

James Joyce and the  
Language of History

DEDALUS'S NIGHTMARE

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# Introduction

*Good God, what a mess! And to think that the nineteenth century takes on airs and adulates itself. There is one word in the mouths of all. Progress. Progress of whom? Progress of what?*

Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Là-bas*

*It has . . . been said of the Iliad that anyone who starts reading it as history will find that it is full of fiction but, equally, anyone who starts reading it as fiction will find that it is full of history.*

Arnold J. Toynbee, "History, Science, and Fiction"

The word "history" reverberates throughout *Ulysses* like the laugh of a ghost. Fiercely contested and continually appropriated, it can probably lay claim to more transformations than the protean dog Stephen Dedalus watches on Sandymount Strand. The Englishman Haines observes with imperial serenity that "it seems history is to blame" for his nation's treatment of Ireland (1.649), while Stephen complains that "history . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (2.377). Mr. Deasy, the prating, imper-turbable Orangeman, affirms that history moves "towards one great goal, the manifestation of God" (2.381), but the outsider Leopold Bloom, bearding the superpatriotic Citizen in his gloryhole, offers a less sanguine opinion: "Persecution . . . all the history of the world is full of it. . . . Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred" (12.1417, 1481-82). A provocatively complex word whenever Joyce uses it, "history" carries an especially heavy, shifting freight of meaning in *Ulysses* that makes it the verbal counterpart of Stephen, who personally labors under the burden of the past.

Definitions of history are bound to proliferate in a country oppressed by it, a country that, at the time of the events of *Ulysses*, was confronted with multiple images of its past, ranging from servitude and humiliation to

the indigenous glories promoted by patriots and the forgotten beauty unearthed by literary revivalists. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen's conversation with the English dean of his university leads him to think how "different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine!" (P 189). Surely "history" could be added to the list of words that would have seemed divided and duplicitous to a middle-class Irish Roman Catholic at the turn of the century. This riven sense of the past was summed up by Joyce's university friend Thomas Kettle when, crossing Voltaire with an Irish bull, he quipped that "Irish history is the lie disagreed upon."<sup>1</sup>

History is more than just a theme in *Ulysses*; it is to an exceptional degree a condition of the novel's aesthetic production. More than any writer before him, Joyce made himself dependent on the empirically verifiable events of a specific place and time, so much so that when the Carlylean voice in "Oxen of the Sun" refers to "this chaffering allincluding most farraginous chronicle" (14.1412), we hardly blink at the implied collocation of the encyclopedic artist and the recorder of historical events. In addition to being a fabulous artificer, Joyce became the compulsive historian of the Dublin of June 16, 1904, drawing his details from contemporary newspapers, maps, and city directories, and poring over histories of the capital. His passion went far beyond the naturalistic quest for verisimilitude, which is satisfied with a representative picture of social conditions. Joyce wanted to fill the pages of his book with real names and places, with things that had incontrovertibly happened, so that, however hostile some readers might be to his methods, no one could deny his monumental fidelity.

Although *Ulysses* is undeniably a novel including history, to adapt Ezra Pound's phrase for the epic reach of *The Cantos*, it is no mere simulacrum of 1904 Dublin. This supremely self-aware text also foregrounds the ways in which, as a text, it processes the past, and thus offers its own mediation of history as an instance of the always already textual nature of the past and our relation to it. Derek Attridge has noted that "Joyce's texts . . . seem to imply that *all* versions of history are made in language and are, by virtue of that fact, ideological constructions, weavings and re-weavings of old stories, fusions of stock character-types, blendings of different national languages, dialects, and registers."<sup>2</sup> Early in *Ulysses* Mr. Deasy's teleological, providentialist claims about time and causality provoke Stephen's retort that history is a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, an implicit acknowledgment that history hurts because the stories we tell or are told about it have a visceral impact on our lives. Deasy, a decrepit but indefatigable teller of historical tales, embodies those nineteenth-century conceptions of history and culture that weigh so heavily on a young artist desiring to forge the *un*created conscience of his race, to separate himself and his art from those "idols of the market place . . . the succession of the ages, the spirit of the age, the mission of the race" (CW 185). This string of Victorian clichés—slogans of the sort that make up Deasy's worldview—was Joyce's ironic characterization of history in a 1907 lecture (planned but never given) in

which he polemically opposed "poetry"—a rebellious, intuitional force—to received notions of progress and civilization.

