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James Joyce and the (Post)Modern Irish Conscience

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This study explores the body of literature surrounding the Easter Rising of 1916 to account for that revolution’s influence upon the development of Irish fiction. Using *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as my primary examples, I argue that James Joyce’s literary innovations emerged partially in response to the ideology expressed by prominent nationalists. Over the past thirty years, postcolonial studies of Joyce’s fiction have revealed the extent to which the author’s aesthetic innovations occurred in dialogue with, and in opposition to, both British Imperialism and Irish Nationalism. While such work has proven profitable, scholars have yet to sufficiently account for Joyce’s response to the Easter Rising, one of the defining moments of modern Irish history. This study endeavors to find that response by tracing the dialectic between the ideology of the Rising and Joyce’s emergent postmodern aesthetic.

Through rhetorical analysis of poetry, essays, speeches, and letters produced by the Rising’s most prominent leaders, and texts written by other Irish nationalists, I argue that the Military Council of 1916 established the grounds for their rebellion in reference to a “grand narrative” of Irish national destiny, fashioned around the *telos* of the Irish Republic. Drawing from numerous sources, including historical precedent, modern and ancient Irish literature, Marxism, and the *mythoi* of Celtic and Judeo-Christian traditions, the leaders forged an ideology
that stressed both the moral authority of their cause and the inevitability of its completion.

Joyce’s response to the ideology and its structure is irony, employing metafictional and satirical techniques that destabilize both the text and the ideology the text rejects.

Drawing from the major texts produced by the Rising’s leaders and other prominent nationalists, I analyze the primary narrative elements of the ideology through examination of three interrelated thematic categories: the essential distinctness of the Irish people, the authority of history and tradition, and the transcendence of patriotic self-sacrifice. The remainder of the study proceeds sequentially through these thematic headings, exploring each in reference to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Tracing the appearance of each theme in Joyce’s final major works, I contend that Joyce interrogates the ideology through use of experimental literary techniques, most notably that of metalepsis. The chapters are the following: Introduction: Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week; Chapter One: “Blotty Words” and “Bloody Wars”; Chapter Two: The Sassenach Wants His Morning Rashers; Chapter Three: History as Her is Harped; Chapter Four: Ruling Passion Strong in Death; Conclusion: Our National Epic.
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For Lily
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Introduction:

Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week?

In 1918, when asked to contribute an article about the political situation in Ireland to a French publication, Joyce declined, claiming that, “the problem of my race is so complicated that one needs to make use of all the means of elastic art to delineate it—without solving it. I am restricted to making a pronouncement on it by the scenes and characters of my poor art” (Letters I 118). Joyce’s response may have seemed disingenuous at the time, given the numerous articles he had already written about Irish politics in earlier years,¹ but as James Fairhall notes, “Joyce was remarkably silent on the subject of Irish as well as European politics while he was composing Ulysses” (164). This silence seemingly carried over to his art itself; anyone expecting that Joyce’s literary output would explicitly address the troubles in Ireland was sure to be disappointed. As Louis Gillet remembered after Joyce’s death,

During his life—that just ended in one of the most tormented ages of history and after two wars—he never made an allusion to all that tears us apart, never said a word on the problems which throw races, peoples, classes, continents against each other. While the battle was raging at its full in 1916, he chose an ordinary date of twenty-four hours, taken at random from the most everyday pattern of a secondary town—June 16, 1904—a day that is not set apart for any famous crime

gossip-item, event or discovery, but only for an ordinary funeral and birth, and he made it the subject of his global restitution, his miraculous chronicle (175-76).

While Gillet finds Joyce’s apparent silence on the matters of revolution and warfare to the author’s credit, this silence is at odds with the zeitgeist of Irish writing in the years following the outbreak of rebellion in April of 1916. Despite its rather inauspicious beginnings, the Easter Rising, the first major Irish rebellion of the Twentieth century, permanently changed the nature of Irish politics. While few could have predicted this on that Easter Monday, the Rising’s aftermath—marked by widespread arrests, the imposition of martial law, and the executions of sixteen men—captured the public imagination and reinvigorated a violent nationalism which had long laid dormant. Such a momentous occasion was difficult, even impossible to ignore. A popular ballad which emerged shortly after the military maneuvers of that Easter Monday challenged the Irish populace:

Who fears to speak of Easter Week?

Who dares its fate deplore?

The red-gold flame of Erin’s name

Confronts the world once more! (Skinneder 241-42).¹

This ballad is a variation on John Kells Ingram’s “The Memory of the Dead,” a poem

¹ This version comes from Margaret Skinneder’s Doing My Bit for Ireland. Skinneder, a former member of the Irish National Volunteers and a veteran of the Easter Rising, attributes the song’s composition to an anonymous nun. Other versions of “Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week” exist; see Brendan Behan’s The Hostage for alternate lyrics.
written in 1843 about the 1798 Rising, later set to music as “Who Fears to Speak of ’98” (and quoted in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*). Borrowing the melody from this earlier version, the new song follows the typical Republican method of interpreting current events through the prism of historical precedent. The ballad forges an implicit connection between 1798 and 1916, subsuming the latest insurrection into the wider tradition of Ireland’s armed resistance to British rule. The Easter Rising, like the 1798 Rising before it, demands comment; avoiding this demand, the lyrics claim, is a cowardly shirking of one’s duty. The Rising prompted diverse opinions among Ireland’s intellectual and literary elite, and most recognized the event as one which necessitated some manner of written response. Consequently, the weeks, months, and years following the insurrection yielded a body of Rising-based literature produced by Ireland’s most prominent writers, including Yeats, O’Casey, Shaw, Colum, and Stephens, all of whom apparently felt, by virtue of their literary vocation, obliged to respond to what happened that Easter Week. As David Krause wrote of O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars*, “if the patriots were now the guardians of the national honor, the [writer] had to be the guardian of the national honesty” (126). Most Irish writers, then, believed they could not be silent when confronted by the “red-gold flame of Erin’s name,” since the obligations of the literary profession necessitated some reply. Yet Joyce, alone among Ireland’s literary elite, remained silent, leaving explicit

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2 The song is referenced in the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*, in a passage I will consider in more detail in Chapter Three. Joyce also alludes to the song and its author in Book I, Chapter IV of the *Wake* with the phrase “from Sean Kelly’s anagram a blush at the name” (93.29; McHugh 93).

3 A technique crucial to this study and one we will explore in greater detail in Chapter Three.

4 Fictionalized accounts of the Rising can also be found in later fiction, including Frank O’Connor’s *The Big Fellow* (1937), Roddy Doyle’s *A Star Called Henry* (1999), James O’Neil’s *At Swim Two Boys* (2001), Sebastian Barry’s *A Long, Long Way* (2005).
mention of the Rising to others.

This silence was, both at the time and in early critical studies of Joyce’s work, widely interpreted as indifference. W.B. Yeats, writing on Joyce’s behalf to the Royal Literary Fund, claimed that the novelist “had no interest in politics” (Letters II 391). While other writers, including Yeats himself, were busy chronicling the events of the Rising, whether in panegyrics or invectives, Yeats imagined Joyce “absorbed in some piece of work until the evil hour is passed” (Letters II 391). To some degree, Yeats was correct: Joyce was, at the time of the Rising, absorbed in the composition of Ulysses, a novel set nearly twelve years before the outbreak of rebellion, which, at least on the surface, betrayed little interest in the current political strife facing Ireland. One might reasonably have assumed Joyce indifferent to politics even before the Easter Rising occurred. Setting his novel in 1904 meant that Joyce eschewed direct response to the Home Rule Crisis and the First World War, those monumental divisions affecting Ireland and Europe at the time Joyce began his chronicle of a single day. The changing political landscape, the outbreak of war on the continent and in Dublin, seemingly did little to change Joyce’s literary endeavors. Though Joyce wrote Ulysses during some of the most turbulent years in both Irish and European history, he never felt compelled to change the scope of his novel to explicitly address current events.

Given this apparent reticence, the notions put forward by Gillet and Yeats gained currency in early studies of Joyce, giving rise to what M. Keith Booker calls “the virtual unanimity of Joyce critics for decades that Joyce was an aestheticist writer with no interest in politics or history whatsoever” (108). This may be traceable not only to Joyce’s refusal to write
political essays during these most turbulent years, but also to the predominant critical approach at work in the first few decades of Joyce studies. As Jeffrey Segal notes, the “Joyce industry consists almost entirely of exegetical analyses of the sort pioneered by the New Critics” (136). While the most prominent New Critics had little apparent interest in Joyce’s work, the influence of New Criticism guided early responses to *Ulysses* to such an extent that “the focus of critical debate over the Joyce text shifted from its social and political effects to its complex structure and style,” so the author’s work “became less of a cultural threat and more of a technical problem” (Segall 136). Given New Criticism’s comparative indifference to political and social matters, the primary focus of early Joyce criticism became the author’s technical virtuosity, rather than the political nuances of his work. The central problem with such approaches, as later scholars would recognize, is that by sublimating political concerns to formal ones, critics risked distorting Joyce’s work by ignoring the very clear political content found in his fiction. Joyce may have written his final political article, “The Shade of Parnell,” in 1912, but the writer’s engagement with political matters remained evident in his subsequent work. Like *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are, if not necessarily political works, works concerned with political questions. These political questions have, after years of critical indifference, become one of the dominant subjects of Joyce criticism produced in the past thirty years, as a generation of scholars have emphasized Joyce’s political engagement. In place of critical directions which privileged aesthetic innovation over historical context, more recent trends have privileged political, social, and economic phenomena. Once Declan Kiberd, Seamus Deane, and others had brought the emerging theories of postcolonialism to bear upon Irish literature, a compelling approach emerged, one which explored the power dynamics at play in
Joyce’s explorations of the Irish condition. Although the question of 1916 remained largely in the background, the shift towards postcolonialism in Joyce studies changed the field. No more could the question of politics be brushed aside.

While postcolonial studies of Joyce’s work—and Irish literature in general—met early resistance from important postcolonial theorists, for whom Irish literature did not merit such consideration,⁵ political readings of Joyce have become one of the field’s most important critical directions. The first such major study was Dominic Manganiello’s *Joyce’s Politics*, a work which attempts to prove that Joyce had a strong interest in political matters. Manganiello finds compelling evidence of this interest through an inventory of Joyce’s personal library, noting the author’s considerable collection of political works. Much of Manganiello’s study focuses upon ideas espoused by continental theorists, charting Joyce’s evident engagement with radical ideologies through a survey of the numerous socialist and anarchist works Joyce owned. Manganiello’s work has proven valuable, as it reveals that Joyce was politically engaged, even if he remained somewhat aloof from individual movements, parties, or causes, and that his engagement is evident in his work. However, when it comes to specifically Irish matters, Manganiello’s study is somewhat lacking, particularly when he broaches the subject of the Easter Rising. Arguing that Joyce’s distaste for violence was as strong as his distaste for imperialism, Manganiello claims that “Joyce opposed [the Rising] because it was violent,” and that “he must have thought it absurd,” though such assertions, however plausible, are more speculation than

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⁵ As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin note in *The Empire Writes Back*, the “subsequent complicity” of the Irish (and the Scottish and Welsh) “in the British imperial enterprise makes it difficult for colonized peoples outside Britain to accept their identity as post-colonial” (31-32).
Such speculation, however, fits well with the common assumptions made by Joyce’s biographers when the subject of the Easter Rising is broached. While Joyce was undoubtedly aware of the Rising, particularly since he was personally acquainted with two of its most prominent casualties—Padraic Pearse and Francis Sheehy Skeffington—his biographers have found little evidence that he harbored strong feelings about the event. The insurrection in Dublin receives no direct mention in Joyce’s letters, nor does the subject seem to have prompted strong opinions in Joyce’s private conversations on the continent. Jacques Mercanton, remembering Joyce after the author’s death, found that “in his accounts of Ireland, [Joyce] maintained his objective point of view” (223). Regarding revolution, Joyce apparently felt that fault lay on both sides: “The English were very violent in their suppression of the uprising, but the Irish were no less so in their rebellion” (Mercanton 223). Relying upon Mercanton’s memories should strike us as a risky venture, but this muted response has been purportedly confirmed by later biographers. Richard Ellmann devotes a mere paragraph to the Easter Rising in his landmark *James Joyce*:

Joyce followed the events with pity; although he evaluated the Rising as useless, he felt also out of things. His attitude towards Ireland became even more complex, so that he told friends, when the British had to give up their plans to conscript troops in Ireland, ‘*Erin go bragh!*’ and predicted that some day he and Giorgio would go back to wear the

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6 The nearest exception is a sympathy letter Joyce wrote to Mary Kettle, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington’s sister, in September of 1916 after the death of her son in combat during the Great War. Joyce indirectly acknowledges Sheehy-Skeffington’s death at the letter’s conclusion: “I am grieved to learn that so many misfortunes have fallen on your family in these evil days” (96).
shamrock in an independent Ireland; but when this temporary fervor waned, he replied to someone who asked if he did not look forward to the emergence of an independent country, ‘So that I might declare myself its first enemy?’ Would he not die for Ireland? ‘I say,’ he said, ‘let Ireland die for me’ (411-12).

The portrait Ellmann paints of Joyce “balanced between bitterness and nostalgia,” personally affected by the Rising’s casualty list, and ultimately dismissive of the Rising as a fruitless endeavor, is a compelling one (412). However, a closer examination of the passage raises some rather serious concerns. Ellmann provides no source for any of his assertions made in the first sentence of the above. That Joyce simply regarded the Rising as pitiable and “useless” may well be true, but Ellmann offers no evidence for the claim. As Patrick McGee notes, this characterization “would appear to be speculation rather than Joyce’s consistent opinion,” particularly given that sentiment’s inconsistency with the more patriotic statements Ellmann claims Joyce made (198). These expressions of “temporary fervor” are also not sourced, though the context Ellmann offers reveals that if Joyce actually expressed them, he must have done so a full two years after the Rising, since the Conscription Crisis did not occur until 1918. Moreover, Joyce’s two pithy phrases are from uncertain times: the former is from Joyce’s own report to Herbert Gorman, while the latter, later to appear with slight amendment in the “Circe” episode of *Ulysses*, is found in this particular formulation only in Ellmann’s biography. The combination of unsourced material and tremulous timelines should give us pause. Perhaps the portrait Ellmann paints of Joyce’s response is an incomplete one. At the very

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7 Enda Duffy, referring to Joyce’s sudden patriotism, notes that such exclamations were certainly delivered “with irony” (15).
least, it should provoke some doubt.

Should we seek a fuller depiction of Joyce’s response from other biographers, we will invariably be disappointed. Edna O’Brien, in an even terser account, uses virtually identical language to that used by Ellmann: “The 1916 rebellion in Dublin he deemed useless” (98). Like Ellmann, O’Brien provides no source for her claim, leaving us to conclude that her source is likely Ellmann’s biography itself. John McCourt’s *The Years of Bloom*, a biography focused upon Joyce’s life between 1904 and 1920, contains no mention of the Easter Rising whatsoever.8 Gordon Bowker, Joyce’s most recent biographer, covers the Rising in a mere three sentences, claiming that “Joyce was shocked by the violence and what remaining sympathy he had for Sinn Fein evaporated” (225). This is obviously a stronger reaction than that described by Ellmann, and one incongruous with Ellmann’s account: if Joyce had given up all sympathy for Sinn Fein, it seems unlikely that he would have celebrated Sinn Fein’s victory in the Conscription crisis two years later. More troubling is that Bowker, like Ellmann, fails to provide adequate evidence for his characterization. Even those early critical accounts of Joyce’s politics fall into the same trap. These sentences receive no citations, leaving us unsure of what, if any, sources these critics used to draw their assertions.

Much of what we find from Joyce’s biographers seems to be speculation which, according to Emer Nolan, stems from an overly simplistic view of both Joyce’s politics and the politics of nationalism. In her *James Joyce and Nationalism*, Nolan argues that Joyce’s critics

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8 McCourt does mention Pearse, but only as an example of a brand of nationalism Joyce rejected in both its Irish and Triestine incarnations (99).
often underestimate the complexity of Irish politics, so that a caricature of Irish nationalism has become common in critical studies: “in offering a narrow philosophy of racial identity and mythologized, teleological model of history, [nationalism] can provide only a mirror-image of the imperialism it may ostensibly oppose” (xi). From this distortion, Nolan asserts, critics have drawn a false dichotomy between Irish nationalism and Joyce’s modernism, concluding that Joyce, as a cosmopolitan high modernist, rejected nationalism as incompatible with his own artistic vision. For Nolan, this conclusion is overly simplistic, leading scholars to lose sight of both the rich postcolonial context of Joyce’s works and the real, if somewhat reserved, sympathy he held for nationalist movements. In response, Nolan notes that “this received reading of Joyce can make little of the concerns of the marginal, colonized community as they are reflected in his texts, viewing them merely as the content of his experiments with literary form and language, lending colourful but essentially irrelevant local detail for humour or satire” (xii).

Nolan’s objection to such trends is similar to that expressed earlier by Enda Duffy, whose own *Subaltern Ulysses* seeks a richer understanding of Joyce’s engagement with both imperialism and nationalism. Like Nolan, Duffy finds that Joyce’s response to nationalism is more complex than Joyce’s biographers allowed, arguing that *Ulysses* is a fundamentally postcolonial text, going so far as to term the novel “the text of Irish independence” (1). Where Nolan sees a false division between nationalism and modernism, Duffy’s estimation is somewhat different, contending that those features which critics typically consider “modernist” about *Ulysses* are actually postcolonial in nature:

*Ulysses* distributes the literary effects of modernist defamiliarization on the one hand and
an almost archaic strand of realist mimeticism on the other to present the reader ultimately with a postcolonial text. Long seen as a modernist masterpiece, the novel is more interesting in that it is pivotal: it marks, at the heart of the modernist canon, the moment at which the formal bravura of the Eurocentric high modernisms is redeployed so that a postcolonial literary praxis can be ushered in the stage of a new and varied geo-literature (4).

