement that characterizes *Finnegans Wake*. And like the *Wake*, it is an "aleatoric" work, freely welcoming the momentary and adventitious into its fabric, and allowing the present instant in all its contingency to help shape the rendering of an ostensibly separate, objective "past."

Ulysses is not the only work of its time to let the war into a structure and language seemingly concerned with other matters. It is common to see *The Waste Land* as a war or postwar poem which achieves its effects partly through occasional and indirect reference to military matters (such as Albert's demobbing and the ships at Mylae). According to Bernard Bergonzi, Pound's "Homage to Sextus Propertius" (completed in 1917) uses the Rome of Augustus as a way of commenting on wartime England.[59] And Lytton Strachey, in his Preface to *Eminent Victorians* (1918), prescribed these tactics for the historian of the Victorian Age:

> It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular epoch. If he is wise, he will adopt a subtler strategy. He will attack his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the rear; he

> will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined.[60]

Here the pacifist Strachey, with tongue devilishly in cheek, makes use of images ranging from night-fighting in No Man's Land to an assault on the Schlieffen wing.

The breaking of the war into these texts could be interpreted as one solution to what James saw as the problem facing writers after August 4, 1914. Strachey's Preface, for instance, takes account of recent events through a kind of jaunty mimesis of the eruption into history of its latent horror and treachery. *Ulysses*, not only in "Nestor" but throughout the earlier episodes, also dramatizes this explosion of repressed forces. It is easy to pass over the battle imagery in "Telemachus," for example, though much of that episode takes place in a defense tower built during the Napoleonic Wars, the last time England had seriously feared invasion. In the first three pages of *Ulysses*, the word "gunrest" appears four times, "barracks" once, and "parapet"—a term to be met with in almost any account of trench warfare—four times. As Stephen and Buck Mulligan converse, they seem to be waging a kind of choreographed battle: Mulligan "came forward and mounted the round gunrest"; then he "skipped off the gunrest." Stephen "sat down on the edge of the gunrest." Mulligan "mounted to the parapet again," and "Stephen stood up and went over to the parapet." And all this goes on, of course, as they do emotional and intellectual battle.

We know that Joyce was completing "Scylla and Charybdis," the ninth episode of *Ulysses*, when the Armistice was declared, for he had been working on it since October and the Rosenbach Manuscript shows a dateline of "New Year's Eve, 1918" at the end of the section. This partly explains Stephen's strange passivity and resignation at the end of an episode that has seen him so strenuously at war with the Dublin idealists and the scoffer Mulligan. As Stephen follows Mulligan out of the library, Joyce's language becomes serene, almost pastorally content: "Kind air defined the coigns of houses in Kildare street" (218.5; 9.1218). And Stephen's thoughts, concluding Part I of *Ulysses*, imply a farewell to arms: "Cease to strive. Peace of the druid priests of Cymbeline" (218.8; 9.1221). The next episode, "Wandering Rocks," the first to be composed free of the war, provides an "entr'acte," as Joyce called it, "a pause in the action."

The more we recognize the variety and complexity of historical textures in *Ulysses*, the harder it is to accept unquestioningly Eliot's view that Joyce's "mythic method" provides a way "of controlling, of

ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[61] Such a method would require a static conception of history in which present and past are distinct from one another and observable by an ordering consciousness (a mind "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity"). But if past and present, or history and not-yet-history, are observable, then from what vantage, at what remove, are they to be observed? How can we get sufficiently outside the futility and anarchy to bring history and tradition to bear upon them? How, in short, can we rouse ourselves from the nightmare of history in order to begin to apprehend other perspectives?