A few years earlier, in notes for his unfinished novel *Stephen Hero*, Joyce had written:

The spirit of our age is not to be confounded with its works; these are novel and progressive, mechanical bases for life: but the spirit wherever it is able to assert itself in this medley of machines is romantic and preterist. Our vanguard of politicians put up the banners of anarchy and communism; our artists seek the simplest liberation of rhythms; our evangelists are pagan or neo-Christian, reactionaries.<sup>3</sup>

Beneath the obscure, youthfully assertive rhetoric is a startling proposition, one that runs counter to the prevailing view of the "spirit of the age" at the turn of the century. For in this passage Joyce evicts the time-spirit from its usual Victorian habitations—the progress of liberalism, the spread of empire, the growth of material benefits. He then relocates it in imaginative, iconoclastic aspects of culture: in socialist and anarchist politics and in the exertions of dedicated artists, those Symbolist priests of eternal imagination like Yeats's monk-aesthetes, Michael Robartes and Owen Aherne, who fascinate Stephen Daedalus with their "infrahuman or superhuman" morality and their determination to "inhabit a church apart . . . having chosen to fulfil the law of their being" (*SH* 178). Joyce believed that a "romantic and preterist" art—one both visionary and apocalyptic, like Blake's—was the true if unacknowledged locus of cultural values. Not only had such an art broken with the paradigms of progress; it might even appear perversely retrograde and reactionary, delighting in obsolete attitudes, lost causes, and visions of primitive equality. The ideal social state, Joyce wrote in his 1904 essay "A Portrait of the Artist," "would pension off old tyranny" and permit the artist to "give the word" to "those multitudes not as yet in the wombs of humanity but surely engenderable there" (*P* 265).

"Every age," declares Stephen, "must look for its sanction to its poets and philosophers. . . . The age, though it bury itself fathoms deep in formulas and machinery, has need of these realities which alone give and sustain life" (*SH* 80). The "realities" with which the artist is privileged to commune are crucial to the health of society, yet the act of aesthetic creation also marks the artist as a rebel against social norms—a Romantic predicament symbolized by Shelley's Prometheus and tragically realized in the life of Oscar Wilde. As Joyce implied in his remarks about the spirit of the age, the process of achieving the "simplest liberation of rhythms" also liberated the artist, for better or worse, from the idols of the marketplace; the act of expressing the self freely and fully in supple, periodic prose was analogous to more active, political forms of resistance, such as the socialism and anarchism with which the young Joyce implicitly linked the artist's work. This belief that genuine creativity drives out the false gods, that honest, expressive fictions defy and subvert dominant discourses, is the basis of Joyce's historiographic art.

Even as a young man Joyce saw himself as part of an iconoclastic vanguard opposed to popular ideas of history, progress, and patriotism. Without inconsistency he could also see this vanguard as a righteous remnant keeping faith with earlier traditions of moral and aesthetic purpose, in contrast to his fellow university students who "admired Gladstone, physical science and the tragedies of Shakespeare . . . believed in the adjustment of Catholic teaching to everyday needs [and] displayed a nervous and (wherever there was question of authority) a very English liberalism" ("A Portrait of the Artist," P259). The only "progress" that held any real value for him was the kind he found in the subversive "spirit of Ibsen," a spirit resistant to Deasy-like notions of history as manifestation of God. "Let the world solve itself in whatsoever fashion it pleased," Stephen affirms in his defense of the Norwegian dramatist, "let its putative Maker justify Himself by whatsoever processes seemed good to Him, one could scarcely advance the dignity of the human attitude a step beyond this answer [Ibsen's art]" (SH41). Already, if incipiently, Joyce was imagining the artist as a favored historiographer, even though his sense of the past tended at this stage to be more antihistorical and apocalyptic, more Nietzschean and Blakean, than realistic and socially committed in the manner of *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*.