In essence, Duffy regards the novel as one richly engaged in the political debates of modern Ireland, using the literary innovations of modernism in order to explore the postcolonial condition. Duffy’s primary contention is that the experimental Joyce and the political Joyce are parts of the same whole, so any investigation into Joyce’s politics in the latter half of the author’s life must undertake a formal study of the author’s works.

Duffy and Nolan, like Manganiello before them, have produced crucial investigations into Joyce’s politics, yielding a more thorough and nuanced sense of Joyce’s relationship with Irish nationalism. By seeking the subaltern elements in Joyce’s work they have brought heightened emphasis upon the political nature of Joyce’s literary techniques, which has proven an invaluable contribution to the field. Moreover their work has shifted the focus of political studies of Joyce from Manganiello’s broad question—was Joyce a political writer?—to a more focused one: what was Joyce’s relationship with nationalism? Valuable though their studies are, I believe that their findings need to be augmented by a more focused consideration of Irish nationalism, one which emphasizes a single manifestation of the movement in place of the more general focus found in both James Joyce and Nationalism and The Subaltern Ulysses. While
both Duffy and Nolan consider the role of the Easter Rising in Joyce’s work, their studies also take on the rather herculean task of considering nationalism in broad terms. However careful they are to recognize the numerous distinct manifestations of nationalism in early Twentieth century Ireland, their studies can only produce a partial glimpse of both the complexity of those manifestations and the richness of Joyce’s response.

The Easter Rising, as I hope to show, was a distinct expression of nationalist ideology, one influenced by earlier and competing visions, but driven by its own particular set of beliefs. As such, my project is narrower than Duffy’s or Nolan’s, but I would argue that this narrow scope is warranted. The has never been a book-length study of Joyce’s response to the Easter Rising, and given both the historical importance of the Rising and the preponderance of recent studies devoted to Joyce and nationalism, this seems peculiar. Irish nationalism has always been a complex movement, one expressed in myriad forms by myriad organizations with myriad ideologies. While Manganiello, Duffy, and Nolan have all provided a general sense of Joyce’s opinions about these movements, the risk of so broad a scope is that the individual ethos of an individual form of nationalism receives too little attention. However much the Easter Rising was a part of this broader nationalist tradition, its ideology was distinct. My approach is, therefore, predicated on three crucial justifications. First, that the Easter Rising, as the seminal moment in the development of modern Ireland, is historically, socially, and culturally significant enough to warrant its own focused study. Second, that insofar as the Rising was a unique moment in Irish history motivated by a unique set of beliefs, the search for Joyce’s response to 1916 merits more concerted attention than that applied by any previous study. And third, that by narrowing the focus to one particular ideology, we can more firmly identify Joyce’s opinions about the matter.
Indeed, it seems strange that this novelist so invested in the history of his homeland, so deeply involved in the political and social issues of his time, could be so detached in his response to Ireland’s most significant political development of the Twentieth century. This detachment is even stranger when we consider that Joyce never shied away from confronting earlier rebellions. We find in his critical essays, particularly “Ireland: Land of Saints and Sages” and “Fenianism: The Last Fenian,” some measure of sympathy with violent separatism as the inevitable consequence of British oppression, though he never goes so far as to openly endorse rebellion. He is particularly dismissive of the more impractical and strategically unsound insurrections, claiming that “armed revolt has become an impossible dream” before terming Emmet’s 1803 Rising “ridiculous” (138). This same piece reveals his somewhat reserved affinity for Sinn Fein, suggesting that the characterization of Joyce as both a pacifist and a cautious nationalist has some merit. Still, we should be careful to read too much into Joyce’s political essays for purposes of this study. However tense the situation in Ireland may have been in the years preceding the Rising, there was no reason to expect violent revolution on the scale of 1916. Joyce’s generation had not experienced a rebellion, so it is reasonable to assume that he, like most Irishmen, was unprepared for what rebellion truly meant. Instead of seeking Joyce’s opinion from articles written before the Rising, I propose to seek it in those works published after 1916, when the author had the opportunity to consider the rebellion and the new Ireland it had wrought.

While it may be treacherous, given the lack of evidence, to assume anything about Joyce’s feelings towards the Easter Rising, I maintain that the author’s answer can be located in the texts of his final two works. Seeking this answer demands not only a careful reading of
*Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, but a focused investigation of the Easter Rising itself. Only through a careful study of the Rising’s ideology in tandem with Joyce’s novels can we hope to uncover the nuances of both the motivations behind the Easter Rising and the richness of Joyce’s reaction. Building upon previous studies which have demonstrated the complexities of Joyce’s relationship with nationalism in both its moderate and radical incarnations, and also on those studies which have demonstrated the extent to which Joyce’s work incorporates the events of 1916, I aim to develop those insights towards a fuller picture of Joyce’s political response to the Easter Rising. To do so, I propose to consider *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* from within the prism of the radical ideology espoused by the most prominent rebels involved in the planning and execution of the Rising. While the Military Council published virtually no documents indicating their beliefs, the lone exception being the Proclamation read by Pearse at the onset of the insurrection, my contention is that, by drawing upon the documents produced by the Rising’s most prominent voices, we can construct a sense of the leaders’ functional ideology. By locating consistent tropes across the literature written by prominent rebels, we can, if only with some reservation, garner a sense of what the leaders believed they were doing when they marched in rebellion on Easter Monday.

This project of tracing the ideology of the Easter Rising through documents written by its leaders will be the focus of the first chapter, in which I will interpret some of the leaders’ most important writings in an effort to determine the content and shape of those men’s beliefs. While such an endeavor should acknowledge the diversity of opinions among the Rising’s leadership, a careful study of the rhetoric produced by these men in their speeches, essays, letters, and poetry reveals certain recurrent themes and shared suppositions by which we may construct, however
tentatively, a sense of the ideology which drove them in the planning and implementation of their uprising. In brief, this I assert that this ideology can be described as a teleological grand narrative of Ireland’s past, present, and future.

Teleology, at its most basic level, concerns itself with, in Aristotle’s terms, final causes. The fundamental assumption of teleology is that things develop linearly towards this final cause, or telos; as such, we can interpret virtually any process in reference to its final cause. Aristotle’s primary concern is with natural phenomena, but the notion of teleology has long influenced approaches to history. M.H. Abrams finds this influence ascribable to Christian eschatology, claiming the Apocalypse as the foundational model by which later Western theories developed. The sense that, as Joyce’s Deasy puts it, “all human history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God,” has often been adapted to fit secular and materialist visions, wherein the “manifestation of God” is replaced by the attainment of some more perfect social state. As Abrams suggests, we find such notions deeply embedded in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the consequent French Revolution, which itself gave rise to later models, including Hegel’s dialectic, Marx’s dictatorship of the Proletariat, and the Victorian “Myth of Progress,” among many others (344-65).

William H. Sewell argues that teleology, when introduced to historiography and sociology (as in the models cited above), postulates “history as the temporal working out of an inherent logic of social development” (83). Teleology, then, is progressive and linear, and it provides a template by which we can interpret the course of events, so that “events in some historical present,” as Sewell continues, “are actually explained by events in the future” (84).
These future events, as the final cause towards which social development bends, are imbued with a sort of inevitability. The telos, in such estimation, is not merely a desired, predicted, or even expected end, but a presumed certainty. This sort of interpretation, according to Denis Donoghue, posits “history as the narrative form of meaning, whether the meaning is construed in biological, evolutionary, familial, or otherwise enhancing terms” (110). As such, teleology is virtually inseparable from narrative—the role of historians and historiographers, once they have uncovered the telos, is to determine the “significant pattern among historical events” in order to yield the plot of history (Donoghue 110).

Such notions acquire ideological resonance if the interpretation of this pattern is shaped by social or political motivation. Simply put, a political movement can gain great advantage if a teleological historiography is constructed in reference to the movement’s goal. Since political action, as goal-directed activity, ostensibly seeks the attainment of a (presumed) more perfect state, that state, as the telos of the movement, can be claimed as the telos of history itself. This is, of course, the fundamental assumption of Marx’s philosophy of history, where the logos of social development is rooted in terms of capital and labor, and where Communism is the ultimate telos. Once teleology becomes part of a political movement, and once that movement adopts teleology into its rhetoric, the telos potentially becomes not only the motivation behind the movement, but the inevitable consequence of the pattern of events which birthed the movement. This, I argue, is true of the Easter Rising, which held as its telos the establishment of a fully-independent Irish Republic. Postulating this end as the final cause of modern Irish history, the leaders of the insurrection, consciously or not, employed teleology in their rhetoric. A careful study of the speeches, essays, and poems written by members of the Military Council reveals a
belief—if only a propagandistic, rhetorical one—that Irish history is moving inexorably towards the *telos* of liberation. Crucial to this position is the contextualization of previous events: the course of Irish history could be understood as a linear progression towards independence. This is particularly true of Pearse’s work, which explains Irish history in terms of the separatist tradition, contextualizing events in reference to the eventual dissolution of British colonialism in Ireland. It is also true of Connolly, whose histories of Ireland employ Marxist methodology to explain, through economic circumstances, the progression of events towards the establishment of an independent socialist republic. While other members of the military council were less explicit, we do find, in both the public and private discourse produced by prominent rebels, a clear and consistent belief that the attainment of Irish independence was inevitable.

This point is crucial: the leaders of the Rising, though often accused of maintaining a cyclical vision of history, actually believed that their actions were part of Ireland’s inexorable movement towards the *telos* of independence. Such teleology may not have manifested itself in practical terms—the leaders were surely not thinking of public works or governmental administration in any sensible way—but it remains a constant in the rhetoric they produced before their executions. Given this inevitability, the rest of the narrative consists of interrelated themes developed as a means of explaining Ireland’s current situation from within the context of the inevitable march towards independence. Concisely put, these include the sense that the Irish people are a race unto themselves, ethnically distinct from their colonizers; the notion that the authority to rebel stems from the long tradition of insurrection; and the conviction that a death for Ireland is the garnering of apotheosis.
Joyce engages with such themes constantly throughout the course of both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, bringing these mainstays of radical, revolutionary nationalism into dialogue with his artistic creation. This engagement presents significant evidence of Joyce’s response to 1916; since these themes were the foundation for revolution, addressing them after the Rising suggests that Joyce was obliquely addressing the Rising as well. Indeed, the ideology the rebels professed is prominent throughout the works, suggesting that Joyce, whatever his aims towards verisimilitude, had no interest in limiting the political scope of his fiction. Subsequent chapters will consider the thematic content of this narrative as it appears in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, proceeding through each element of the narrative in reference to both novels in an effort to uncover Joyce’s engagement with the ideology of the Easter Rising.

It is necessary to note that the themes described above were not wholly original to the leaders of the Easter Rising. Similar ideas held currency in nationalist circles for years, having been expressed by previous generations of Irish rebels, whose actions had established a precedent for the insurrection in 1916. This may suggest that the appearance of such themes is not directly a response to the Rising, but the disproportionate prominence given to these ideas in works set temporally apart from the revolution and published in that revolution’s aftermath plausibly suggests engagement with contemporary events as well as with the past. Indeed, such continuity in revolutionary ideology provides Joyce a plausible means of incorporating ideas which, while virtually traditional in Irish nationalism by 1904, had garnered new significance and new immediacy once the rebellion had been quelled and its leaders had been executed. To incorporate these themes into novels set outside the immediate time frame of the Rising offers Joyce the means by which to respond to events beyond the purview of Bloomsday without
shattering the novel’s setting. As Robert Spoo has argued, Joyce employs a “double time frame” in his fiction, one which accommodates both the novel’s temporal placement and the intrusion of more current events (142).\(^9\) Uncovering that intrusion is possible through diligent rhetorical analysis: by reading Joyce’s work in reference the political circumstances against which it was written, one can find, in the diction and details of a given passage, oblique indications of the present’s incursion upon the scene.

While Spoo’s focus is the First World War, other critics have built upon Spoo’s findings to seek the presence of the Easter Rising in Joyce’s work. Seemingly insignificant details can, when imbued with the context of the Rising, become highly suggestive. Susan de Sola Rodstein finds the Rising most evident in the “Cyclops” chapter, which opens with the unnamed narrator “passing the time of day…at the corner of Arbour hill” and closes with the Citizen hurling a Jacob’s biscuit tin at the escaping Bloom (12.1-2). As Rodstein notes, Arbour hill “is the burial place of both Wolfe Tone and the martyrs of the 1916 Rising,” and the biscuit tin “is a synecdochic reminder of one of the abortive strongholds of the Easter Rising” (149). While such material may seem insignificant, Joyce’s specificity is charged when one considers the context: in the most directly political episode of the novel, Joyce opens and closes the scene with references to places directly associated with the Easter Rising. These details are largely incidental in the context of 1904, but they hold great significance for the post-1916 world, revealing Joyce’s willingness to engage with events ostensibly beyond the purview of his work’s

\(^9\) Spoo concludes that “June 16, 1904, was not, for Joyce, a fixed, isolable ‘contemporaneity’” (151). Rather, Spoo continues, “the very process of composition ensures the inscribing of the chaotic ‘present’ into any continuous parallel that a narrative may hope to manipulate” (151). As such, “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’” (151).
If Joyce engages with the Easter Rising, a study of the engagement might yield a clearer sense of his response to the Easter Rising. To better understand the shape of that response, I wish to return to Joyce’s letter quoted at the beginning of this introduction. As Joyce explains, he does not intend to ignore the political questions facing Ireland. Quite the contrary, the author claims that these questions demand a more nuanced response, one which cannot be adequately expressed in a political essay. Instead, Joyce writes that to delve into these matters, “one needs to make use of all the means of elastic art.” Assuming that Joyce is sincere, that his response can be found in the pages of his art, it seems telling that the author, like the leaders of the Easter Rising, found the problems of the Irish people best expressed in narrative form. However, Joyce’s conception of narrative is markedly distinct from the teleological model espoused by the Military Council.

In formal terms, a teleological narrative, however nuanced, is comparatively stable. All occurrences are interpretable insofar as they can be contextualized by the narrative’s end. Since the end is assured, a teleological narrative offers a clear means towards interpretation. In political rhetoric, a teleological narrative can become not only stable, but rigid by presenting the sense that meaning is always secure. In its most radical incarnations, a teleological narrative leaves little room for nuance or ambiguity. In contrast to this rigidity, Joyce offers an art which is, in his phrase, “elastic.” The word is inviting, particularly since Joyce never clarifies what he means. While it is certainly possible that he is merely distinguishing between the written art and the “plastic” visual arts, the context suggests something richer. It is, Joyce claims, due to the
complexities of the issue that he is forced to use an elastic art, and only an elastic art, as the means of his response. An elastic art, whatever it might be, is surely more flexible than it is rigid, providing an immediate contrast between Joyce’s work and the narrative established by the leaders of the Rising. This is true in formal terms, as Joyce’s novels lack a clear telos. As such, these novels also lack the presumed certainty found in a teleological narrative; as the ending is not preordained, meaning is seldom assured, but always open to interpretation from manifold perspectives. Consequently, Ulysses and Finnegans Wake reject the presumed certainties essential to the teleological narrative structure.

The contrast between the rigid and the elastic suggests that Joyce’s narrative vision is incompatible with that promoted by the leaders of the Easter Rising. Distinct formal properties provide a point of entry: taking as my guide Joyce’s claim that his response to the problems of his race rests in the characters and scenes of his art, I have endeavored to find those scenes where Joyce’s fiction interrogates the ideology of the Easter Rising, seeking the elasticity of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. I have found that during those moments when the ideological constructs of the Easter Rising emerge, or when Joyce makes a direct reference to the events and personalities of Easter Week, Joyce’s fiction responds by becoming formally unstable. In other words, to confront the political material of Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, we must confront the novels’ technical experimentations, their moments of radical departure from conventional literary form, made manifest in the novels’ formal structure, rhetoric, and even the appearance of the text itself. Such features are, perhaps, the best definition we can provide for Joyce’s notion of an “elastic art.” Joyce’s formal experimentation reveals the extent to which the novel as an art form could transcend the sort of rigidity clung to by rebel leaders. This, I believe, is the primary
means of Joyce’s response: to contrast teleology with the dynamism of the literary form through an emphasis upon potentiality, process, and ultimately, artificiality. In this way, we might reconcile those two opposing visions of Joyce laid out above: that of the artist and the activist. Put another way I hope to argue, as Duffy did before me, that Joyce’s narrative innovations, while not always political in their bent, often occur when the text confronts political ideology.

If we posit that the specific ideology of the Easter Rising took a narrative shape, and that Joyce relegates commentary about that ideology to the pages of his novels, it seems plausible that Joyce’s response can be located within the narrative techniques he employs in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. While both novels clearly address the matter of Irish nationalism, the form of that address merits more concentrated consideration. Seamus Deane, speaking broadly of Joyce’s work, claims that “subversion is part of the Joycean enterprise” (39). Understanding Joyce’s fiction is largely a matter of identifying, in both form and content, the nature of that subversion. For Deane, Joycean subversion is not merely destructive; rather, Joyce is an affirmer whose revolution “is accompanied by the joy of renovation,” so that “there is nothing of political or social significance which Joyce does not undermine and restructure” (39). This enterprise applies to cultural, political, and social matters, but it applies equally to the form of narrative itself. Joyce’s formal innovations, then, are inseparable from this subversion: assuming Joyce sought to undermine both traditional social structures and traditional literary structures, the two endeavors should be brought into dialogue with each other.

If Deane is correct that Joycean subversion occurs concomitantly with the drive to renovate and renew, Joyce’s assault upon a narrative of Ireland’s path towards nationhood will
provide a fresh alternative to the violent revolution practiced by Irish nationalists. Such matters are broached in “Eumaeus,” when Stephen wearily and irritably dismisses Bloom’s talk of Irish politics: “We can’t change the country. Let us change the subject” (16.1171). Though Bloom acquiesces to his companion’s demand, we should not necessarily assume that Stephen speaks for Joyce. Changing the country and changing the subject need not be distinct projects; indeed, to change the subject may well be to change the country. Andrew Gibson finds in Joyce the notion of an “undeveloped possibility” (40). This exists, Gibson explains, because “Joyce does not polarize the actual and the possible,” so the possibilities open to the imagination are real within the context of the work, allowing Joyce to “loosen if not break the fetters of ‘actuality’” (40-41). By emphasizing the merely possible, rather than the actual or the inevitable, Joyce denies the teleology of radical nationalism.