Ulysses asks these questions earnestly and continuously. June 16, 1904, was not, for Joyce, a fixed, isolable "contemporaneity" to be ordered by a fixed, isolable "antiquity," and the Eliot of *The Waste Land* knew this even if Eliot the essayist chose to give a different impression. The very process of composition ensures the inscribing of the chaotic "present" into any continuous parallel that a narrative might hope to manipulate, and no book is more aware of this than *Ulysses* with its crucial theme of parallax, a reckoning of the observer and the point of observation into the observed. The law of parallax rules historiography as well, for every attempt to locate and clarify our antecedents entails the obfuscations of language and vantage. "Nestor" shows how, try as we might to relegate history to the dispassionate inculcations of the classroom, its nightmares will not be hushed away in textbooks. Likewise, Joyce's text, though ostensibly out of battle, is a neutral zone crossed and recrossed by rumors and phantoms of what Henry James, eloquent in despair, called "the Great Interruption."[62]

[1] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 30.

[2] *Ulysses* page references are given for the 1961 Random House edition and the three-volume "Critical and Synoptic Edition," prepared by Hans Walter Gabler, et al. (New York and London: Garland, 1984). Citations are from RH 1961.

[3] *The Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1983), p. 207.

[4] *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, II (1920; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 384.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 391.

[6] Stephen's assertion about history is not one of the later additions to "Nestor."

[7] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 419.

[8] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1939; rpt. Penguin Books, 1984), p. 176.

[9] Tom Stoppard, *Travesties* (New York: Grove Press, 1975), p. 50. The actual remark on which Stoppard modeled his version is less apolitical: "As an artist, I attach no importance to political conformity." (Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 446.)

[10] See E. L. Epstein's essay on "Nestor" in *James Joyce's "Ulysses": Critical Essays*, eds. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1977), pp. 22 and 23–24.

[11] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 386.

[12] Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses"* (1934; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1960), p. 31.

[13] See Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics* (London: Routledge, 1980).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[15] In conversation with Georges Borach on 21 Oct. 1918. Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 446.

[16] Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 399–400. Kettle was a war poet whose sonnet, "To My Daughter Betty," written four days before he was killed at the Somme, has been frequently anthologized. See the *Anthology of War Poetry, 1914–1918*, ed. Robert Nichols (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1943), p. 116; and *Up the Line to Death: The War Poets, 1914–1918*, ed. Brian Gardner (1964; rpt. London: Magnum Books, 1976), pp. 95–96.

[17] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses,"* pp. 12–13.

[18] Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 432*n*.

[19] Joyce's humorous occasional verse—mostly limericks and verses based on popular songs—is in miniature what *Finnegans Wake*, that sprawling occasional work, is on a gigantic scale. Through parody and pastiche, these works allow the present moment spontaneously to enter the framework of the item parodied. This superimposition of one time frame upon another is a variation of what Joyce achieved in "Nestor."

[20] Quoted in Ellman, *James Joyce*, p. 420.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 420.

[22] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses,"* p. 166.

[23] Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's "Cantos"* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 267.

[24] George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Gollancz, 1937), p. 170.

[25] From Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919). Quoted in Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's "Cantos,"* p. 272.

[26] "Three Cantos by Ezra Pound," *Dial*, 71 (Aug. 1921), 205.

[27] Bush argues that Joyce's treatment of history in "Nestor" influenced Eliot's "Gerontion" and some of the early *Cantos*. Curiously, he does not relate the portrait of Deasy to the old-men mythology, nor does he suggest what seems to me such a rich possibility, that Eliot's little old man and Pound's murmuring and rattling old men might derive in part from the schoolmaster in *Ulysses*. See Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos,"* pp. 183–263, esp. pp. 216–24.

[28] The dialogue form is another feature "Nestor" shares with so much war literature. It would seem that a confrontational mode was the one best suited to a situation in which an urgent message had to be conveyed to unsympathetic

authorities and a complacent home front. The dialogue was so natural to war writers that when, in 1940, Robert Nichols, a poet of the First World War, assembled his *Anthology of War Poetry: 1914–1918*, he included a Preface of 100 pages set up as a formal dialogue between the Anthologist (himself) and Julian Tennyson, a young man who has "just been called up" to fight Hitler.

[29] Siegfried Sassoon, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), pp. 23–24.

[30] Siegfried Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey, 1916–1920* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945), p. 78.