In recent years the interdependence of history and language has become of vital concern to scholars of literature, just as the inseparability of the factual and fictional dimensions of historical discourse is increasingly probed by historians. More and more as disciplines converge and overlap in the academy, critics are turning to the category of history, variously and polemically defined, in order to redescribe aesthetic texts and contexts. Adherents of the New Historicism, cultural poetics, popular culture studies, materialist feminism, metahistorical theory, to name just a few formulations, have worked to rescue literature from deconstructive strategies of reading, which, for many scholars, have come to seem abstract and self-indulgent, totalizing in their epistemological claims, but curiously blind to the ways literary texts process nonliterary discourses and institutions and are in turn shaped by those forces.

Joyce criticism has long recognized the thematic importance of history in *Ulysses* and regularly invokes Stephen Dedalus's now famous remark about the nightmare of history as evidence of the problematic status of historical experience in Joyce's fiction. Yet there have been relatively few sustained efforts, and no book-length attempt, to examine the problem of history in *Ulysses*, and to situate that problem within the philosophical and cultural contexts that shaped Joyce's ideas and generated the discourses of history present in his text.<sup>4</sup> I argue that Stephen's "nightmare" and the text of *Ulysses* itself are distinct but related responses to what Nietzsche called "the malady of history," the cultural obsession with the past and with the explanatory power of historiography, which, Nietzsche believed, was destroying intellectual and moral health in the nineteenth century. For Stephen, as for Joyce, this malady takes many forms, from Hegelian notions of history as realization of Spirit to the sacrificial, teleological master narratives promoted by

Irish nationalism. In each case a totalized interpretation of the past threatens to overwhelm human freedom in the present moment, in particular the creative freedom of the artist. The proudest boasts of Victorian and Edwardian culture, like the defiant revisionary claims of Irish patriots, confront the artist as ideologies that inhibit and oppress. To invoke a Blakean dualism entirely congruent with the young Joyce's antihistorical sense (Blake is never far from Stephen's thoughts about history in *Ulysses*): the aspect of culture that bourgeois society fervently worships as the Prolific, the source of progress and delight, is for the artist the Devourer, the enemy of vision and energy.

Joyce's whole career might be viewed as a crusade against the historical Devourer. Lionel Trilling wrote that *Finnegans Wake* is the realization of an "anti-Hegelian" text, that "its transcendent genial silliness is a spoof on those figments of the solemn nineteenth-century imagination—History, and World Historical Figures, and that wonderful Will of theirs which, Hegel tells us, keeps the world in its right course toward the developing epiphany of *Geist*."<sup>5</sup> *Ulysses*, too, combats these historical orthodoxies, and does so formally, by means of its textual praxis, as well as thematically, on the levels of plot and characterization. In this sense "story" and "history" are inseparable in *Ulysses*, the nightmares with which Stephen struggles are engaged by the text itself on formal and stylistic planes. In the "Aeolus" episode we see Stephen symbolically resisting certain master narratives of Irish history in his "Parable of the Plums," while *Ulysses* as a whole takes up his cause in its own strategies of irony and subversion. In this respect it could be argued that the mature Joyce of *Ulysses* (or the text's "Arranger")<sup>6</sup> comes to the aid of Stephen—a rescue imaged perhaps in Leopold Bloom's charity toward the inebriated young artist who at the end of "Circe" has swung his Wagnerian ashplant at the nightmare of history and received, as he predicted in "Nestor," a "back kick" from it (2.379), this time in the form of an English soldier's fist. The text of *Ulysses*—with Bloom as its naturalistic "double," its etiological myth—fights the battles Stephen hasn't yet the aesthetic muscle to win.