Essentially, my argument is that when the ideology of the Easter Rising appears in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, Joyce disrupts the narrative so as to disrupt the ideology. The leaders of the Easter Rising, I hope to prove, based their insurrection upon supposed fixities; by revealing such suppositions to be unsustainable, Joyce rejects the presumed simplicity and certainty of radical nationalist ideology in favor of nuance and possibility. This is, of course, a subversive enterprise, one which interrogates the validity of nationalist assumptions by challenging their assumed stability through use of satirical, metafictional, and metatextual techniques. By complicating its overt simplicity, Joyce effectively debunks the ideology, destabilizing it by drawing out complexities and contradictions left unexamined by the Rising’s leadership.
This study contends that both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are texts engaged in dialogue with the Easter Rising. Regarding *Ulysses*, my argument is that, despite being set nearly twelve years prior to the Rising, the structure of the novel allows for the intrusion of events from beyond the purview of its temporal setting. Spoo, Rodstein, and Duffy all recognize the role of historical anachronism in the structure of *Ulysses*, but their findings can be augmented by studying the formal nature of such interruptions. While none of these scholars provide the terminology, the intrusion of events concomitant with the composition of *Ulysses* upon the novel’s ostensibly fixed temporal setting are examples of metalepsis. Gerard Genette, who brought the term into narratology, defines metalepsis as the “transgression, whether supernatural or playful, of a given level of narrative or dramatic fiction” (*Palimpsests* 469). In other words, metalepsis serves to disrupt a given narrative through “a breakdown of the boundary between levels of narration” (Freedgood 398). Chief among these levels are those between reality and fiction, and those between author and text, so that “the basic function of metalepsis remains a crossing of the border between the fictional world and (a representation of) the real world” (Kukkonen 6). The careful reader will find myriad examples of metalepsis throughout *Ulysses*; as such, a comprehensive account of metalepsis’ general application in the novel is well beyond the purview of this study. However, a more focused investigation of Joyce’s use of a particular brand of metalepsis can provide great insight into Joyce’s response to the Easter Rising. The intrusion of content from beyond the temporal scope of Bloomsday is a particular brand of metalepsis, in that such moments reveal the hand of someone—narrator, author, or projected author—prescient about events of which the characters can have no knowledge. This study focuses specifically upon those moments when the Easter Rising intrudes upon *Ulysses*, applying rhetorical analysis.
to uncover, more fully, the commentary Joyce’s response to 1916.

By tracing these particularly political incidents of metalepsis throughout *Ulysses*, I wish to emphasize two particular formal aspects of metalepsis. First, metalepsis, by its very nature, calls attention to the artifice of the text. Any transgression of a narrative boundary highlights the role of the creator—and brings attention to the role of the reader—in constructing the text. Metalepsis is, to some degree, a metafictional technique; one which undermines a work’s supposed mimeticism by exposing, more fully, the fictionality of the work wherein it appears. Such a technique can have ideological purposes, since the application of politically-minded metalepsis offers an author the means to address the presumed certainties of a given belief system. Political rhetoric depends upon such certainty for its rhetorical appeal—this is particularly true of the rhetoric surrounding the Easter Rising. The leaders of the insurrection made their call to arms by establishing a fixed set of ideological imperatives, each of which was treated, at least in the rhetoric, as definitively true. By confronting these imperatives with a technique designed to highlight narrative artifice, Joyce destabilizes both *Ulysses* and the narrative upon which the leaders of the Rising based their rebellion. Second, the emphasis upon artifice is inconsistent with the content and design of a teleological narrative. However nuanced a teleological narrative is, it nonetheless assumes that the course of events leads inexorably towards a given end. This model of development, then, is relatively smooth and clearly laid out—such certainty is incompatible with the effect of metalepsis. By calling attention to the artifice of a narrative, metalepsis also calls attention to the narrative’s process.

While such an approach may be successfully applied to *Ulysses, Finnegans Wake*
demands a somewhat different methodology. Charting incidents of metalepsis, however narrow the focus, in *Finnegans Wake* is a virtually impossible task, since metalepsis occurs upon virtually every page of the novel. Given the novel’s radical style, only the most extreme uses of metalepsis—specifically, the design of “Nightlessons”—will garner the reader’s attention. Moreover, given both the *Wake*’s radical style and extensive scope, the integration of material relevant to the Easter Rising is less disruptive to the course of the work than the appearance of the same in *Ulysses*. References to the Easter Rising on Bloomsday are anachronistic, but there is nothing about the Easter Rising—or almost any other subject—that is anachronistic to *Finnegans Wake*. As a result, references to the Rising and its leaders can be more explicit and more direct in the *Wake* than in *Ulysses*, so that understanding these references demands rhetorical analysis. My study of *Finnegans Wake* therefore consists of uncovering these allusions, accounting for context, and determining the rhetorical implications of their inclusion. In other words, my aim here is investigate those moments when *Finnegans Wake* engages with the Easter Rising in an effort to reveal the political content contained therein.

It is perhaps fair to say that my methodology is essentially that of close reading. While one might well claim that such rudimentary methods are too crude and too outdated to properly account for the nuances of Joyce’s most complex work, I wish to argue that close reading is the best way to adequately study *Finnegans Wake*. Samuel Beckett, writing in defense of *Finnegans Wake* at Joyce’s request,\(^\text{10}\) claimed that in the *Wake* “words are not the polite contortions of twentieth-century printer’s ink. They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10} Beckett’s “Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce” appeared in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (1929), a book of essays concerning the *Wake* when it was still known as *Work in Progress*.}\]
and blaze and fade and disappear” (15-16). These living words, to take Beckett’s metaphor, refuse to sit still. The *Wake* then, inasmuch as it is about anything, is about language—its possibilities and its limitations. This means that, in order to draw out any meaning from the seemingly incomprehensible style of the work, we must engage with Joyce’s language, seeking in its portmanteaus and allusions those references which can, through exegesis, be explained. Such a process is, of course, not without risks. The nature of Joyce’s style is such that any reading is contingent in ways incomparable to the contingency of other literary works. As such, the “ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia” is arguably as much a fiction as HCE, ALP, Shem, Shaun, or Issy.

Such trepidation is warranted, but it should not dissuade the reader of *Finnegans Wake*, nor should it impede my project. The instability of the *Wake* lends itself to my contention that Joyce sought to undermine the suppositions of the Rising’s leadership in his fiction. The *Wake*, as the most unstable text in Western literature, offers a means to such subversion. For Joyce to introduce the Rising into the *Wake* is a potentially subversive act in itself, since the very nature of the work contradicts the sense of security and certainty characteristic of the leaders’ beliefs. In short, the *Wake* is a novel designed to trouble certainty itself. We find this whenever the Rising appears in Joyce’s final work: the *Wake*’s style subverts the supposed fixity of the leaders’ beliefs, offering in its place a disrupted text which denies certainty and inevitability in favor of potential and possibility.

My approach to the *Wake* is therefore a somewhat narrowly-confined exegesis. While I will consider the role of metalepsis in the design of “Nightlessons” in Chapter Three, the
majority of my study will focus upon the insurgency of Joyce’s prose. By considering those passages most immediately relevant to the Easter Rising, I hope to reveal the commentary contained within. My intent is not to explicate the whole of *Finnegans Wake*, or to produce a definitive account of the passages explored, but to engage with the content attached to 1916 to uncover the substance of Joyce’s response. In addition to revealing Joyce’s response to the Rising, I hope that such methodology may fit into a long-standing tradition in scholarship concerning the internal logic of *Finnegans Wake*. Apologists for the *Wake*, even in the first years after the work’s publication, found themselves confronting the work’s strangeness while arguing, implicitly or explicitly, that there was an internal order to *Finnegans Wake* which could be ascertained only through careful study. Such concerns have dominated *Wake* criticism for decades, beginning with Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson’s search for a “skeleton key” to interpretation, through William York Tindall’s reader’s guide, John Gordon’s plot summary, and Roland McHugh’s annotations. More recent studies, such as Len Platt’s investigation of racial and power dynamics, and the burgeoning field of genetic criticism spawned from the Buffalo notebooks, have followed suit, indicating that seven decades after the *Wake* left the printer’s, scholars are still questing for the work’s internal order. The search for a relatively specific brand of political commentary is a part of that dialogue. While my project is narrowly confined to a single event, it will hopefully augment the more general scholarship concerning the *Wake*.

From such methodology, and in such limited scope, I hope to reveal the nature of Joyce’s engagement with the Easter Rising. Chapter One offers a fuller treatment of the prevailing ideology espoused by the leaders of the Easter Rising in an effort to locate both its narrative
shape and thematic content. Drawing upon speeches, essays, and poetry produced by 1916’s most prominent rebels, I hope to establish an outline of the fundamental beliefs held by the men who planned and led the insurrection. Once the form and substance of the narrative has been established, I will proceed through the narrative’s primary thematic elements in reference to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* to chart Joyce’s treatment of such content in his fiction. Chapter Two will look at Joyce’s response to the essentialism of radical nationalism; that is, the persistent notion that a communal identity could be construed in categorical—and potentially limiting—terms. As a response to colonialist racism, nationalist essentialism is a means of constructing identity—often in reference to the colonial other—in ways which demark the native population from all others. My analysis will center upon crucial passages in “Telemachus,” “Nestor,” and “Cyclops” to reveal Joyce’s nuanced presentation of Irish identity. From there, I will consider the even denser presentation of Irish identity in the *Wake*, considering the characters of HCE and Shaun, those figures whose self-identification endeavors towards essentialism at the risk of sense. Chapter Three will look at the importance of the nationalist past in Joyce’s fiction. Focusing upon “Sirens” from *Ulysses* and “Nightlessons” from *Finnegans Wake*, I hope to reveal the means by which Joyce interrogates the Military Council’s interpretation of the past by subverting the assumption that history can be written in narrative form without gross distortion. Chapter Four focuses upon Joyce’s depiction of executed rebels in *Ulysses*, specifically in “Cyclops” and “Circe,” before considering the theme of resurrection and apotheosis in the final book of *Finnegans Wake*. Through such means, I hope to reveal the extent to which *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are, both in content and design, in dialogue with the Easter Rising, exposing Joyce’s nuanced response to Modern Ireland’s seminal moment.
Chapter One:

“Blotty Words” and “Bloody Wars”

Interpreting the Easter Rising is a formidable task—the rebellion came as such a genuine shock that most in Ireland and abroad struggled to make sense of what had happened. “It is no exaggeration,” wrote Maurice Joy, shortly after the Rising, “to say that the Irish Insurrection astonished the world” (145). Certainly, the general populaces of both Great Britain and Ireland were taken by surprise. “None of these people,” James Stephens wrote of Dublin’s residents, “were prepared for insurrection. The thing had been sprung on them so suddenly they were unable to take sides” (74). Similar confusion reigned in England, where newspapers incorrectly reported a “Sinn Fein Rebellion,” despite the non-involvement of either Arthur Griffith or the Sinn Fein party.\(^1\) As Declan Kiberd has noted, the revolt seemed to make little immediate sense: economic conditions in Ireland were relatively favorable, the Irish populace had not yet been subject to conscription, and the Irish Question itself had seemingly been resolved by the passage of the Third Home Rule Bill a mere two years earlier (198).

Attempts to explain the Rising in its immediate aftermath failed to adequately account for the rebels’ motivation. Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland at the time of the Rising, blamed the revolution on “the old hatred and distrust of the British connection, always noticeable in all classes, and in all places, varying in degree, and finding different ways of expression, but always as the background of Irish politics and character” (qtd. in Joy 174). James Reidy

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\(^1\) Confusion later echoed on the continent: see R.C. Escouflier’s account of the Rising in Ireland: An Enemy of the Allies (1919).
interpreted the Rising in much the same way, albeit more sympathetically, calling it the product of “the centuries-old desire of the Irish people for freedom from foreign rule” (251). Or, as James Connolly’s daughter Nora argued, “the Revolution was caused by the English occupation of Ireland” (vii).

Surely, Irish distrust and resentment towards British rule, coupled with long-standing traditions of violent resistance, helped drive the Rising, but why had this resentment spilled over into rebellion, and why in 1916? As Conor Cruise O’Brien argued on the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, “the only provocation [the rebels] could muster was the famous ‘Castle document,’ a paper listing various aggressive measures allegedly intended by the British authorities, and almost certainly concocted by the rebels themselves” (622). There was, therefore, little immediate justification for rebelling in 1916, save the opportunity afforded to the rebels by the First World War. The old mantra that “England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity” was not without pragmatic truth, and military intervention from Germany was expected. However, even with the distractions of the Great War and the prospect of German aid, victory was hardly plausible. James Connolly, aware of the long odds against the Rising, reportedly went to the GPO expecting “to be slaughtered” (qtd. in Ellis 30). If there was no viable advantage to rebelling during the First World War, what could have prompted the Rising?

By way of explanation, many have argued that the Easter Rising was the product of an irrational, though potent, dogma. Robert Lynd, in his introduction to Connolly’s Labour in Ireland, argued that “some of the insurgent leaders,” Connolly excepted, were dominated by a semi-mystical theory that it is the duty of every generation to shed their blood for Ireland until their country is free. They feared that the Irish nation would
perish unless some redeeming blood was shed for it in each new generation. Their conception of a rising, one fancies, was in the nature of a sacrifice rather than of a victorious war (xi).

In other words, the Rising emerged from a belief system that prized self-sacrifice as a duty to Ireland. To its admirers, like Seumas O’Bien, this was heroism beyond measure:

The rebellion of 1916 will not soon be forgotten, and the lover of freedom and liberty of another generation will journey to Rathfarnham, and learn the story of Padraic and William Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett, and all those who thought that life was too little to give for Ireland. Poets they were, both one and all, but their deeds were mightier than their words (421).

Others were less appreciative. Eoin MacNeill, the founder of the Irish National Volunteers, who had tried to cancel the Rising before it began, found this mystical idealism deeply troubling:

We have to remember that what we call our country is not a poetical abstraction, as some of us, perhaps all of us, in the exercise of our highly developed capacity for figurative thought, are sometimes apt to imagine—with the help of our patriotic literature. There is no such person as Caitlin Ni Ullachain or Roisin Dubh or the Sean-bhean Bhoct, who is calling upon us to serve her. What we call our country is the Irish nation, which is a concrete and visible reality (qtd in Townshend 295-96).

Such appeals fell largely upon deaf ears after the executions which followed the Rising,
and MacNeill’s brand of militant Home Rule politics became largely irrelevant. Indeed, Home Rule became a dead issue, and John Redmond’s Irish Parliamentary Party would be virtually powerless by 1918, replaced by the more radical Sinn Fein (a party once supported by Joyce himself). The days of constitutional politics and political pragmatism were effectively over, at least for the time being. To those opposed to this revolutionary fervor, the shift made little immediate sense. “Such a defeat as was inflicted on the rebels,” wrote Richard Dawson, “would have crushed previous revolutionary movements for half a century. It did not check the new Nationalism for a month” (257). Dawson actually understates the case; the Republican movement did not merely endure, but gained remarkable momentum in the aftermath of 1916. Lamenting this phenomenon, R. C. Escouffaire, a Frenchman infuriated by Ireland’s supposed disloyalty to the Allied cause, claimed that the rebels, particularly Pearse, “believed the world was very simple-minded, easily taken in by resounding phrases and theatrical poses” (vi). While Escouffaire saw nothing admirable in these poses, he was forced to admit that Pearse “was not mistaken” (vi). The appeal of the Rising seems rooted in the heroic gestures surrounding it—gestures that have become as much a part of myth as of history.

Escouffaire’s characterization of the Rising captures, albeit in an invective, the prevailing vision of Easter Week. This “most popular view,” according to Johann A. Norstedt, assumes that “the insurrectionists never thought they would succeed in the immediate overthrow of British rule but that they intended a ‘blood sacrifice that would somehow reassert the Irish spirit and show to the world that the Irish ‘nation’ still existed” (5). Such a vision, according to Tom

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2 MacNeill was sentenced to life imprisonment in the aftermath of the Rising, but was released shortly thereafter. Upon his release, he became a member of Sinn Fein and later served in the Free State government.
Garvin, assumes the Easter Rising was more performed ritual than military operation, “less an exercise in the science of warfare than in the science of propaganda” (481). It was, Garvin continues, “a mainly symbolic rebellion,” enacted to “awaken in people’s minds the image of the long and chivalrous fight of the Irish against British tyranny” (481). Alan J. Ward makes a similar claim, maintaining that the Rising’s leaders believed that “Ireland was slumbering and only a heroic gesture, a blood sacrifice, an act of voluntary martyrdom, could reawaken republican nationalism in Ireland” (10). As Kiberd notes, “no previous Irish insurrection had been mounted in such avowedly theatrical terms” (204). More recently, Fearghal McGarry has argued that the leaders “prioritized heroic gestures over practical objectives” (3).