[31] From the Preface to *Poems* (London: Chatto, 1920), p. vii.

[32] Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 185.

[33] In *The Muse in Arms*, ed. E. B. Osborn (London: John Murray, 1917), p. 25.

[34] Stephen and Deasy's debate strongly resembles a dialogue ("dialettica") dramatized by the Italian historian Guglielmo Ferrero in his section on socialism in *L'Europa giovane* (1897), a work Joyce read in 1906–07 and drew on for details in *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. Ferrero sketches a "torneo" between an anti-Semite and a socialist, part of which runs:

> The anti-Semite says to the people: "The Jew is your enemy; he enslaves you and compels you to work for him, robbing you of your labor. Rise and hunt him down." But the socialist replies: "The Jew indeed robs the laborer of his work and forces him to work for him, but because he is a capitalist, not because he is circumcised." (p. 63)

(*L'Europa giovane: Studi e viaggi nei paesi del nord* [1897; rpt. Cernusco sul Naviglio: Garzanti, 1946]. The translation is mine; no English translation of this work exists.) At the time Joyce read Ferrero he was much interested in socialist politics and considered himself something of an anarchist.

[35] Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 141.

[36] D. H. Lawrence, *Movements in European History* (1921; rpt. with hitherto unpublished Epilogue, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 311.

[37] Owen, *Poems*, p. 9.

[38] From his poem "Arm-chair," reprinted in Gardner, ed., *Up the Line to Death*, p. 114.

[39] Ford Madox Ford, *Selected Poems*, ed. Basil Bunting (Cambridge, Mass.: Pym-Randall Press, 1971), p. 89.

[40] From "A Dead Statesman," reprinted in Gardner, ed., *Up the Line to Death*, p. 148.

[41] These speculations have been assisted by A. Walton Litz's excellent essay on "Ithaca," in Hart and Hayman, eds., *James Joyce's "Ulysses": Critical Essays*, esp. pp. 400–01.

[42] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (1944, rpt. New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 34.

[43] Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts* (1904, 1906, 1908; rpt. New York: St. Martin's, 1965), p. 483.

[44] See Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965), pp. 122–23.

[45] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 22.

[46] Quoted in Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 26.

[47] C. E. Montague, *Disenchantment* (New York: Brentano's, 1922), p. 191.

[48] Mentioned in Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 27.

[49] Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in "Ulysses": An Annotated List* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 39, offers both of these passages as Victorian glosses on Deasy's "one great goal, the manifestation of God."

[50] Reprinted in *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914–1917*, ed. George Herbert Clarke (Boston: Houghton, 1917), p. 23.

[51] Owen, *Poems*, p. 33.

[52] Quoted in Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 29.

[53] Quoted in Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 420.

[54] Owen, *Poems*, p. 19. See Jon Silkin's careful analysis of these lines in his *Out of Battle*, pp. 204–06.

[55] See, in addition to Manganiello's *Joyce's Politics*, the essays in *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, eds. W. J. McCormick and Alistair Stead (London: Routledge, 1982).

[56] Shira Wolosky, *Emily Dickinson: A Voice of War* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. xviii.

[57] Letter of 4–5 Aug. 1914, in Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James*, II, 384.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 446.

[59] Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight*, p. 139. See Pound's letter to Thomas Hardy (31 Mar. 1921), in which he speaks of "the doubling of me and Propertius, England to-day and Rome under Augustus." Reprinted in Donald Davie, *Ezra Pound* (Penguin Modern Masters, 1976), pp. 46–47.

[60] Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Putnam's, n.d.), p. v.

[61] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt, 1975), p. 177. Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's "Cantos,"* p. 210, agrees with Eliot: "One way of describing *Ulysses* is to chart the reader's historical awareness of Dublin life as it progresses from identification with Stephen's myopia to an understanding achieved by layer upon layer of implied literary and historical parallels. By the end of the novel Stephen has been placed in a tradition."

[62] Letter to Mrs. Alfred Sutro (8 Aug. 1914), in Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James*, II, 387.