Thus, while Stephen's personal nightmare serves as the novel's chief thematic exposition of the problem of history, other responses to that problem emerge at the level of the work's restless, ceaselessly reinvented language. Stephen's "romantic and preterist" desire to burst through the stifling discourses of history is realized, in forms matured and toughened by the tests of reality, in the ironic counterdiscourses of *Ulysses*, their winking assaults on Cyclopean reductions of the past to "a tale like any other too often heard" (2.46–47). Richard Terdiman, in his study of forms of discursive subversion in nineteenth-century France, has defined counterdiscourse in a way that is useful for discussing symbolic resistance in *Ulysses*. He says that in France in the early part of the nineteenth century "counterdiscourse tended to take the form of direct *thematic* contestation," but later, as the dominant discourse became constitutive of all discourses, "more subtly subversive *formal and functional* strategies" began to operate.<sup>7</sup>



*Ulysses* traces an intriguingly similar pattern. In the early part of the book Stephen contests historical nightmares in thematic, quasi-philosophical terms, as in his laconic ripostes to Mr. Deasy in "Nestor," but as the novel establishes its own discursive history and Joyce's linguistic experiments grow bolder and more irreverent, Stephen's battle is taken up by the text itself, by what Terdiman calls formal and functional strategies. One example is the witty, counterteleological model of history offered in "Oxen of the Sun," an episode that, as I show in chapter 6, is the historiographic twin of "Nestor." My study rehabilitates Stephen as the novel's hero by showing that the persistent historiographic concerns of *Ulysses* are ultimately *his* concerns, that his intellectual attitudes, though seemingly remote from the styles of the later episodes, continue to shape the text's contestatory stance toward history long after he has receded as a character.

Joyce's writings—in particular *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*—are exemplary of, though unique within, the larger phenomenon of modernist historiography, which might be defined as the attempt to extend practices of aesthetic innovation to the representation of the past. The oxymoron implicit in "modernist historiography" hints at both the revisionary energy of this project and its faith in a vital point of contact between the present and the past, the scene of writing and the immense panorama of history. For Ezra Pound the imperative to "make it new" in works of art went hand in hand with a desire to reimagine the past or, as he put it in 1919, to "build up our concept of wrong, of right, of history."<sup>8</sup> Pound's passion for reading history against the official grain, which led him to poetic techniques such as the "ideogrammic method" and the "luminous detail," was strident and polemical where Joyce's was silent and cunning, and he dedicated himself and his art to very different ideological purposes. But *The Cantos* and *Ulysses* have in common a thoroughgoing skepticism about traditional representations of the past and a fascination with the ways in which the formal resources of art may be marshaled to challenge those representations. Both writers searched the historical record and the traditions of their art for traces of a usable past.

T. S. Eliot's Gerontion, the little old man who keeps to his lodging house and is read to by a boy, is as much a personification of the decrepit nineteenth-century historical sense as Joyce's Mr. Deasy. Gerontion's enfeeblement has rendered him impotent before the seductions of historiography, even though it has not freed him from the desire to penetrate the meanings that history occults. In his bewilderment he finds every attempt to account for the past menacing and weirdly lubricious:

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving.<sup>9</sup>

Written not long after the publication of Joyce's "Nestor" episode, "Gerontion" offers its own version of the nightmare of history.<sup>10</sup> Eliot's poems and essays, both before and after "Gerontion," represent a sustained effort to diagnose the problem of history and to evolve a "historical sense" with which to treat that problem. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which he published in the same year he wrote "Gerontion" (1919), Eliot described the historical sense as "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence . . . a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together."<sup>11</sup>

Louis, the "poet of history" in Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* (1931), nurses an ambition remarkably similar to Eliot's: "[I]f I now shut my eyes, if I fail to realise the meeting-place of past and present . . . human history is defrauded of a moment's vision."<sup>12</sup> The importance of personal vision in making the past vital and meaningful is a neo-Romantic assumption shared by many modernists. "It is better," asserted H.D. in an essay on the Elizabethan poets, "to follow one's own clues and have of each of these poets, a living and personal memory, rather than grow weary and confused with disputable facts about them."<sup>13</sup> When in the "Aeolus" episode of *Ulysses* Stephen Dedalus calls his "Parable of the Plums" a "vision," he acknowledges precisely this special relation between the writing subject and the historical object. The epiphanic moment in modernist historiography, the moment of vision, is the peculiar reward of a hermeneutics of intimacy: a revisionary art requires a visionary artist.