There is some evidence to suggest that this vision is something of a distortion. Norstedt has argued that “there must be serious doubts about the ‘blood sacrifice’ theory of the Easter Rising” since “the motives of the thousand-odd men who mobilized on Easter Monday were extremely varied; many thought that they would win, others thought that they were on route march, and certainly many simply never weighed the consequences of what they were doing” (142). Indeed, Roger McHugh describes a veteran of the Rising who went to war with no intentions towards martyrdom: “Dying for Cailin Ni hUllachain did not appeal to us…Believe it or not, we wanted to win” (110). As Jason K. Knirck notes, “the idea, at least originally, was to fight a real ‘war,’ to sustain belligerency long enough to gain a seat at the peace conference” (40). Only when this plan became untenable, Knirck argues, did the emphasis turn to blood sacrifice and theatricality. This new vision “certainly justified the truncated rising that actually took place,” though it “should not mask some of the more ambitious plans that were discussed in the months and years before April 1916” (Krick 40).
Even if victory was impossible, the rebels’ motives may have been more pragmatic than mystical. McGarry argues that “a wartime insurrection, even one likely to fail was not only rational but a moral and historical imperative if Fenianism was to retain any credibility or future” (98). As such, “it was necessary for separatists to fight even if they would probably be defeated” (McGarry 100). Maureen Wall points to the attendance of seven future signatories of the Proclamation at a meeting where radical nationalists agreed that, before the end of the First World War, “a rebellion should be staged and Irish independence declared, so that Ireland’s right to a seat at the peace conference would be assured” (166). Such a refrain can be found in statements from the Rising’s participants, including Sean Heuston, who speculated that “the struggle we have made will lend strength to Ireland’s claim for representation at the Great Peace Conference when the map of Europe is being redrawn” (Mac Lochlainn 111). Pearse expressed similar sentiments just before surrendering, claiming that the Rising had been “sufficient to gain recognition of Ireland’s national claim at an international peace conference” (Mac Lochlainn 12). These statements suggest that the Provisional Government held a more nuanced—if still unrealistic—vision of geo-politics than popular understanding typically assumes. Even the military strategies, often assumed faulty to the point of indifference, have been defended by some commentators. Kiberd points to the timing of the Rising, when many British soldiers stationed in Dublin were on furlough, as a “sound tactic,” while G.A. Hayes-McCoy argues that “on the whole, the insurgents showed, in a week of severe fighting, remarkable military

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3 Even among the leadership there may have been some discrepancy of expectations; Norstedt argues that, lacking firm evidence, we can hardly assume that Thomas MacDonagh expected to die. Perhaps, as Norstedt suggests, it is an error to interpret the Rising in light of pre-Rising poetry, as “the theme of early death in a heroic cause” may have been “a convention” rather than an ideological imperative (142).
Moreover, popular imagination has hardly accounted for the place of James Connolly and his Irish Citizen Army. Unlike his fellow revolutionaries, Connolly was an avowed socialist who understood revolution in Marxist terms; reportedly, Connolly ordered his soldiers to “hold on to [their] rifles” in the event of a victory, lest the IRB or INV have different designs for an Irish Republic (qtd in Foster 478). Lynd may have remembered Connolly as “Ireland’s first Socialist martyr,” but posterity had different plans (vii). Connolly’s radical social program largely disappeared from the ensuing republican movement, which regarded him a martyr to Ireland, rather than to Ireland’s working class. Of course, posterity has judged Connolly by the company he kept, and by aligning his revolution with that of the IRB and INV, Connolly’s more politically radical ideals were ultimately subsumed by the more conservative beliefs of the enigmatic Padraic Pearse. This could be said of any of the revolutionaries involved in the Easter Rising; as Norsdedt notes, Pearse was “the hero of the Easter Rising, the father of his country” (1).

Consequently, popular imagination has aligned all of the Rising’s participants with Pearse’s revolutionary program of patriotic and transcendent self-sacrifice.⁴ Pearse, John Newsinger argues, “was the chief ideologist, the spokesman, of the Rising: so much is indisputable; it was his imaginative conception of revolution as redemption that was acted out on the streets of Dublin” (613). However, the extent to which the other leaders shared Pearse’s ideology is somewhat unclear.

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⁴ Others have questioned the extent of Pearse’s influence on the Easter Rising, particularly Ruth Dudley Edwards (Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure), to whom Newsinger’s essay responds. The question is hardly new; Robert Lynd addressed it in 1916, in his introduction to Connolly’s Labour in Ireland. For Lynd, it was Connolly, rather than Pearse, who “provided the immediate impulse of the Rising” (xvii).
If there are doubts as to the actual ideology that drove the Easter Rising, these doubts can, in no small part, be blamed upon the organizers of the Rising themselves. As McGarry notes, “the origins of the Easter Rising remain sketchy: the conspirators planned it with the utmost secrecy, few records of their plans survived, and all of the military council’s members were executed within three weeks of the insurrection” (79). Practicality may have demanded that the Rising be planned in secret, but that secrecy meant that the actual belief system motivating revolution was never formally or publicly announced prior to Easter Monday. Nor can we find a verifiable belief system in the constitutions or public documents of any of the organizations involved in the Rising. It is reasonable to describe the Rising’s revolutionary body as an amalgamation of splinter groups from other organizations, acting in direct violation of those organizations’ express aims.  

This confederation of revolutionary groups made its first public appearance that Easter Monday, and issued their first public statement from the steps of the General Post Office. The express ideology of the Easter Rising can be found only in the Proclamation of 1916, the one document issued under the cosigned body of the self-proclaimed Provisional Government.

Based upon the document, the aims and justifications for the Rising are relatively clear, but the

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5 The Irish National Volunteers had as their aim the enforcement of prospective Home Rule, rather than the creation of an Irish Republic. Founded to oppose militant Unionism, specifically the Ulster Volunteer Force, its aims were protective, not revolutionary. Though the INV had splintered following Britain’s entrance into the First World War—John Redmond’s Volunteers joined the war effort, while Eoin MacNeill’s did not—the express aims of the Volunteers remained static prior to Easter Monday, when they split once again, due to MacNeill’s countermanding order canceling all operations. Those Volunteers who disobeyed MacNeill’s command, whether through defiance or ignorance, essentially comprised a new group with aims counter to the INV’s original intentions. Much the same can be said of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, an organization that had fallen into disrepair in the Twentieth century and did not rise as a single unit on Easter Monday. The Irish Citizen Army, though they marched as a single unit, had drifted so far from its original aims—James Larkin had founded the group to protect workers during the Dublin Lockout of 1913—as to be virtually unrecognizable.
brevity of the statement begs further questioning. A desire to know more, to fill in the gaps, would lead later commentators to forge a more complete ideology from the available documents written by the leaders of the Rising. From discourse produced by those involved, one can construct, albeit tentatively, a working belief system that may have shaped the events of Easter Week.

This can be accomplished only at some risk. Interpreting any of these documents in light of the events of Easter Week is potentially problematic: the original intent of certain works may be obscured by hindsight, so that we may mistake rhetorical flourishes for dogma. Moreover, the assumption that any of these discourses are representative of the Easter Rising in general, rather than the mere opinion of individual authors, risks oversimplification by ignoring, or at least minimizing, the ideological diversity among the leadership and the men they commanded. Acknowledging these risks does not resolve them; however, the aim of this study is to account for Joyce’s response to the Easter Rising, and Joyce’s understanding of Easter Week was likely as distorted as anyone else’s. Consequently, much of what follows in this chapter reinforces the prevailing, conventional interpretation of the Rising. Although the matter is certainly more complicated than convention typically allows, recognizing these complications hardly refutes convention. A focused reading of the discourse surrounding the Easter Rising reveals that the ethos of the insurrection was largely congruent with the way it is typically presented.

This chapter concerns itself with the most prominent figures of the Easter Rising, rather than with the rank and file.⁶ Inevitably, some leaders emerge as more prominent than others. As

⁶ For a closer look at the opinions and attitudes of the rank and file, consult Fearghal McGarry’s The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916 (2010).
this chapter focuses upon discourse, the more prolific writers among the leadership are more significant than those whose discourse is more limited. Inevitably, the greatest emphasis is given to Pearse’s work. Pearse may not have been the greatest poet, intellectual, or strategist of the Rising, but he was its greatest rhetorician, so his speeches and essays merit more attention than those of his comrades. This emphasis on Pearse is not inappropriate to the study, as Pearse was the only member of the Military Council with whom Joyce was personally acquainted. For a brief period in his university days, Joyce took Irish language classes under Pearse’s instruction, before his annoyance with the future rebel led him to drop the endeavor altogether. As such, Pearse’s ideas plausibly formed the core of Joyce’s understanding of the Rising.

While Pearse may merit the most attention, the work of MacDonagh, Plunkett, and Connolly also provide valuable evidence of the beliefs characteristic of the Rising’s leadership. From such texts we may forge a plausible sense of the ideology surrounding the Easter Rising. To proceed, the first step is establishing the ideology’s shape. According to Tom Garvin, “republican ideology was both modernizing and nostalgic,” in that it “portrayed the desirable future in themes culled selectively from a real or imaginary past” (470). Such a structure indicates that “the vision of the future depends on the vision of the past” (Garvin 470). Garvin’s claims fall within a conventional interpretation of Easter Week, holding that the Rising emerged from a particular vision of Irish history, demanding from every generation of Irishmen the fulfillment of patriotic duty. So much is said in the Proclamation itself: “In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times in the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms” (Mac Lochlainn 1). Following the long

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According to Ellmann, Joyce resented that Pearse “found it necessary to exalt Irish by denigrating English, and in particular denounced the word ‘Thunder’—a favorite of Joyce’s—as an example of verbal inadequacy” (62).
tradition of violent revolution, the rebels fulfilled this duty, even in the face of almost certain defeat.

Kiberd argues that this vision stems from Pearse’s “cyclical” vision of Irish history (205). However, without disavowing the importance of historical precedent to Pearse or his comrades, we should be careful when applying the word “cyclical” to the Easter Rising. The suggestion, whether intended by Kiberd or not, is that the Easter Rising was meant to be part of a continuous pattern of rebellion. A cyclical process has no end, only the repetition of the same experience. However, though the leaders of the Rising may have anticipated defeat that Easter Week, they certainly did not expect an interminable reoccurrence of this defeat for future generations. As Charles Townshend notes, the rebels “proposed to use naked violence only as a preliminary means, to reawaken the supposedly slumbering national spirit” (297). Townshend’s interpretation echoes Seumas MacManus’ earlier evaluation of the Rising as “an honorable necessity” enacted by the leaders with the “[hope] that it would ultimately prove successful by rousing the spirit of the nation and making the Irish cause once more an international question” (699). Once awakened, the leaders believed, this national spirit would spur the general populace of Ireland towards full-scale rebellion, but rebellion itself was not the anticipated end. The Rising was simply a necessary step, leading inevitably to a fully liberated Irish Republic.

This distinction is crucial: the Easter Rising was not merely a performed ritual of self-sacrifice wherein the sacrifice is the intrinsic end. Rather, it was, as Nora Connolly would later write, prompted by a “tradition” in which “an Irish man or woman has no greater dream of glory than of dying ‘a soldier’s death so Ireland’s free’” (xvii-xviii). Ireland’s freedom, more than the patriot’s death, was the aim, and that freedom was envisioned as an inevitable end, rather than an
imagined ideal. As Garvin notes, apropos of both the leaders of the Rising and those who would guide both Sinn Fein and the IRA in the next phase of Irish revolution, “some had an almost Marxist capacity to envisage political action as aimed at some goal far off in time” (497). For John X. Regan, writing a few years after the Rising, this capacity emerges best in the work of Pearse:

He describes and traces the whole philosophy of Irish nationality with a splendid conciseness, shows its origin, its continuity, its *inevitability*, how the past is the forerunner of the present, the present the growth of the past, and proves that the chain of Separatist tradition never once snapped during the centuries (xi, emphasis mine).

Regan’s analysis may seem like propaganda—it was, after all, published by Sinn Fein—but its assertions remain largely current. In her *Remembering and Forgetting 1916*, Rebecca Graff-McRae, applying Derrida’s notion of spectrality,\(^8\) says something quite similar about Pearse’s vision of history:

Pearse’s ghosts are…the voices of rebellion, the call to arms. They are the traces of the past, and the visions of the future. At the same time, through them, Pearse constructs an Ireland whose history is one of conflict, rebellion and oppression leading to the rightful ‘inevitable’ independence of the Irish people (26, emphasis mine).

This sense of inevitability is crucial—understanding the Rising demands that we

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\(^8\) Graff-McRae’s analysis borrows from Derrida’s “Spectres of Marx”, in which Derrida himself borrows his metaphor from *The Communist Manifesto*. That Pearse’s more structuralist account of the Irish revolutionary tradition was entitled “Ghosts”, a title itself borrowed from Ibsen’s play, seems a convenient accident. However, Pearse’s notion of contemporary Irish events was undoubtedly “haunted” by the specters of Irish history.
recognize the way its leadership regarded the Irish Republic they declared. It was not an *aisling*, a fantasy, or a consummation devoutly to be wished; rather, it was a real, tangible aim the leaders sought with full expectation of eventual, though not immediate, attainment. Pearse claimed as much during the Rising: “Each individual has spent himself, happy to pour out his strength for Ireland and for freedom. If they do not win this fight, they will at least have deserved to win it. But win it they will, although they may win it in death (Mac Lochlainn 11). He said much the same before his execution, warning his judges that “You cannot conquer Ireland. You cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by better deed” (Mac Lochlainn 28-29). It is a refrain repeated by Clarke: “I and my fellow-signatories believe we have struck the first successful blow for Freedom. The next blow, which we have no doubt Ireland will strike, will win through” (Mac Lochlainn 45). Sean Heuston, in a letter to his sister shortly before his execution, claimed that “Ireland shall be free from the centre to the sea as soon as the people of Ireland believe in the necessity for Ireland’s Freedom and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to obtain it,” indicating a belief in inevitability (Mac Lochlainn 111).  

In place of the cyclical vision of Irish history, I maintain that the leaders of the Rising took a teleological view of Irish national destiny, envisioning the whole of Irish history as a grand narrative moving inevitably towards the moment of independence. As such, constructing

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9 Heuston is quoting from “The Shan Van Vocht,” an Eighteenth century ballad also quoted in *Ulysses*. I will discuss this ballad further in the following chapter.

10 This places the ideology of the Rising firmly within the intellectual and ideological climate dominant in Western Europe in the early Twentieth century. The Victorian myth of progress had established a sense of history’s inexorable movement towards an inevitable end, and many of the various philosophies that dominated the time
a coherent ideology from the works of the Rising’s architects demands that we account for both the content and the structure of this linear narrative. If we recognize that the ideology pointed towards the *telos* of an Irish Republic, we can make more sense both of the Rising and of Joyce’s response. If Ireland moves inexorably towards its independence, then all events must exist within the framework of that progression. Understanding the Easter Rising, therefore, is largely a matter of understanding that narrative.

Three primary themes appear and reappear throughout the writings of both the Rising’s leaders and their most immediate sympathizers. First, the essential distinctness of the Irish people: a constant refrain in the literature of the Rising is the notion that the Irish are a people unto themselves, unique among the peoples of the world, and wholly separate from the English. While there is little cause to accuse the leaders of racism, this doctrine has, in its most extreme manifestations, led to some rather ugly rhetoric (as we will see when we come to the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*). Second, the authority of history and tradition: the leaders strongly believed that the legacy of rebellion bequeathed to them by previous generations solidified the moral righteousness of their cause. This belief necessarily assumes that the past, if interpreted correctly, can yield a viable narrative of history’s movement towards the inevitability of Irish liberty. Third, the transcendence of patriotic self-sacrifice: the leaders frequently expressed their conviction that a death in service of Ireland offered the prospect of apotheosis. As these deaths bring freedom ever closer, the dead are rewarded for their service with a transformative immortality.

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period—Hegelianism, Marxism, Darwinism, imperialism, nationalism, and eugenics—had been formulated thus, or re-imagined to fit this pattern.
Joyce’s distrust of this ideology will be the focus of the remaining chapters, but first, we will consider these thematic elements in turn.

“The Constancy of Our Race”

Like virtually all rebellions in the postcolonial era, the Easter Rising was predicated upon the essential difference between the colonizer and the colonized. As Kiberd notes, “that movement [for Irish independence] imagined the Irish people as an historic community, whose self-image was constructed long before the era of modern nationalism and the nation-state” (3). For Kiberd, this vision was not racialist in its bent, but pluralist: the rebels “[took] pleasure in the fact that identity is seldom straightforward and given, more often a matter of negotiation and exchange,” rather than “providing a basis for doctrines of racial purity” (3). The men of 1916, Kiberd claims, fought for “cultural,” not racial reasons: “they wanted a land in which Gaelic traditions would be fully honoured” (198). Indeed, the revolutionary laboratory that produced the Easter Rising was non-sectarian and non-exclusive. The Irish republican tradition was largely established by Anglo-Irish Protestants (Tone, Emmet, and Mitchel, among others), rather than Catholics of Gaelic stock. Pearse, Connolly, and the rest took these Protestant heroes as their role models, without a thought towards ethnic or religious divisions. Moreover, the onset of Cultural Nationalism in the late Nineteenth century—a movement to which Pearse, MacDonagh, and Plunkett were heavily indebted—owed its nativity at least as much to the Anglo-Irish Protestant elite (Yeats, Gregory, Hyde, Synge, and others) as to the Catholic Irish. This movement to de-Anglicize and, by extension, re-Gaelicize Ireland has long been seen as the first
stage towards revolution; Kiberd identifies the founding of the Gaelic League in 1893 as “year one of the revolutionists’ calendar” (200). The zeitgeist of this movement was fashioned around the fundamental distinctness, rather than superiority, of the Irish, a people inevitably opposed to the English.

Though not intended to be confrontational, this vision made confrontation unavoidable. Douglas Hyde may not have intended his movement to be political, but politics soon interfered as the Gaelic League attracted increasingly radical members, and other influential figures—Arthur Griffith and Michael Cusack, for instance—pushed cultural nationalism into the realm of separatist politics. A sense of Irish distinctness became inextricably connected to aspirations towards nationhood. For Pearse, a member of the Gaelic League and a dedicated poet and scholar of the Irish language, the first battleground was not the streets of Dublin, but the halls of his school. Pearse’s St. Enda’s, established to counteract the foreign influence of the English educational system in Ireland, used a curriculum designed to produce an able-bodied, able-minded, culturally Irish generation. As Mary Colum, a former teacher at St. Ita’s, the sister school of St. Enda’s, and, coincidentally, a friend of James Joyce, explains:

Both the primary and secondary systems of education had, in the main, the object of Anglicising the country, and some of the schools were succeeding—and are still, of course—in turning out passable imitation Englishmen and Englishwomen with imitation English manners and imitation English accents, though nothing really can impose an Anglo-Saxon civilization on the bulk of the people. They still retain every distinction of race, and the more educated they become the more intensely national are they, as witness the part played by University-bred men and women in the recent revolt. Pearse had been
one of the most important workers in the Gaelic League, which had convinced the 
intelligence of the country that if we were to take our place amongst the nations of the 
earth we must have a distinctly national culture and we must be able to speak our own 
language (270).

The leaders of the Rising, therefore, did not merely view culture as an important, but 
socially constructed difference between the English and the Irish; rather, cultural difference 
became a part of something larger and innate. Their revolutionary program was largely founded 
upon this difference, so that establishing the fundamental distinctness of the Irish people became 
a matter of ontology, and defining the Irish nation meant defining the Irish people. To use the 
language of postcolonialism, their definition was a form of essentialism—that is, the notion that 
a communal identity can be established in fixed, categorical, and authentic terms.\(^{11}\) John C. 
Hawley, in his *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, defines essentialism thus:

> Essentialism is a viewpoint that attempts to explain the properties of a complex whole by 
> reference to a supposed inner truth or essence. Such an approach reduces the complexity 
> of the world to the simplicities of its constituent parts and seeks to explain individuals as 
> automatic products of inner propulsions. Essentialism also operates on the premise that 
> groups, categories, or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to 
> all members of that category (156).

Nationalist essentialism is a response to colonialist essentialism—where the colonizer 
seeks to differentiate between himself and the colonial subject, the nationalist seeks to

\(^{11}\) For a fuller discussion of the matter of "authenticity" in postcolonial literature, see Gareth Griffith’s “The Myth of Authenticity.”
differentiate between himself and the colonial oppressor. In practice, essentialism presumes that a singular, static, and exclusive identity can be ascribed to a given community. In Ireland, we find that the need to demark the Irish people from their colonizers became entwined with identity politics, so that defining an Irish essence became a part of defining the Irish nation. One crucial objection to essentialism is that, by construing identity in limiting terms, it risks alienating minorities.\footnote{For a more thorough refutation of essentialism, see Homi Bhabha’s \textit{The Location of Culture}.} At times, whatever Kiberd’s protestations to the contrary, this essentialism found expression in the language of race. MacDonagh, for example, writes in \textit{Literature in Ireland} of “the ideal held always by the Gaelic race that once dominated Europe—now held by their heir and successor of that race here, the Irish. The calamities of our history have given a voice to that cause. The constancy of our race has given pride to that voice” (14). This is a refrain MacDonagh repeats in the same book with increased militancy:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{The Gaelic revival has given to some of us a new arrogance. I am a Gael and I know no cause but of pride in that…My race has survived the wiles of the foreigner here. It has refused to yield even to defeat and emerges strong to-day, full of hope and of love, with new strength in its arms to work its new destiny, with a new song on its lips and the word of the new language, which is the ancient language, still calling from age to age (167).}
\end{quote}

This association of the Irish people with the Gaelic race was hardly unique to MacDonagh. Pearse, a few short months before the first shots of Easter Week were fired, drew ethnic battle lines for the approaching revolution. “In the coming battle,” wrote Pearse in “Christmas 1915,” “Help the Gael!” (30). John X. Regan would later refer to Pearse as “the Gael of Gaels,” claiming that his “mind was Gaelic in its every fibre” (vii). Even when the
Gaelic race is not mentioned, we find a strain of ethnic pride in the writings of Pearse, MacDonagh, and others. In “The Rebel” Pearse self-identifies thus: “I am come of the seed of the people, the people that sorrow,/That have no treasure but hope,/No riches laid up but a memory/Of an Ancient glory (27). Plunkett says much the same in “This Heritage to the Race of Kings”: “This heritage to the race of kings/Their children and their children’s seed/Have wrought their prophecies in deed/Of terrible and splendid things” (196).

One might well question the accuracy of such ethnocentricity, especially as it seems rooted in an unscientific vision of ethnicity. As Maurice Joy notes in his essay about Casement, “one has heard learned biologists prove that there is no such thing as a distinct Irish race”; however, Joy continues, “it is not biologists who have to settle political difficulties” (300). For Joy, as for Casement and the members of the Military Council, “what matters is that there is a distinct Irish mentality” (300). This distinct mentality, evidently extant in the fact of the Rising, is sufficient grounds to establish an essential difference between the Irish and their colonizers that, if not predicated on racial or ethnic determinism, functions similarly.

Self-identity rooted in essentialist terms inevitably leads to confrontations with the Other. By establishing “Irishness” in terms of Gaelic, or more generally Irish identity, the republican ideology is one which opposes itself to the English colonizers. For Pearse, this is the fundamental truth about the Irish: “That they are greater than those that hold them, and stronger and purer” (“The Rebel” 29). Joseph Plunkett’s vision is much the same: “No alien sword shall earn as wage/The entail of their blood and tears,/No shameful price for peaceful years/Shall ever part this heritage” (196).

Plunkett may write in poetic abstractions, but other members of the military council had a
concrete vision of what heritage the Irish race had lost. For James Connolly, this heritage could be understood in explicitly economic terms. The British imperial presence had, by destroying Irish customs, eradicated an economic system largely predictive of modern socialism. As such, a movement towards independence pointed towards an economic liberation that would reinstitute economic conditions known in Ireland prior to the Viking and Norman conquests. As Robert Lynd writes, in his introduction to a posthumously published edition of *Labour in Ireland*:

> He aimed, like Sir Horace Plunkett at the reconstruction of Irish civilisation, but he aimed at its reconstruction on the basis of the civilisation which had given Ireland a place in the community of nations before the Dane and the Norman had laid it to waste with fire and sword. He wanted to go back as well as forward to the Golden Age—to recover the old Gaelic fellowship and culture…Democracy did not mean to him a hard-and-fast theory or an invented political machine. It meant the re-discovery of an ancient justice and freedom and friendliness. He desired Irishmen to see Socialism not as something imported from the Continent but as a development of the best tradition of Irish life (xxii).

Even Connolly’s Irish Citizen Army, the most politically liberal of the forces involved, drew battle lines along essentialist criteria, even adopting the language of race. Nora Connolly recalls the ICA marching to a confrontational tune:

> And when we meet the Saxon we’ll drive them all to Hell.  
> We’ve got to free our country, and avenge all those who fell  
> And our cause is marching on.  
> Glory, glory to old Ireland,  
> Glory, glory to our sireland,
Glory to the memory of those who fought and fell,

And we still keep marching on” (36).

Such militancy was hardly unique to the ICA; the INV had long sung “A Soldier’s Song” (later translated into Irish as “Amhran na bhFiann” and adopted as the national anthem of the Republic of Ireland), which could be heard in the General Post Office during Easter Week. The lyrics oppose the “children of a fighting race”—the so called “Sons of the Gael”—against the “Saxon foe.” This refrain is similar to those uttered throughout the course of Irish history: Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland. Distinguishing between the indigenous population and the colonizers was paramount to establishing these claims: as the people of Ireland are distinct from their colonizers, the colonizers could have no proprietary rights in Ireland. And so, we find this refrain repeated in the last words of the rebels, from Connolly:

Believing that the British Government has no right in Ireland, never had any right in Ireland, and never can have any right in Ireland, the presence, in any one generation of Irishmen, of even a respectable minority, ready to die to affirm that truth, makes that Government a usurpation and a crime against human progress” (Mac Lochlainn 189).

to MacDonagh:

You would all be proud to die for Britain, your Imperial patron, and I am proud and happy to die for Ireland, my glorious Fatherland (Mac Lochlainn 55).

to Casement:

With all respect I assert this Court is to me, an Irishman, not a jury of my peers to try me in this vital issue, for it is patent to every man of conscience that I have a right, an indefeasible right, if tried at all, under this statute of high treason, to be tried in Ireland,
before an Irish Court and by an Irish jury (Mac Lochlainn 198).

This first part of the narrative is of the utmost importance in that it establishes the necessary grounds for all rebellions. It provides a moral justification: the English are alien usurpers, a colonial “other” whose presence in Ireland is, and always has been, a violation of the natural order. While this is hardly unique to Ireland, having been replayed in the postcolonial era across the outposts of the British, French, Italian, Belgian, and Dutch Empires, Ireland’s position as the first colonial laboratory means that the Irish were among the first to formulate this kind of essentialist vision. The result, of course, is the established grounds for rebellion. If the Irish are distinct, and if distinctness can be parlayed into the concrete reality of statehood, then the Irish merit their own state. This belief had the added benefit of justifying all prior attempts to liberate Ireland from English rule. Such justification was reciprocal in its nature. If essentialist views demanded Irish liberation, Irish efforts towards liberation demanded essentialist views. For the leaders of the Easter Rising, the past was a well-spring of such demands.

**The Heirs of Tone and Emmet**

A critical feature of this ideology is that the legitimacy of Ireland’s aspirations towards nationhood—and the violent means taken to achieve such aspirations—are rooted in the failed rebellions which have characterized Irish history sporadically since the island first came under English rule. The language of the Proclamation of 1916, read aloud by Pearse on the steps of the General Post Office to derisive response from bemused onlookers, is telling in this regard. The opening paragraph asserts that it is through “the dead generations” that Ireland “receives her old tradition of nationhood” (Mac Lochlainn 1). The third paragraph further solidifies this claim, by noting that “in every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and
sovereignty; six times during the last three hundred years they have asserted it in arms” (Mac Lochlainn 1). Rebecca Graff-McRae argues of the Proclamation that “in writing the history of the nation—state or ethnic group, it seeks to write the nation itself” (5). For the signatories of the Proclamation, as for many of their comrades, the history of Ireland—particularly the history of Irish rebellion against British oppression—provides the context for Ireland’s claim to nationhood. The claim has precedent, which renders it legitimate.

Such claims were hardly unique to Pearse, having been constant throughout nationalist rhetoric since the end of the 1798 Rising. Nor were these words new to Pearse in 1916, the role of history having been a constant theme in his political writings in the years preceding the Rising. In “Ghosts,” written in 1915, Pearse argues that the “ghosts of dead men have bequeathed a trust to us living men…and they must be appeased, whatever the cost” (221). The trust Pearse speaks of is clarified in the opening section of the essay as “the national demand of Ireland,” a “fixed and determined” demand for nationhood “that we of this generation receive…as a trust from our fathers” (230). As “Ireland’s historic claim is for separation…the man who, in the name of ‘a final settlement’ accepts anything less by one fraction of one iota than Separation from England will be repudiated by the new generation as surely as O’Connell was repudiated by the generation that came after him” (Pearse 231). In a speech given in 1914, just as Joyce had begun the composition of the Ulysses, Pearse, expressing frustration with the conciliatory efforts of Home Rule-minded politicians, exclaimed that “either we are the heirs to [Tone’s and Emmet’s] principles or we are not” (Pearse 78). The latter option amounts to a betrayal of their legacy; the former option is the only acceptable course.

More than merely rejecting conciliation, Pearse’s ideology is one that promotes
affirmation of Irish national sovereignty through negation of all that falls beyond his vision. For Pearse, the world existed in black and white, a belief built from a profound heritage of patriotic self-sacrifice. The patriot dead, for Pearse, as for Yeats’ poor old woman, or the Citizen in *Ulysses*, live still in memory. This memory of the dead, and the legitimacy that memory confers upon insurrectionary nationalism, famously characterizes Pearse’s rhetoric. In his best-known speech, the Funeral Oration for the Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, Pearse equates the names of Irish patriots with his own political program: “And we know only one definition of freedom: it is Tone’s definition, it is Mitchel’s definition, it is Rossa’s definition” (135). To stray from this definition in any way is to “blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served” (Pearse 135). The conclusion of the speech is even more explicit: “the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace” (Pearse 137).

Padraic Colum, an acquaintance of the rebels and a friend of Joyce, writing of Pearse’s skill as a rhetorician, claimed that “he never worked up his audience into tears about the past woes of Ireland; he made them passionately eager to struggle for the future” (282). Pearse’s rhetoric always points towards the future, that inevitable day of victory, but the past was tremendously important to the ideology that shaped Easter Week. James Reidy, in an essay about the Irish Republican Brotherhood, summarizes this ideology thus:

[England’s] firing squads, her gibbets, her jails, her malignity and her wiles have again failed to crush the love of liberty to which the Irish race has clung during more than

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13 Though Pearse was, in the end, more tolerant of other visions, at least publicly. Of Eoin MacNeill, whose countermand order severely limited the manpower of the Rising, Pearse said that, like the rebels, he had “acted in the best interests of Ireland” (11).
seven centuries of outrage and oppression. The torch which dropped from the dead hands of the Irish martyrs of 1916 has been taken up by others and relighted and the Irish nation keeps resolutely to the path along which the patriots and martyrs of the past have toiled and suffered during the long, dark and dreary centuries through which the people of Ireland have clung to their faith in ultimate freedom, inspired by the trust in the justice of God (265-66).

Reidy’s metaphorical torch was one the Rising’s leaders claimed to have received from earlier generations. We find here a rather concise summary of the vision which dominated the Easter Rising: the heroics of the current generation are justified by the heroics of their metaphorical fathers in the revolutionary tradition, and will, in turn, justify the heroics of the new generation until Ireland becomes a free nation.

That the leaders borrowed the authority of precedent is beyond dispute, but their relationship with Ireland’s revolutionaries extended beyond the lionization of prominent role models. Indeed, the Military Council approached the past as living evidence of Ireland’s inevitable march to independence. Framing their ideology as a teleological narrative meant that the leaders, by necessity, interpreted past occasion in reference to the presumed end. This brand of master narrative appears frequently in Joyce’s fiction, most notably in “Nestor,” where its spokesman, ironically enough, is Mr. Deasy, the novel’s most vociferously Unionist character. Deasy’s formulation corresponds, in structure if not in content, with prevailing Nineteenth and early Twentieth century approaches to the past: “Vico, Hegel, Darwin, and Marx agree with Mr. Deasy in finding a significant pattern among historical events,” claims Donoghue, and “they differ only in naming the particular pattern each finds there” (110).
To Donoghue’s roster we might add the Military Council of 1916, particularly Pearse and Connolly, the rebel leaders whose work is most dominated by interpretations of Ireland’s national past. While their methodology and conclusions were certainly distinct, both Connolly and Pearse believed that the national past could be understood by recognizing the active logic of identifiable trends. In other words, both presumed that, by delineating patterns, one could fashion a viable method for understanding, interpreting, and subsequently narrating the past. Inherent to such presumptions is the notion that the application of the correct interpretive method to the national past would yield a correct narrative of that past, one which avoids the misprisions of less accurate versions (such as those manufactured by capitalist and imperialist ideologies).

Before proceeding, it is necessary to clarify the terms I will use when we explore the role of nationalist interpretations of the past in Joyce’s fiction. Building from Stephen’s own distinction between history “how it was in some way” and how the past was “fabled by the daughters of memory,” I intend to distinguish between the two halves of this division by terming the former History (that is, the comprehensive sum of all events in all their truth) and the latter Storiella (that is, the narrative expression of those events in language, replete with the omissions, obscurations, obfuscations, and alterations that all storytelling brings to bear upon that which is being narrated). While my first term probably needs no further explanation, my choice of Storiella for the second half of the division derives from Joyce’s own use of the word in *Finnegans Wake*. “Nightlessons,” the second chapter of Book II, was published in part in 1937 under the working title *Storiella as she is Syung*. While Roland McHugh translates “Storiella” from the Italian into “story” or “fib” (267), he fails to note that the word is a derivation of the Italian *storia*, which means “history.” As such, Storiella is a convenient term, in that it combines
history, narrative, and fabrication in a single word. Distinguishing between History and Storiella, then, should highlight the distinction between the idealized, formlike existence of the past postulated by Stephen and the corrupted version resultant from attempts to understand the former in symbolic, narrative expression.

The leaders of the Easter Rising made no such distinction, assuming that their methodology could yield an accurate, true narrative of Ireland’s past. For Connolly, understanding the past is a matter of scientific method; by applying an iron-clad, logical formula to the sequence of events, one could fashion a narrative akin to what I’ve termed History. For Pearse, the reality of the past is virtually a neo-Platonic gnosis, best expressed in prophetic and mystical terms. Divergent though these notions may be in content, they are alike in structure: in short, they presume that an interpretation of what happened can only be valid if it follows certain correct patterns of analysis. As such, both men seek to exceed the limits of Storiella to reach History itself.

Connolly’s work is a suitable starting point, as he alone among the rebels endeavored to write a full-scale scholarly treatment of Ireland’s past. In Labour in Ireland and The Re-Conquest of Ireland, Connolly explains the social forces which shaped Ireland’s present in its past through the application of Marxist methodology. As Austen Morgan notes, “it was the Marxism of the 1880s which formed [Connolly’s] intellectual diet. All the characteristics of what can be termed evolutionism, the view that history was moving of its own accord towards a superior state, were evident in Connolly’s later writings. His theory remained derivative throughout his life” (17). Derivative though this theory was, Connolly adopted his derivations of vulgar Marxism to suit his nationalist leanings, an amendment to vulgar Marxism in evidence
even before the Rising, by which time Connolly had concluded “that history was (ultimately) on the side of Irish nationalism, an assumption which underpinned everything he wrote about contemporary politics” (Morgan 105). As such, Morgan asserts that “Connolly adhered to a nationalist worldview, constructed around the concept of an Irish nation, in which statehood for Ireland was inscribed in a teleological version of history” (81). This revolutionary fervor was not abstract, as Peter Berresford Ellis notes:

As a Marxist Connolly accepted the Marxist analysis of society and nowhere did he attempt to dilute or change it. But to Connolly Marxism was not some dogma or some new plan for a system…it was a method of analysis, a science, with the objective of taking action. Indeed, Engels saw it as ‘nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought.’ As did Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, Connolly accepted Marxism as a basic philosophy and guide. He set about applying that philosophy and guiding principles to Irish conditions as Lenin and Mao so applied them to their own countries and their own cultures (52).