Drawing on recent theorists such as Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, and Michel Foucault, as well as on historians and philosophers of history whose ideas formed part of Joyce's intellectual culture, I offer metahistorical readings of *Ulysses* which show how dominant notions of history are both figured and resisted in the Joycean text. By placing Joyce's project in the context of European intellectual history—primarily nineteenth-century historical and aesthetic theory—and by exploring his modernist response to that context, I approach *Ulysses* in a way that complements yet differs markedly from such recent studies of Joyce and popular culture, advertising, and dialogized discourse as Cheryl Herr's *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture* (1986), Jennifer Wicke's *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, and Social Reading* (1988), R. B. Kershner's *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (1989), and Stephen Watt's *Joyce, O'Casey, and the Irish Popular Theater* (1991).

These important books, focused as they are on the popular discourses that shaped Joyce's Dublin and his fictional representations of it, tend to emphasize those aspects of his texts that are dominated by the world of Leopold Bloom, the bourgeois world of the press, the pulpit, and the popular stage, to mention the three cultural media discussed brilliantly by Herr.<sup>14</sup> In stressing the intellectual, "high culture" sources of Joyce's historiographic art, I hope to restore the balance by foregrounding the mind of Stephen Dedalus, who, after all, is the character consciously suffering from the night-

mare of history. In this sense my book is devoted to Stephen and his struggle to awake from that nightmare; it is a book about a restless, unhappy son, an overburdened Telemachus, a young artist seeking to flee what Gerontion calls the “decayed house” of his personal and cultural past, but realizing that he must reenter history through the window or the back door before he can achieve anything of value. Without ignoring popular conceptions of history—indeed, popular and learned discourses of history coincided in remarkable ways in the Dublin culture of this period—I examine a variety of intellectual contexts for the Dedalian nightmare and thus offer a sustained discussion of historiographic backgrounds for *Ulysses* and an analysis of the textual activity those contexts elicit.

I am especially interested in the kinds of meaning that emerge when relevant concepts of history are used to focus and catalyze close readings of the Joycean text. In seeking to engage the language of history in the text, I adopt an approach that is both formalist and at the same time attentive to a range of historically situated contexts, including those provided by ideas of history and the history of ideas. The interpretive strategy I am describing, one that moves between philosophical thematics and textual energetics, mirrors what I have pointed to as the two historiographic phases of *Ulysses* itself. Moreover, it is an approach that has never been fully exploited in historiographic (as distinct from historical) criticism of *Ulysses*. One reason may be the fascination that the philosophy of Giambattista Vico held for Joyce scholars in previous decades. Vico’s cyclical theory of history and his doctrine of recurrent human “institutions” provided important insights into Joyce’s works, particularly *Finnegans Wake* (where the Vichian cycles act as a structural “trellis,” as Joyce himself noted),<sup>15</sup> but at the same time they led to something of a scorched-earth campaign of historiographic criticism, a series of virtuoso readings—in many cases overreadings—that seemed to exhaust the topic of Joyce and history.<sup>16</sup> By the early 1980s Margaret Church, one of the foremost Vichian interpreters of Joyce, could announce wryly that “studies on the Viconian ages . . . in the Joycean canon are by and large definitive, and have earned a rest.”<sup>17</sup>