Connolly’s explanation of this science fits well with vulgar Marxism, borrowing the approach and applying it to Ireland’s history. In “Labour, Nationality and Religion,” an essay written in response to the criticisms of socialism voiced by Father Robert Kane, a Dublin Jesuit, Connolly attempts to explain the operative mechanism of socialist thought in what may be his clearest, most direct explanation of Marxist methodology:

It teaches that the ideas of men are derived from their material surroundings, and that the forces which made and make for historical changes and human progress had and have their roots in the development of the tools men have used in their struggle for existence,
using the word ‘tools’ in its broadest possible sense to include all the social forces of wealth-production. It teaches that since the break-up of common ownership and the clan community all human history has turned around the struggle of contending classes in society—one class striving to retain possession, first of the persons of the other class and hold them as chattel slaves, and then of the tools of the other class and hold them as wage-slaves. That all the politics of the world resolved themselves in the last analysis into a struggle for the possession of that portion of the fruits of labour which labour creates, but does not enjoy, i.e., rent, interest, profit (Connolly 70).

In Connolly’s own words, we find the presumption of a formula by which the interpretation of the past might viably proceed. While Connolly does not necessarily subscribe to every tenet of vulgar Marxism—specifically, he makes room for a non-materialist viewpoint—he nonetheless follows this formula in his study of Ireland’s past. For Connolly, the past can be adequately narrated if the historian approaches the subject through the appropriate interpretive prism. Connolly was, of course, aware that biased, ideologically-driven interpretations can cloud an objective reality, but these manipulations were, to him, largely the product of a capitalist system’s efforts to maintain hegemony. Socialism, as an interpretive mechanism, according to Connolly, could provide an answer, revealing through the study of class dynamics, a version of the past narratively arranged that is History itself.

Pearse, though he never attempted a full-scale study of Ireland’s national past, approached the subject through an ideological prism as well. For Pearse, the History of Ireland can only be understood as a continuous power struggle between England and Ireland. Establishing this conflict as the fundamental dynamic at play throughout the centuries, Pearse
argues for a communal relationship with the past marked by obligation. In his essays about Ireland’s rebellious past, Pearse emphasizes process as much as he emphasizes personality: extraordinary figures (Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, and Pearse himself) are subsumed into the insurrectionary tradition, transformed into symbols of an ongoing struggle. This struggle to liberate Ireland from English rule is what drives the Irishman towards the future, as evidenced by his preface to 1915’s “Ghosts”:

> Here be ghosts that I have raised this Christmastide, ghosts of dead men that have bequeathed a trust to us living men. Ghosts are troublesome things in a house or in a family, as we knew even before Ibsen taught us. There is only one way to appease a ghost. You must do the thing it asks you. The ghosts of a nation sometimes ask big things; and they must be appeased, whatever the cost (221).

For Pearse, the Irish past operates as a ghostly, spiritual heritage of “Separatism,” “the natural position” for the Irish people (238). This natural position, according to Pearse, began in 1169, when the first Norman invaders arrived on Irish shores (232). While Pearse wrote at times of pre-conquest Ireland, typically in romanticized terms, his primary interest was the tradition of resistance, “the chain of the Separatist tradition,” which he claimed “has never once been snapped during the centuries” (238). This tradition was, of course, not an impersonal force; the contemporary Irishmen owed his allegiance to this phenomenon by virtue of his birth. Two years before publishing “Ghosts,” in a speech given at the grave of Theobold Wolfe Tone, Pearse explained his own position as part of this unbroken chain:

> We who speak here to-night are the voice of one of the ancient indestructible things of the world... We are older than England and we are stronger than England. In every
generation we have renewed the struggle, and so it shall be unto the end. When England thinks she has trampled out our battle in blood, some brave man rises and rallies us again; when England thinks she has purchased us with a bribe, some good man redeems us by a sacrifice (76).

While clearly distinct in substance from Connolly’s approach, Pearse’s methodology takes a similar shape. Like Connolly, Pearse applies a particular interpretive apparatus towards the past: for Connolly it is an account of economic and social forces, while for Pearse it is the tradition of insurrection. Both men maintained that the past was more than a distant antiquity; crucial to both Pearse and Connolly is the relationship between the past and the present, a formula of interpretation by which insurrection is justified. As Linda Orr notes, “the ‘focalization’ (point of view) of history in terms of the present or a desired present produces an automatic internal teleology, the ‘optical illusion’ of history” (15-16). Taking Orr’s insight into account, and combining that insight with Stephen’s speculative imaginings in “Nestor,” we might summarize the shared beliefs of Connolly and Pearse as follows:

1. The application of the correct interpretive formula to the past yields access to History.
2. History, once uncovered, is distinct from Storiella. Unlike those narrative accounts of the past emerging from incoherent interpretive mechanisms (Storiella), those wrought from the correct methodology are true (History).
3. History provides a context for both the present and the future. If known, we can account both for the realities of contemporary life and its inevitable telos.

From this somewhat general appeal to the authority of the past, we proceed to a more particular understanding of the past’s heroes. The authority of precedent is certainly vital, but
the events of the past are ultimately secondary to a reverence for Irish martyrdom.

A Cleansing and a Sanctifying Thing

As mentioned above, popular understanding of the Rising has long hinged upon a vision of the insurrection as a blood sacrifice enacted by the leadership to cleanse Ireland. While controversy exists as to the accuracy of this understanding, there is little doubt that the trope of self-sacrifice to a higher cause characterizes the discourse surrounding the Rising and its aftermath. Fearghal McGarry has pointed to two distinct visions of blood sacrifice found among the Rising’s leaders: the mysticism typically attributed to Pearse, and the more pragmatic—and commonly held—aim of asserting independence even in the face of defeat to sustain the movement. For McGarry, distinguishing between the two is vital, though he acknowledges that confusion is almost unavoidable, as “the language in which both concepts were expressed was so similar” (100). As such, the distinction McGarry finds has largely faded from common understanding, leaving us a pervasive, if overly simplistic, vision of the Rising. Given the doubts raised by McGarry and Norsedt concerning the actual intentions of the rebels in 1916, we must wade into the theme of martyrdom at some risk. If, as McGarry argues, the rational beliefs of some have been inaccurately conflated with the irrational beliefs of others, this assumed impulse towards martyrdom may well be a more complex matter than has been conventionally acknowledged.

In military terms, the expectation of possible, even probable death is so common as to be mundane. The Rising occurred two years into the Great War, a time in Europe when the zeitgeist
could best be described in Horace’s words: “dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.” In this regard, at least, the revolutionaries of 1916 were not so different from the thousands of young men who died at Suvla or the Somme. “I die for my country,” Casement reportedly said before his execution, asserting a common, even pedestrian understanding of patriotic duty (Mac Lochlainn 322). This appeal to patriotism can also be found in the words of MacDonagh, who, speaking from the dock, said, “I am proud and happy to die for Ireland, my glorious Fatherland” (Mac Lochlainn 55). MacDonagh’s final public words even invoke Horace to explain his actions to his Imperial audience:

> It would not be seemly for me to go to my doom without trying to express, however inadequately, my sense of the high honour I enjoy in being one of those predestined to die in this generation for the cause of Irish freedom. You will, perhaps, understand this sentiment, for it is one to which an Imperial poet of a bygone age bore immortal testimony: ‘’Tis sweet and glorious to die for one’s country’ (Mac Lochlainn 55).

Such notions are consistent with those voiced by other leaders, most of whom seemed convinced that their patriotic sacrifice was a noble and happy death. Plunkett reportedly said as much on the morning of his execution: “I am very happy. I am dying for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland” (Mac Lochlainn 96). Ceannt, in his final letter to his wife, emphasized the honor of his cause: “I die a noble death, for Ireland’s freedom” (Mac Lochlainn 141). For Clarke, it was the prospect of eventual victory that allowed for a cheerful end: “In this belief,” he wrote, “we die happy” (Mac Lochlainn 45).

However typical such happy deaths may have been in the years of the Great War, the
leaders of the Easter Rising, following long-standing rhetorical traditions in nationalist rhetoric, considered a patriot’s death to be the achievement of martyrdom. In its particularly Irish nationalist version, martyrdom implies something transformative; as Richard Kearney argues,

In brief [martyrdom] obeys the laws of myth, not politics: it operates on the assumption that victory can only spring from defeat, and total rejuvenation of the community from the oblation of a chosen hero or heroic elite. But while myth seeks to transcend the logic of pragmatic political action, it can nonetheless influence the political consciousness of a people in a significant manner (36).

To become a martyr, then, is to transcend the limits of the ordinary. To resign one’s part in the casual comedy of life, as Yeats recognized, was to become something new, to become a member of an elite fraternity, to join that legion of the patriot dead. In so doing, the patriot could effectively achieve apotheosis. Consider the words Sean MacDiarmada wrote to the Fenian John Daly, on the eve of his execution:

I have been sentenced to a soldier’s death—to be shot tomorrow morning. I have nothing to say about this only that I look on it as a part of the day’s work. We die that the Irish nation may live. Our blood will rebaptise and reinvigorate the old land. Knowing this it is superfluous to say how happy I feel (Mac Lochlainn 171).

We find here both the conventions of patriotic death (“a soldier’s death” that is “a part of the day’s work”) and a clear intimation of transcendence. By borrowing the language of Catholic theology, McDermott draws a connection between his sacrifice and that of Christ, suggesting a renewal achievable only though a willingness to shed one’s own blood; the blood provides the old land the nourishment to grow again. While these may be rhetorical flourishes
rather than explicit dogma, it is easy, consciously or not, to conflate the two. Such sentiments
were not unique to McDermott; even Connolly, who had once publically abjured the mystic
strain of martyrdom found in the writings of prominent nationalists, used similar language two
months before the Rising:

No agency less powerful than the red tide of war on Irish soil will ever be able to enable
the Irish race to recover its self-respect, or establish its national dignity in the face of a
world horrified and scandalized by what must seem to them our national apostasy.

Without the slightest trace of irreverence, but in all due humility and awe we recognize
that of us, as of mankind at Calvary, it must truly be said, ‘without the shedding of blood
there is no redemption’ (qtd. in Newsinger 616).

While Connolly and McDermott were both gripped by a willingness to sacrifice their
blood, the main spokesman for this desire was Padraic Pearse. According to Sean Farrell Moran,
Pearse was convinced that Ireland’s freedom was achievable only “through the self-destructive
yet regenerative and ultimately liberating act of self-immolation” (201).\(^\text{14}\) Throughout Pearse’s
work, we find the notions that “bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing,” and that self-
sacrifice is the only means by which the Irish nation can be redeemed (Pearse 99). While such
notions are fairly standard poetic tropes, Pearse’s apparent decision to enact these tropes in real
life has led Moran, in “Patrick Pearse and the European Revolt Against Reason,” to declare that
“what [Pearse] was really doing was attempting to reinvent the myth mimetically” (639) In other

\(^{14}\)This obsession with blood-sacrifice is, according to Moran, rooted in both Christian and Celtic Pagan notions,
“found in the transformation symbolism of the Eucharist” and in the figure of Cuchulain, who “was transformed into
an unstoppable warrior by his warp spasm” (Moran 198). These conceptions, though philosophically disparate, are
relatable in that in both “the Christian and Celtic concepts of transformation, base elements are miraculously
changed into heavenly and divine ones” (Moran 198-99).
words, “Pearse appears to have sought what his rational mind could not furnish by living out the sacrifice that is at the heart of the myth” (Moran 639-40).

Whatever we might make of Moran’s psychoanalytic approach to Pearse’s actions, we should surely recognize that Pearse’s rhetoric relied heavily upon the common patterns of death and resurrection, ascribable not only to Christianity, but dozens of mythoi around the world. Like Connolly, MacDonagh, and, later, Yeats, Pearse connects his impending sacrifice to the health of the Irish land, ascribing the powers of fertility to his own blood. Such rhetoric becomes virtually indistinguishable from ideological imperatives when Pearse applies these notions to his predecessors in the Irish separatist tradition. Among the venerated Irish martyrs for whom he held an almost religious admiration was Robert Emmet, whose rebellion was a military farce even compared to the mere week of fighting that Pearse and his cohorts managed. Even the idealistic Pearse was fully aware of this, noting that “no failure, judged as the world judges these things, was ever more complete, more pathetic than Emmet’s” (69). Pearse found this failure poignantly moving, as it offered Ireland “the memory of a sacrifice Christ-like in its perfection” (69). This comparison between Emmet and Christ dominates Pearse’s “Robert Emmet and the Ireland of Today,” where his description of Emmet’s execution implicitly connects the martyrdom of the rebel to the Passion of Christ. The essay focuses upon the violence of the execution itself and the sufferings of the rebel (“they say [his body] swung for half-an-hour, with terrible contortions, before he died”), consciously recalling the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross (70-71). And just as the crucifixion is followed by the Resurrection, Pearse asserts “that such a death always means redemption”; in this case the salvation is that of Ireland “from acquiescence in the Union” (71).
Pearse’s intentions towards martyrdom were even more explicit once he put his ideals into practice. His order to surrender was predicated on a desire to save innocent lives; lives for which he was willing to give his own, as evidenced by this letter to his mother:

Our hope and belief is that the Government will spare the lives of all our followers, but we do not expect that they will spare the lives of the leaders. We are ready to die and we shall die cheerfully and proudly. Personally I do not hope or even desire to live, but I do hope and desire and believe that the lives of all our followers will be saved including the lives dear to you and me (my own excepted) and this will be a great consolation to me when dying (Mac Lochlainn 19).

Having expressed such sentiments privately, he also voiced them publicly at his Courtmartial:

I fully understand now, as then, that my own life is forfeit to British law, and I shall die very cheerfully if I can think that the British Government, as it has already shown itself strong, will now show itself magnanimous enough to accept my single life in forfeiture and give a general amnesty to the brave men and boys who have fought at my bidding (Mac Lochlainn 27-28).

It was the death for which Pearse had long been preparing. “When I was a child of ten,” said Pearse to the court, “I went down on my bare knees by my bedside one night and promised God that I should devote my life to an effort to free my country. I have kept that promise” Mac Lochlainn (28). That promise, he believed, solidified his status as a martyr to Ireland’s freedom. This belief was shared by MacDonagh, whose sentiments express a similar vision of transcendent sacrifice:
Gentlemen, you have sentenced me to death, and I accept your sentence with joy and pride, since it is for Ireland I am to die. I go to join the goodly company of the men who died for Ireland, the least of whom was worthier far than I can claim to be, and that noble band are, themselves, but a small section of the great unnumbered army of martyrs whose Captain is the Christ who died on Calvary. Of every white-robed knight in that goodly company we are the spiritual kin. The forms of heroes flit before my vision, and there is one, the star of whose destiny sways my own; there is one the keynote of whose nature chimes harmonious with the swan-song of my soul. It is the great Florentine, whose weapon was not the sword but prayer and preaching. The seed he sowed fructifies to this day in God’s Church. Take me away, and let my blood bedew the sacred soil of Ireland. I die in the certainty that once more the seed will fructify (Mac Lochlainn 56).

We find this refrain repeated throughout the words of those executed: that one’s blood, when given freely for Ireland, can renew the Irish land. We may conclude that the leaders of the Rising envisioned their sacrifice as regenerative. The Rising, then, becomes, if only metaphorically, a fertility ritual, providing transcendence and, if unintentionally, a sense of eroticism. Nowhere is the eroticism attendant upon martyrdom more clear than in the words of Padraic Pearse, whose discourse frequently employs sexualized figurative language.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) A detailed exploration of Pearse’s sexuality is unnecessary, though it does bear mentioning that his sexual inexperience seems to be connected to the fervor of his patriotic idealism. According to Moran, Pearse’s earliest literary work included depictions of “passionate heterosexual love, but he ceased writing about it when he reached adolescence,” apparently as a result of “an almost conscious decision; at the time in life when sexual identity is confirmed and controlled, [he] successfully avoided facing his own instinctual drives and retreated into largely patriotic dramas” (Moran 123). By sublimating his sexual predilections into the realm of patriotic self-sacrifice, Pearse fashioned an ideology dominated by “his eroticization of death and violence” (Moran 197). Having rejected sexual congress, likely without having had sexual experiences of any kind, Pearse found the replacement in nationalism (Moran 122).
Pearse’s “Renunciation,” a poem written shortly before his death, most clearly “reaffirms the sexual tension at the core of the nationalist commitment to Ireland” (Moran 154). In the poem, the speaker, confronted with the naked body of the “beauty of beauty” blinds himself, “for fear [he] should fail” in his mission, vague until the final stanza when it is revealed that “the deed [he] must see” is “the death [he] shall die” (36). Death takes the place of sexual pleasure, rendering death itself erotic. His political discourse takes this trope further by frequently connecting the loss of Irish liberty to castration: “it has made of some Irishmen not slaves merely, but very eunuchs” (8-9).16 In an article published in 1913, Pearse paints the impending insurrection against British rule as the reclamation of Irish manhood. Under the British aegis, “men…have ceased to be men” in Ireland (Pearse 194). By “suffering ourselves to be disarmed, in acquiescing in a perpetual disarmament,” the men of Ireland have been emasculated (Pearse 195). By taking up arms against the English, giving one’s blood freely in the pursuit of an Irish nation, the Irish could redeem themselves and their nation, thereby reestablishing sexual potency.

As Joseph Valente notes, Pearse worried that “the colonial subjacency of the Irish people would in fact be justified if they did in truth harbor the ‘feminine characteristics’ attributed to them” by their British colonizers. Reestablishing masculinity, Valente explains, was possible only “through a virile display of cultural resistance” (193). We may expand upon Valente’s

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16 Pearse’s precise subject here is education, specifically the system developed by the English, in his words, “make us its willing or at least manageable slaves” (8). As an educator, Pearse saw the classroom as a battleground to fight imperialism through curriculum designed with Irish cultural values as the guiding principle. His opinion of the state-sponsored educational program is best expressed by the title of the essay: “The Murder Machine.”
claim by adding that military, more than cultural, resistance was the means to restore this lost, or latent, virility. It is a familiar trope in the patriotic literature of Ireland, one that, according to Sarah McKibben, “links cultural loss with loss of manhood, and Anglicization and political subordination with emasculation” (100). When cultural resistance slipped into political separatism, the solution Pearse found was for Ireland to take up arms, thereby reestablishing potency. Whether or not Pearse was conscious of the phallic symbolism that weaponry carries is irrelevant; the sexual undertones of his language are clear. Arming, however, is merely one step that the Irishman must take towards erotically satisfying patriotic activity. Violence surely follows, but the violence of revolution is largely beside the point. The aim is to die, so nationalist literature, including and especially the work of Pearse, “[substituted] the act of blood sacrifice, the heroic encounter with certain death, for the act of erotic love as a means of attaining sovereignty” (Valente 197).

It is not merely sexual satisfaction that is sublimated into nationalist ideology in Pearse’s philosophy, but the reproductive process itself. “From the graves of patriot men and women,” Pearse exclaimed at Rossa’s grave, “spring living nations” (136-37). In such symbolic fashion, “life springs from death” (Pearse 136). The consequence of a death for country is the birth of country itself, rendering the process of self-sacrifice an act of fertilization and the blood of the dying patriot akin to semen, thereby equating the spilling of blood to ejaculation, whether through the hanging and decapitation of Emmet or the shooting of Pearse and his comrades.

The Rising may not have immediately produced a liberated Irish nation, but the generative function of the leaders’ sacrifice was no fantasy. Their deaths produced the intended

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17 McGibbon traces the history of this rhetoric from the United Irishmen, through Thomas Davis, to Pearse himself.
short-term consequence, winning new converts to the nationalist cause and reviving the tradition
of violent resistance to English rule. It is no exaggeration to term the Easter Rising the seminal
moment in the development of modern Ireland. Future attempts to liberate Ireland from British
rule would adopt the martyrs of 1916 as role models, and the ideas cherished by these leaders
would influence subsequent generations of Irish rebels immensely. The remainder of this study
will focus upon these ideas, charting the ways in which these themes appear in *Ulysses* and
*Finnegans Wake*. We will begin, as does *Ulysses*, with Stephen, Mulligan, and Haines, in the
Martello Tower.
Chapter Two:

The Sassenach Wants His Morning Rashers

A convenient point of reference for this study is Yeats’ *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, a play that had premiered a mere two years prior to the action of *Ulysses*. The story is well-known: a poor old woman (in Irish, *an sean bhean bhocht*) has been seen stalking the countryside surrounding Kilalla on the eve of the 1798 Rising. She comes to the house of the Gillane family on the night before Peter Gillane’s wedding, complaining of strangers in her house, who had put her onto the roads after taking her four green fields. She asks not for alms, but for Peter’s life; in return she offers a sort of immortality, to be “remembered forever” (*Plays* 92). As she leaves, Peter has forgotten the wedding altogether. Hearing that the French are landing on the Irish shore, he runs out of the house as if entranced, in search of the mysterious visitor. The poor old woman has vanished, but has been transformed into “a young girl” with “the walk of a queen” (*Plays* 93)

The play is, of course, an allegory, with the poor old woman representative of Ireland itself. The four green fields are the four provinces of Ireland (Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connacht), and the strangers are the English, a conventional term used for the Saxon (or in Irish, *Sassenach*) colonizers. As such, the play draws its lines of conflict along essentialist, ethnocentric criteria. The Irish are opposed to the English stranger; though no Englishman appears in the play, the implications of the Old Woman’s speech are starkly clear. To this ethnic dichotomy is introduced a third race, the French, whose landing in Killala signals the coming of revolution and the occasion for patriotic apotheosis.
Joyce was familiar with *Cathleen ni Houlihan*; in *My Brother’s Keeper*, Stanislaus Joyce writes that his brother “was scornful and indignant that Yeats should write such political and dramatic claptrap” (184). The Joyce brothers were, of course, in the minority, as *Cathleen ni Houlihan* “was received with rapturous applause” by the multitudes (*MBK* 184). Though it predates the Easter Rising by almost exactly fourteen years, the play’s influence upon the emerging revolutionary culture would later cause Yeats concern:

> I lie awake night after night  
> And never get the answers right.  
> Did that play of mine send out  

Maria Tymoczko rather definitively answers in the affirmative: “by fusing Irish patriotic history with themes of the dispossession, the folk ideal, Christian martyrdom, and a heroic thirst for fame, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* set the stage for the Easter Rising” (105).¹ Such themes, crucial to the ideology surrounding the Easter Rising, suggest that we may rightly consider the play a founding document of the developing radicalism; it is as concise a summary of Pearse’s vision of patriotic self-sacrifice as anything Pearse himself would write. While Yeats’s “September 1913” had castigated Pearse’s generation for failing to live up to these ideals a mere year before Joyce had begun writing *Ulysses*—and a mere three years before the Easter Rising—the influence of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* on the emerging ideology attracted Joyce’s attention. Though unaware of the coming events, Joyce nonetheless responds to this ideology infiltrating Irish politics, taking

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¹ Tymoczko’s analysis is hardly universal. Roger McHugh quotes a veteran of the Rising who, when asked about Yeats’ “Man and the Echo,” dismissed the poet’s concerns rather succinctly: “He should have slept” (110).
Yeats’s play as one of the sources used in structuring the first episode of *Ulysses*. While the play’s call to martyrdom will be crucial to this study later, our present concern is with Joyce’s appropriation of its essentialism.

The first apparent reference to *Cathleen ni Houlihan* is an indirect one. Setting his opening chapter in the Martello tower where he had lived for a time in 1904, Joyce begins with a clear reminder of the English colonial presence in Ireland, as these towers which dot the Irish coast had been built with the intention of preventing a French invasion. Mulligan says as much: “Billy Pitt had them built…when the French were on the sea” (1.543-44). As Mabel P. Worthington notes in her catalogue of Irish folk songs in *Ulysses*, Joyce here alludes to an Eighteenth century Irish ballad, “The Shan Van Vocht” (323). The title, of course, is an Anglicized spelling of the Irish sean bhean bhocht, which, when translated, provides the name given in the *dramatis personae* to the Yeats’s Poor Old Woman, who will soon appear in the form of the old milkwoman.

While Joyce is playing upon a long-standing tradition in Irish nationalist allegory, one which predates Yeats and his play by more than a century, the most immediate frame of

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2 While the towers were no longer used for this purpose by 1904, the tower’s residents nonetheless pay their rent to the British Secretary of State for War, making the imperial subtext of their home all the more clear. The threat posed by the French had long since subsided, though the tower does serve as a reminder of the lingering danger of foreign invasion, specifically from Germany. By the time Joyce began *Ulysses*, the danger of French support for an Irish revolution had been replaced by the danger posed by German support, and both Unionists and Nationalists were importing German arms through Irish ports. Of particular note is the fatal Howth Gunrunning, occurring on the other side of the bay from (and almost in view of) Joyce’s tower.

3 Intriguingly enough, Sean Heuston quotes this same song in the letter to his sister written while imprisoned for his part in the Easter Rising (quoted in the previous chapter): “Ireland shall be free/From the centre to the sea.”

4 Worthington identifies three other allusions to the song: one in “Cyclops” and two in “Circe” (323).
reference for Joyce’s parody is *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, as Yeats’s play was the version most contemporary to both the setting and the composition of Joyce’s novel. Given Joyce’s antipathy to the play, it seems plausible that Joyce may have appropriated elements from *Cathleen* for subversive purposes. As such, the ethnic dynamics of Yeats’ play are explicitly recast in “Telemachus,” so as to render the allegory absurd. Before the novel’s version of the *sean bhean bhocht* even makes her appearance, Joyce calls our attention to Haines, the tower’s resident Englishman, or in Yeats’ terms, “the stranger in the house.” When Haines is introduced into the narrative, he is identified by Mulligan as a “Saxon” and as a “Sassenach” (1.51;1.232). These terms are typically used interchangeably in nationalist discourse with the English word “stranger,” as they serve the same rhetorical function: to demark the otherness of the English conquerors from the native Irish. The presence of a “stranger in the house” makes Joyce’s appropriation of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* evident, and the words used to describe the stranger establish an ethnic tension between the tower’s residents reminiscent of what drives Yeats’ play.  

While Haines comes to Ireland as a student, not a conqueror, his anthropological project merits more attention, as it represents a particular component of imperialist ideology which establishes identity along essentialist criteria. Cheng, in “Authenticity and Identity,” argues that Haines “reflects one discourse—that of the colonizer—that fashions Irish character and identity

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5 This tension is complicated by the curious position Haines holds within the novel. As Trevor L. Williams notes, “Haines as representative Englishman is a convenient means of symbolizing the colonial relationship,” but, given Joyce’s resistance to the simplistic, anti-English cant espoused by radical nationalists, “Haines is not just another Englishman” (138). Williams points to the source of Haines’ money, arguing that his father’s fortune, made on the outposts of the British Empire “swindling” the Zulu people, makes Haines a member of “the exploiting class” (138). This, Williams claims, colors Haines’ anthropological aims, so that “if Haines on June 16, 1904, is able to traipse around Dublin collecting the ‘folk’ sayings of the Irish, it is precisely because his father has made money swindling Zulus” (138). As such, whatever Haines’ interests and affections towards Ireland and its people, he remains a manifestation of the imperialist system.
as one of ‘otherness’” (242). Indeed, none of the tower’s residents seem to recognize, or care, that they are all technically citizens of the same country, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; instead, they think only of differences, and in Haines’ case, how to exploit those differences. For Haines, his anthropological study, a collection of Irish folk sayings, serves as a well-intentioned, but nonetheless exploitative endeavor, one which clearly demarks the “native” Irish as distinct from himself and his people. When the milkwoman enters, Haines attempts to speak to her in Irish, which she comically mistakes for French. Alone among the characters thus far introduced, Haines is conversant in the Irish language. “He thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland,” Mulligan says, ironically explaining Haines’ thinking in reference to Haines’ Englishness; while the old woman agrees, she does not know the language (1.430). As an imperialist, Haines has a fixed idea of what the Irish should be, and a fixed idea of how they are different from him. The idea and the reality, of course, are incongruent—the Irish do not speak Irish, while Haines, the sassenach, does. While Joyce’s joke here is most immediately at Haines’ expense, it also mocks similar assumptions in nationalist thought, given that movement’s analogous assumptions of an essential Irish identity. As such, Haines’ colonialist discourse is a mirror image of the postcolonial discourse found in radical nationalism.

If the structure of these two divergent ideologies is much the same, so is much of the content. While Haines’ vision of the Irish as a colonial Other may be characterized by a certain degree of affinity, even sympathy, he nonetheless regards the Irish as a people wholly distinct

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6 The joke here is also on radical nationalists, including MacDonagh and Pearse, whose conception of Irish identity was inextricably connected to the Irish Language.
from his own, and an appropriate subject for anthropological research. Joyce here implicates both the colonial center and its colony; as Seamus Deane indicates, the Celticism that defined the Revival “was a bogus attempt to revive the old Gaelic culture which lay beyond the pale of the modern consciousness,” rendering the Revival itself—and its cultural progeny, including many of the leaders of the Easter Rising—“an anachronism” (36). However anachronistic this project may have been, its content became inextricably connected to the drive towards Irish liberation, so that defining Irish identity became paramount to defining the Irish nation. The matter is familiar to postcolonialism, which inevitably confronts the manufactured identity developed and espoused after the fact of colonialism. As Homi Bhabha reminds us, “the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image” (64). In other words, identity, when developed in response to colonialism, is always a conceived artifice posing as something intrinsic. In Ireland, the cultural nationalism which birthed the Easter Rising, developed by such organizations as the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association, grew increasingly political in the second decade of the Twentieth century. As such, the definition of Irish culture became connected to the definition of the Irish nation; marking the Irish as distinct from the English became a tactic of separatist politics. Culture, therefore, even a culture that was largely artificial and self-consciously political, became mistaken for essence. Since the revolutionary fervor that drove the rebels in 1916 developed from cultural nationalism, it is hardly surprising to that the rebel leaders attempted to define Irish

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7 This instinct is similar to that observed, albeit unironically, by Chandler in “A Little Cloud,” when he frets that he lacks a suitably Celtic surname for English audiences; an Irish poet should, after all, be sufficiently Irish to appeal to the colonial center.
identity in essentialist, binary terms.

To return to Joyce’s parody of Yeats’ play, we find that, where Yeats’ ethnic dynamics (between Irish, English, and French) are relatively straightforward, Joyce’s appropriation of those dynamics subverts Yeats’ simplicity. The poor old woman, here a wanderer only in that she delivers milk, is—in Stephen’s view, at least—a servant of her colonial master. Yeats’ _sean bhean bhocht_ is ironically transformed, “serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer,” bringing milk rather than asking for blood (1.397). The Irish are rendered impotent—Stephen will, by day’s end, be set out on the road himself, his position as leaseholder in the tower usurped by the stranger Haines and the complicit Mulligan.

Also of note are the French, the race Yeats presents as Ireland’s ally. Joyce has the milkwoman mistake Haines’ Irish for French, perhaps implying that Yeats never fully accounted for the place of the French within his overtly simplistic narrative. What Joyce suggests, and Yeats entirely ignores, is the sense of “the selfhood of the nation as opposed to the Otherness of other nations” (Bhabha 212). In other words, Yeats’ dichotomous vision of Irish identity fails to account for the presence of a second Other. While there are no French characters in the scene, they are nonetheless suggested—the tower, of course, was built when the French were on the sea—but are quickly dismissed from the narrative when Mulligan angrily rejects Stephen’s

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8 For Bhabha, this problem is secondary to the “the nation split within itself…marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense locations of cultural difference” (212). We will confront such matters later in the chapter, but the “Otherness of other nations” was a vital question in Irish nationalist politics in the Twentieth century, given the reliance of such movements upon intervention from abroad. The leaders of the Easter Rising confronted the matter directly in the Proclamation: “supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.”
Franco pretensions: “O, damn you and your Paris fads!” (1.342). And, appropriately for what comes later in the novel, a fourth group is introduced to further complicate the matter through Haines’ anti-Semitism.

This first incident of anti-Semitism, forecasting both the coming appearance of Leopold Bloom and the novel’s later incidents of bigotry, provides a context for Stephen’s subsequent encounter with Mr. Deasy, a figure who, though comparatively minor, further develops the racial consciousness of Ulysses. Having already complicated the ethnic dynamics of Cathleen ni Houlihan, Joyce uses Deasy to further subvert Yeats’ reductive perspective. Where Yeats, like the leaders of the Easter Rising, presents a simple “We/They” dynamic, opposing the English colonizer to the colonized Irish, Deasy reminds us that these dynamics fail to adequately capture the social conflicts extant in Ireland in the years preceding the Easter Rising. Specifically, Joyce points to Deasy’s sympathies towards Unionism, an ideology that sought to maintain the political connection between Ireland and Great Britain, typically marked by both staunch Protestantism and imperialist leanings. As an Irish Protestant with Northern roots, Deasy’s self-identification subverts the more simplistic attitudes towards identity found in nationalist thought.

Radical nationalists have long had difficulty accounting for the place of Ulster Protestantism within their envisioned Irish state. Though many of Ireland’s great nationalist

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9 The quick dismissal of the French from the narrative of Ulysses may owe in part to France’s repeated failure to provide aid to Irish Rebellions. Additionally, Joyce may have been thinking of current events: in 1914, France was allied with Great Britain, and so had little interest in supporting an Irish insurrection. The primary ally for Irish Nationalists in 1914 was Germany, which had been providing the INV with arms. German support, however, was hardly aimed at liberating Ireland; rather, the aim seems to have been to spark a civil war in Ireland that would weaken the British Army as the inevitable First World War approached. As such, Germany provided arms to both Unionist and Nationalist paramilitary organizations.
heroes—Tone, Emmett, Mitchel, and even Casement—came from Protestant backgrounds, their programs rarely responded to the intense sectarian and ethnic divisions between Ulster Protestants, most of whom had Scottish roots, and the Norman and Gaelic Irish, whose adherence to the Church of Rome stood at odds with the prevailing Presbyterianism of the North. While early manifestations of Irish nationalism sought to establish solidarity among the Catholics and Presbyterians, those outside the Anglican establishment, these attempts failed to produce a unified front. Nationalists have tended to oversimplify the matter: the common enemy for Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian was England, and the divisions engendered by religion were cleverly created and manipulated by the English to frustrate Ireland’s national ambitions.\textsuperscript{10}

It is a tradition that begins at least with Tone, himself a Protestant from the North, and extends through the rhetoric surrounding the Easter Rising.\textsuperscript{11} However, the failure of nationalists to find solidarity with the Ulster Protestant community is traceable, in part, to this tendency to underestimate the sincerity and scale of Ulster’s resistance.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} The Proclamation of 1916 says as much: “The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.”

\textsuperscript{11} The Proclamation of 1916 may have aimed to alleviate the stain of sectarianism that had long dominated Irish politics, but most of the leaders of the Easter Rising were remarkably silent about the sectarian divides between the North and South. Connolly is the exception, having written a series of essays calling for solidarity between Catholic and Protestant in opposition to the English. While Connolly’s appeals fell upon deaf ears, the effort was made, and republican organizations have continued to give lip service to such appeals (Sinn Fein, the IRA, the INLA, and others).