The problem lay not so much with Vico as with arbitrary and overschematized applications of his ideas to Joyce’s obligingly polysemous texts. Indeed, it was virtually impossible *not* to find Vico’s principal themes—gods, heroes, men, religion, marriage, burial—in such complex texts, and critics rarely took care, in the early Vichian gold rush, to establish conceptual frameworks that would have kept their readings responsible and credible. What frequently resulted was a “heads I win, tails you lose” form of exegesis, to borrow a term from Kenneth Burke,<sup>18</sup> which turned metahistorical analysis into a tour de force of critical ingenuity and led, I believe, to a sense of the relativism and futility of such analysis. For many years, and with only a few exceptions, historiographic readings of Joyce tended to be Vichian readings of Joyce, and it has been only in the last decade or so that this hegemony has given way, rather suddenly, to the diverse approaches I have noted. Happily, the study of Vico and Joyce has also been revitalized by this

development; aspects of Vico's philosophy that had been neglected or undervalued by Joyceans—his theories of language, for example—have attracted new interest, as I hope my own study demonstrates, particularly in chapter 5, where I discuss Vico's defense of rhetoric in connection with "Aeolus."<sup>19</sup>

From the time of Stuart Gilbert's and Frank Budgen's pioneering studies of *Ulysses*, scholars have found congenial the episode-by-episode approach to the novel. But the more I pursued Stephen Dedalus down history's cunning passages and contrived corridors, the more I found myself in need of an alternative structure. Accordingly, I offer here a comprehensive reading of *Ulysses* while highlighting certain of the novel's episodes as particularly representative of Joyce's historiographic project and relevant to historical and theoretical issues confronting scholars today. Chapter 1 functions as a contextual prologue, isolating Joyce's sojourn in Rome as a resonant text that reveals his ambivalent, sometimes hostile thinking about history at a time when he was poised irresolutely between the *Dubliners* stories he had recently completed and the more complex fictions he would begin to create with "The Dead." His numerous detailed letters to his brother Stanislaus show that he was reading and thinking about history with an astonishing range and intensity. In these letters he describes his encounter with Roman history as a ghastly, nightmarish experience, as the viewing of a grandmother's corpse—an image he would disinter a decade later for inclusion in *Ulysses*. Three historical thinkers with whose ideas Joyce was familiar at this time offer perspectives on his developing historiographic art: Friedrich Nietzsche, particularly in *The Use and Abuse of History*; W. E. H. Lecky, the Anglo-Irish author of the *History of European Morals*; and Guglielmo Ferrero, the Italian sociologist and historian whose works, notably *Grandezza e decadenza di Roma*, Joyce read while in Rome.

Chapter 2 provides another context—this time a textual one—for Stephen's nightmare of history, revealing the profound influence of Romantic historiography and aesthetics on both Joyce and his fictional alter ego. Examining Stephen's overdetermined metaphors for historical experience in *A Portrait*—his use of both spectral and textile-textual figures—I situate his thinking in relation to Shelley, Carlyle, Michelet, and others in the Romantic, idealist tradition of historical thought, an inheritance which has helped to bring Stephen to his nightmarish impasse and which, paradoxically, may offer a way out. Stephen's complex historical tropes participate in what Linda Orr has called the "double discourse of Romantic history." As she has shown, works by Michelet and others offer an apparently seamless, rational "story" about history—in this case the French Revolution—punctuated by sudden, fantastic eruptions, elements that create, in effect, a "text and untext."<sup>20</sup>

In chapter 3 I examine the many ways in which *Ulysses* interrogates teleological, "Hegelian" concepts and their near kin, monocausality (historical origin as full presence), as these operate in fictional and historical narrative. Drawing on the work of Barthes and Derrida, I demonstrate how this

history-story nexus is reflected in Joyce's dismantling of the traditional novel's dependence on bourgeois marriage as the telos or goal of narrative development—the marriage in this case being the comically ironic one of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, the “keyless couple” of the final episodes of *Ulysses*. This chapter offers an overview of the language of Joyce's novel as it interacts creatively and subversively with received ideas of history (Irish as well as English and Continental, revolutionary as well as imperialistic), and goes on to trace the emergence in *Ulysses* of popular forms of historiography (as in the progressively carnivalized figure of Charles Stewart Parnell). These popular modes generate comic, antiheroic treatments of the past which increasingly foreground Bloom's mind and world even as they push Stephen's cerebral nightmare to the novel's margins. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of Molly Bloom's “timeless” monologue in “Penelope,” an episode that intimates a linguistic ground from which historical conceptions emerge and to which they return in a cycle of decay and rebirth.

In chapter 4 I discuss in detail the second and third episodes of *Ulysses*, which establish Joyce's basic historiographic rhythm: thematic revelation of the nightmare of history, followed by textual resistance to it. Noting similarities between “Nestor” and other works obsessed by history's nightmare—*Middlemarch* and *Hedda Gabler*, for example—I interpret the encounter between Stephen and Mr. Deasy as an allegorical struggle between art and history for cultural supremacy. I go on to explore intertextual links with various authors—Jules Laforgue, Walter Pater, Yeats, Ferrero, and Vico—which serve to situate Stephen (and *Ulysses*) within a tradition of ironic, counterhistorical thought. “Proteus,” the episode that follows “Nestor,” proposes an alternative set of rhythms—natural, cyclical, and feminine—to the closed, teleological patterns that bind “Nestor” so straitly. Alone on Sandymount Strand, Stephen is reminded that the protean forms of language underlie all historical ideologies; his Symbolist relationship to words is able to rewrite Deasy's “one great goal” in the idiom of multiple possibilities, prefiguring the more subversive linguistic strategies of later episodes.

Chapter 5 pursues the relationship between language and historical thought in the theme of rhetoric in “Aeolus,” the seventh episode of *Ulysses*. Here I argue that Joyce's understanding of history and rhetoric coincides with that of theorists from Vico to LaCapra, who insist that historiography is inseparable from the persuasive, performative aspects of language. In this context Harold Bloom's model of history as a field of competing voices provides a particularly apt description of the rhetorical competition in “Aeolus.” Far from merely offering a picture of windy Irish futility, “Aeolus” establishes rhetoric as an element in the deep structure of historical discourse, in this case Irish nationalist oratory and Stephen's counterdiscursive “Parable of the Plums.” The Parable represents Stephen's decisive step away from thematic protest against received ideas of history and toward symbolic—formal and functional—resistance to those ideas.

The sixth and final chapter argues that "Oxen" and "Circe" are a repetition, with a vast ironic and stylistic difference, of "Nestor" and "Proteus." Although Stephen's presence as a character is muted by the hubbub of styles that takes control of the second half of *Ulysses*, his distinctive attitudes toward history survive in the textual praxis of the later episodes. Offering an organicist-developmental model of historical process in the form of a progression of English literary styles, "Oxen" exuberantly demolishes this model, whose origins can be traced to the politicized language of *literary* history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly the literary anthologies of this period, which Joyce is known to have consulted while writing the episode. In an echo of the relationship of "Proteus" to "Nestor," "Circe" responds to the teleological structure of "Oxen" by dramatizing the explosive freedom of fantasy and desire in the chaotic rhythms of Dublin's Nighttown. At the same time, "Circe" exposes the constructed, coded nature of libidinal life as figured by the wild costumes and cross-dressing in the episode.

Chapter 6 thus returns, again with a difference, to the textile-textual tropes explored in chapter 2. Similarly, the ghost metaphor that haunted Joyce's sense of the past as early as 1906 makes a climactic and horrific return in "Circe" when the corpse of Stephen's mother, a ghastly reminder of the culture he has rejected, rises through the floor of Bella Cohen's bordello and confronts the antihistorical artist. My book concludes with a discussion of the final episodes of *Ulysses*, in which what Joyce called the "spectral" language of myth and symbol—ghosts again, though this time more friendly ones—comes to dominate and finally to displace the nightmare of Stephen Dedalus. Yet the language of myth is no more immune from textual scrutiny than any other historical ideology. There is ultimately no escape—for Stephen or for Joyce, antihistorical Icarus or pragmatic Daedalus—from the nightmare, only the ceaseless effort to awake from history's oppressive texts through the weaving and reweaving of alternative ones.

## Notes

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### *Introduction*

1. Quoted in Richard M. Kain, *Dublin in the Age of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 93.

2. Derek Attridge, "Joyce, Jameson, and the Text of History," in "Scribble" 1: *genèse des textes* (James Joyce 1: la revue des lettres modernes), ed. Claude Jacquet (Paris: Minard, 1988), p. 186.

3. *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,"* ed. Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 69. Scholes and Kain print this passage with Joyce's deletions, which for the sake of clarity I have omitted.

4. An issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* (28 [Summer 1991]) contained the proceedings of the Joyce and History Conference held at Yale University in October 1990. So far as I know, this was the first conference devoted entirely to historicizing Joyce and to examining what we mean by "history" when we invoke it in interpreting his texts. The fifteen essays in this issue provide something of an overview of recent work in this area of Joyce studies. See also, in the same issue, Robert Spoo, "A Bibliography of Criticism on Joyce and History" (903-33), for an annotated survey of earlier work on this topic.

5. Lionel Trilling, "James Joyce in His Letters," in *The Last Decade: Essays and Reviews, 1965-75*, ed. Diana Trilling (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 33.

6. The "Arranger," a sort of emanation of Joyce himself deduced by critics from the ingenious textual mechanics of *Ulysses*, was first proposed by David Hayman in *"Ulysses": The Mechanics of Meaning* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970) and later taken up by a number of critics, notably Hugh Kenner.

7. Richard Terdman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Prac-*

*tice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 63.

8. Ezra Pound, "Pastiche: The Regional," *New Age* 25 (August 21, 1919): 284.

9. T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion" (ll. 35-40), in *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), p. 30.

10. Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's "Cantos"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), argues that Joyce's treatment of history in "Nestor" influenced "Gerontion" (pp. 205-24), but does not suggest what seems to me a rich possibility, that Eliot's little old man might derive in part from Joyce's gerontic headmaster, Mr. Deasy.

11. *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 38.

12. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), p. 66. The phrase "poet of history" as an epithet for Louis appears in Maria DiBattista, *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 177.

13. H.D. [Hilda Doolittle], *By Avon River* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 43.

14. Another book that should be ranked with these studies of popular culture is Margot Norris, *Joyce's Web: The Social Unraveling of Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992). Norris is concerned to return Joyce's texts, in particular his representations of the artist, to their origins in "social production," and to trace a persistent subverting of the notion of artistic autonomy. In contrast to much recent Joyce criticism, Norris's thesis leads to a sustained focus on Stephen Dedalus and the figure of the artist in Joyce's works.

15. "I don't take Vico's speculations literally; I use his cycles as a trellis." Quoted in Mary and Padraic Colum, *Our Friend James Joyce* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 123.

16. Studies of Vico and *Ulysses* include Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's "Ulysses": A Study* (1930; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1955), esp. pp. 39-41, 110; A. M. Klein, "A Shout in the Street": An Analysis of the Second Chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*, *New Directions*, no. 13. (1951): 327-45; Matthew Hodgart, "A Viconian Sentence in *Ulysses*," *Orbis Litterarum* 19 (1964): 201-4; and two unpublished Ph.D. dissertations: Ellsworth Mason, "James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Vico's Cycles" (Yale University, 1948); and Patrick T. White, "James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Vico's 'Principles of Humanity'" (University of Michigan, 1963).

17. Margaret Church, "Time as an Organizing Principle in the Fiction of James Joyce," in *Work in Progress: Joyce Centenary Essays*, ed. Richard F. Peterson, Alan M. Cohn, and Edmund L. Epstein (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), pp. 79-80. For an annotated list of essays by Church and others on Joyce and Vico, see Spoo, "A Bibliography of Criticism on Joyce and History": 925-33.

18. "A device whereby, if things turn out one way, your system accounts for them—and if they turn out the opposite way, your system also accounts for them." Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (1937), 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 260.

19. Michael Seidel, *Epic Geography: James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), took a fresh and stimulating approach, stressing not cyclical history but Vico's ideas about language and "poetic geography"



(pp. 41–50). Even more important for new perspectives on Joyce and Vico has been John Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark: "Finnegans Wake"* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). See also the essays in *Vico and Joyce*, ed. Donald Phillip Verene (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

20. Linda Orr, *Headless History: Nineteenth-Century French Historiography of the Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 11.