\textsuperscript{12} Not long before Joyce began \textit{Ulysses}, Ireland had been on the brink of civil war. The Third Home Rule Bill, facing no threat of veto from the House of Lords, had provoked controversy so intense that, in response, Ulster Protestants founded a paramilitary organization, the Ulster Volunteer Force, to combat Home Rule should it pass for the whole of Ireland. Fearing that, as the slogan went, Home Rule was Rome Rule, the UVF, under the leadership of the Dublin-born Edward Carson, stood ready to fight against the British to remain a part of Great Britain. The outbreak of the First World War curtailed this danger, at least temporarily, as Carson directed his men to join the war effort \textit{en masse}. 
Upon entering Deasy’s office, Stephen notices the headmaster’s “tray of Stuart coins,” which he regards as the “base treasure of a bog” (2.201-02). The detail is no small matter; divisions between Catholics and Ulster Protestants reached a fever pitch in the days of the Glorious Revolution, when the House of Stuart and its current Catholic King, James II, were deposed by the Protestant William of Orange.\^13 James’ subsequent Irish campaign brought these divisions into the battlefield, where Catholic Irish support for the deposed king met resistance from Ulster Protestants, who sided with William. The Williamite victories at the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry in 1690 effectively crushed the Jacobite cause, ensuring a Protestant Ascendancy for the English Crown. Continued commemoration of these victories made them potent symbols for the Ulster Protestant community, for whom William of Orange became an icon of great importance, as evidenced by the Orange Order, a fraternal society for Irish Protestants that annually celebrates William’s victory at the Boyne. The coins serve as a reminder of the divisions between Protestant and Catholic, and though Deasy keeps them as historical artifacts, seemingly stripped of all their potency, the symbolic function of the coins forecasts much of the subsequent conversation, revealing complexities found in Irish identity long underestimated by nationalists, including those of 1916.

Deasy’s own self-identification is difficult to discern. At first, he seems to take pride in being an Englishman, claiming Shakespeare as one of his own (“a poet, yes, but an Englishman too”) before telling Stephen of the “proudest word you will ever hear from an Englishman’s

\(^{13}\) Of note, the structure of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, alluded to frequently in the first episode, borrows heavily from the *aisling* poetry which developed in the late Seventeenth century in response to James II’s defeat and his subsequent exile in France
mouth” (2.242-45). Stephen guesses at imperial pride, though Deasy dismisses the old dictum that “the sun never sets upon the British Empire” as the work of a French Celt, preferring the English boast of “I paid my way” (2.251). Deasy, like Pearse, Yeats, and a host of others, draws an ethnic distinction between Englishman and Celt. And yet, the old man subsequently self-identifies as Irish, his historically inaccurate musings upon the Orange Order’s opposition to the Act of Union contrasting with the earlier reverence for all things English.\footnote{Deasy is correct about Protestant resistance to the Act of Union, but connecting this protest to O’Connell’s goes too far. The Act of Union passed nearly three decades before Catholic Emancipation, so the parliament in Dublin was much different than the one O’Connell, or the Fenians, envisioned.} To his credit, Deasy recognizes the complications of heredity in Irish identity, acknowledging that his ancestry includes both “rebels blood” and “sir John Blackwood who voted for the union” (2.278-79). “We are all Irish,” Deasy claims, “all King’s sons” (2.279-80).\footnote{The idea that the Irish are descended from kings was important to Plunkett: see “This Heritage to the Race of Kings.”} Then, in the middle of a misogynist rant, Deasy rather curiously refers to the English by the same term Yeats uses in 	extit{Cathleen ni Houlihan}: “A faithless wife first brought the strangers to our shore here” (2.392-3).\footnote{While “stranger” was something of a conventional term, the rhetorical bent of the word suggests the otherness of the English invaders.}

To what extent, then, does Deasy act as a representative for the ideology of unionism? Oddly enough, he frequently attempts to place the Ulster Protestant and imperialist traditions in line with the more radical, Catholic nationalism for which he apparently has little regard.\footnote{Of interest here is the opposition between Deasy’s references to O’Connell, a man he apparently resents, and his references to Parnell, whose fall he regards as the tragic work of Kitty O’Shea. Why Deasy seems more sympathetic to Parnell is a mystery, though we may speculate that Parnell, as a Protestant, was more tolerable to Deasy than the Catholic O’Connell.} Such
efforts are largely fruitless, since Deasy’s understanding of Irish history and politics is limited, and his ignorance precludes any hope of communion between these opposing ideologies. Incoherent though Deasy may be, by appearing directly after Joyce’s ironic parody of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, he nonetheless serves to subvert overly simplistic essentialism. Though undeniably unappealing, he acts as a rebuke to the reductiveness of nationalism. As representative, however contingently, of a fifth group, added to Yeats’ three (Irish, English, and French), and Joyce’s first addition (Jew), Deasy’s presence destabilizes the reductive essentialism frequently found in nationalist discourse by complicating the assumed dynamic of Colonizer versus Colonized. Deasy can be placed in neither camp definitively, as he seems to regard himself as English and Irish equally.

The style of the chapter also demands further inspection. David Hayman has argued that “in ‘Nestor’ the narrator fades to present everything through Stephen’s eyes, acting more emphatically as a complement to his reactions” (79). As a result, Hayman argues, “the other characters become…extensions of Stephen’s experience” (79). In this way, the narrative technique of the episode continues the strategy Joyce employs in “Telemachus,” but goes beyond the opening chapter by virtually removing the implied narrator.¹⁸ As Monika Fludernik notes in “Narrative and its Development in ‘Ulysses’”:

In ‘Nestor’ the basic narrative situation of ‘Telemachus’ is taken one step further:

Stephen’s point of view reigns supreme so that the entire narrative can be interpreted as narrated perception even if one cannot always point to demonstrable traces of Stephen’s

¹⁸ A technique Joyce takes even further in the subsequent “Proteus” episode.
diction…As in ‘Telemachus’ dialogue is a very important feature of the episode, providing the main structure of the chapter as well as enhancing scenic presentation. (The plot of the chapter is really a series of conversations or dialogues.) Interior monologue can now appear with little or no introductory narrated perception and is frequently interspersed with the dialogue which it punctuates and, by implication, comments on (20-21).

However, neither Hayman nor Fludernik adequately account for three apparent interruptions to the text during Stephen’s conversation with Deasy. At three points during this dialogue, snatches of text, two lines long in each instance, appear after Deasy speaks. All come from other sources, but are formally distinct from most of the episode’s other allusions in that these are both italicized and centered on the page. While Joyce establishes this technique in “Telemachus” as a means by which Stephen’s thoughts introduce allusions, the connection between the italicized allusions and the rest of the text is clearer in the first episode than it is in the second. Stephen thinks of his mother hearing Royce perform Turko the Terrible, then lines from the pantomime appear; Mulligan sings “Who Goes With Fergus,” then Stephen’s thoughts repeat the second line he hears from Mulligan’s voice; Stephen remembers the recitation of Latin prayers at his mother’s deathbed, then remembers those same lines in abbreviated form as he leaves the tower. In “Nestor,” by contrast, the context from which each italicized allusion emerges is more slippery, less direct. Deasy’s speech sparks Stephen’s thoughts towards allusions which are distinct from the context of the conversation. Joyce heightens this distinctness by isolating the allusions themselves, italicizing and indenting the text to more fully draw the reader’s notice.
While *Ulysses* is, of course, a densely allusive text, not all allusions receive such emphasis. Without claiming that allusion is always metaleptic in function, we should recognize that, by its nature, allusion introduces a new context into the narrative, one which places particular demands upon the reader to account for the relationship between the primary text and the alluded text. Such demands become even more pressing when the allusion is wholly separated from the rest of the text. By centering, italicizing, and isolating these lines, Joyce calls attention to them in a way unique from Stephen’s other thoughts in the episode. As such, these lines serve a metaleptic function: by manipulating the text (centering and italicizing the lines), Joyce consequently manipulates the fabric of the narrative. Given the context (Stephen’s sometimes tense conversation with the Unionist Deasy) and the style of these interruptions, the new context introduced by the allusions deserves more attention than previous studies have allowed, particularly since two of these instances of metalepsis specifically engage with matters of ethnic conflict: the reference to “The Rocky Road to Dublin” (Irish versus English) and the allusion to a slogan of Nineteenth century Ulster Unionism (Ulster versus the rest of Ireland).¹⁹

“The Rocky Road to Dublin” interrupts the text when prompted by Deasy’s story about his ancestor John Blackwood, the man who voted for the Act of Union in 1800. “He voted for it,” Deasy says, “and put on his topboots to ride to Dublin from the Ards of Down to do so” (2.282-83). From this simple narrative of a member of the Irish parliament riding from Ulster to Dublin to vote for the Act of Union, a snippet of “The Rocky Road to Dublin” appears: “*Lal the ral the ra/The rocky road to Dublin*” (2.284-85). At first glance, the allusion may seem wholly

¹⁹ The allusion to Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence” is also of note, as it comes after Deasy’s bleak report that England, the colonial center, is dying. However, this allusion is beyond the immediate purview of this chapter.
appropriate; Deasy has given us an image of a man traveling by horseback to Ireland’s capital city, and the lyrics speak of just such a journey. However, Joyce’s choice of songs deserves further attention. Zach Bowen finds the allusion representative of Stephen’s “impatience with Deasy’s rebel and loyalist pretensions” (74). As such, Stephen, “by associating [Deasy’s] ancestor with the comic hero of the ballad,” indicates “his disgust with Deasy whose Orange ancestry is hard enough to take without his claiming rebel blood to boot” (Bowen 74-75).

Bowen, however, misses further implications of Joyce’s allusion. “The Rocky Road to Dublin” is only partially about the trip to Dublin; the speaker’s real destination is Liverpool, with Dublin serving as the last stop in Ireland before he emigrates to England. It is a song of alienation and discrimination: the speaker leaves his home in Tuam, and as he comes closer to his destination, he becomes increasingly estranged from the people he meets. Upon his arrival in Liverpool, the emigrant is jeered by Englishmen whose prejudice against Ireland and the Irish explodes in a wave of violence:

The boys in Liverpool, when on the dock we landed,

Called myself a fool, I could no longer stand it;

My blood began to boil, my temper I was losing,

And poor old Erin's Isle, they all began abusing.

"Hurrah my boys" says I, my shillelagh I let fly.

Some Galway boys were by, they saw I was a hobble in,

Then with a loud hurrah! they joined me in the fray.
Faugh-a-ballagh! clear the way for the rocky road to Dublin (O’Conor 20).20

The violence described is a veritable race riot, culminating in the cathartic victory of the Irish over the English. The emigrant, finding no welcome in the colonial center, instead finds community with his fellow Irishman, but only when the need arises to defend Ireland’s honor in the face of English abuse. If we recognize the context, we see that Joyce’s choice of song may seem anachronistic, but is hardly arbitrary. While Deasy prattles on about what is both shared and divisive, the text introduces an allusion emphasizing ethnic and geographical divisions resulting in violence.

The substance of Joyce’s allusion garners greater importance when one places these competing contexts into dialogue. Deasy’s story is of a trip from Ulster to Dublin to vote for the Act of Union, a piece of legislation enacted in response to the 1798 Rising, the first Republican insurrection in Irish history. Joyce makes no explicit mention of that Rising here, but by attaching this context to Irish-English violence, such a connection is implied. Moreover, the eradication of the Act of Union would, essentially, become the primary aim for all subsequent nationalist movements in Ireland.21 As Deasy correctly cites, it became the target of O’Connell and, subsequently, Parnell, whose Home Rule movement aimed to reestablish an Irish Parliament in Dublin, essentially the condition reversed by the Act itself. More radical movements also aimed to reverse the conditions established by the Act of Union, including Eoin MacNeil’s Irish

20 The lyrics here are taken from Manus O’Conor’s Irish Come-All-Ye’s: A Repository of Ancient Irish Songs and Ballads—Comprising Patriotic, Descriptive, Historical and Humorous Gems, Characteristic of the Irish Race (1901). As with most Irish ballads, alternate lyrics exist, though the substance of the final verse tends to be relatively static in all versions.

21 Though few at the time could have expected this. Irish Catholics had little interest in the measure, since Catholic Emancipation was nearly three decades away.
Volunteers, Arthur Griffith’s Sinn Fein, and, most importantly, the Military Council of the Easter Rising. In this sense, Joyce’s allusion reminds us that the Act of Union was both the progeny and the progenitor of internecine warfare. Additionally, if we consider the geographical implications of Joyce’s allusion, further subtexts emerge. Deasy’s ancestor travels from Ulster, while the speaker in “The Rocky Road from Dublin” travels from Connacht. The former heads to Dublin, the Pale, in order to shift Ireland’s political center from that city to London. Meanwhile, the latter travels towards the imperial center, represented by Liverpool on the main body of Great Britain, only to find ethnic and cultural community amongst his fellow Irishmen. Joyce’s (or Stephen’s) apparent confusion of Connacht with Ulster is also relevant: in Tudor Ireland, Ulster was the center of Irish resistance to English rule, as it was the most defiantly Gaelic in its customs, dress, and language. In the aftermath of the Flight of the Earls, the Ulster Plantation, and Cromwell’s Irish campaign, the island’s Gaelic center moved to Connacht, making that province the most culturally “Irish.”

Ulster became the most self-consciously “British” of Ireland’s provinces, the center of Unionism and the Orange Order. Such resonances remind us of the troubles that Ireland would face in the decades after Bloomsday.

Ulster’s position within the broader contexts of both Ireland and the United Kingdom is raised again when Deasy declares, “I am a struggler now at the end of my days. But I will fight for the right till the end” (2.395-96). Immediately following this proclamation, Joyce borrows a slogan of Ulster Unionism: “For Ulster will fight/And Ulster will be right” (2.397-98). This phrase, as Don Gifford notes, was coined by Lord Randolph Spencer Churchill in 1886, and

22 For this reason, Connacht was taken by leading members of the Celtic Revival as the source of all things Irish. Joyce had responded to such ideas before; see Gabriel’s confrontation with Molly Ivors in “The Dead.”
“became a battle cry for anti-Catholic, anti-Home Rule forces” (40). Deasy’s adherence to Unionism is evident through his continuous recourse to imperialist notions, but the invocation of this slogan seems anachronistic to the historical context of the episode. In 1904, Ulster had few viable threats against its position in the United Kingdom; Parnell’s fall had temporarily crippled Home Rule some fifteen years prior, and the Irish Parliamentary Party had been so deeply wounded by the consequent fall-out that it held no real influence over the presiding Balfour government, a coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties. Griffith’s Sinn Fein party had yet to accomplish much of anything in the realm of mainstream politics, and the Third Home Rule Bill was nearly a decade away. As “history” is the express technique of the episode, we may lump this allusion in with the episode’s other references to the past, resonant only as echoes of a continually haunting antiquity, but as impotent in exchange as Jacobite coins in a tray. However, Joyce’s insertion of this slogan recalls not only the Unionism of the Nineteenth century, but the more militant Unionism of the Twentieth century. “Ulster will fight” may have been largely empty rhetoric in 1904, but would prove prophetic when, after the signing of the Ulster Covenant, Edward Carson founded the Ulster Volunteer Force with the express intention of doing just that. Either way, the refrain serves as yet another reminder of essentialist divisions within Ireland, compounded by sectarianism.

Accounting for this new context demands that we break with the immediate narrative of the text, considering it through the prism of historical phenomena beyond the purview of Joyce’s

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23 We may also be reminded of the extensive service of the UVF in the First World War, intended by Carson as a display of Ulster’s loyalty to the Empire. Ulster’s contribution to the war effort was immense, as members of the UVF enlisted in large numbers to fight in Europe. Joyce may have been thinking not only of the Home Rule Crisis here, but of the Battle of the Somme as well, where thousands of Ulster-born soldiers lost their lives in the service of Crown and Empire.
setting. The reader, cognizant of events concurrent with Joyce’s composition of “Nestor,” reads these lines in reference to Ireland’s more recent history, rather than merely considering them from the perspective of June 16, 1904.\textsuperscript{24} However Stephen himself intends these allusions, the broader context suggests the intervention of a figure somehow prescient about current events. This suggested intervention is metaleptic in function, in that the text shatters its apparent historical mimeticism. Once this mimeticism is broken, the reader is reminded of the artificiality of Joyce’s text by interpreting the fictional past in reference to the real present.

Such moments serve to distract the reader from the dialogue between Stephen and Deasy, calling attention both to the text as aesthetic artifice in progress, and to the ever-complicating essentialist divisions found within the narratives of both \textit{Ulysses} and modern Irish history. Deasy, as a Dublin resident with Northern roots, Protestant beliefs and an imperialist ideology, serves as the novel’s embodiment of Irish resistance to Irish liberty.\textsuperscript{25} While included, at least in part, to subvert reductive notions of Irishness, Deasy himself is, ironically, unable to account for nuanced identity. As a Unionist and a Protestant, Deasy sees the world in binary terms himself, referring to Stephen as a “fenian” by virtue of the young man’s Catholic background—a grossly inaccurate characterization (2.272). These terms ultimately manifest themselves in Deasy’s anti-Semitism; like Haines, Deasy laments the supposed influence of Jewish bankers over England, before closing with his offensive quip about Ireland never persecuting the Jews “because she never let them in” (2.442). The irony, of course, is that, not

\textsuperscript{24} For a more detailed discussion of the ways in which the present intrudes upon Joyce’s temporal setting, see Robert Spoo’s “Nestor and the Nightmare: The Presence of the Great War in \textit{Ulysses}.”

\textsuperscript{25} In this, at least, he resembles Edward Carson, the Dublin-born lawyer whose resistance to Home Rule can be credited with the establishment of Northern Ireland.
only is Deasy wrong again, but the bulk of Joyce’s novel will focus upon a single Irish Jew, Leopold Bloom, whose Jewishness merits a much closer study.

“Three Cheers for Israel”

Of course, the legitimacy of Bloom’s Jewish identity is no simple matter. Bloom is not, by traditional standards, a Jew at all: his mother was a Christian, and he had been twice baptized, once as a Protestant and once as a Catholic. He is uncircumcised and un-Bar Mitzva’d, speaks neither Hebrew nor Yiddish proficiently, and does not keep kosher. He is, generally speaking, as ignorant of Jewish beliefs and traditions as he is of those of Protestantism or Catholicism, and his feelings towards Zionism are lukewarm at best. Only once does he self-identify as a Jew, and only then in response to the Citizen’s aggressive bigotry. When recounting that incident in “Euamaeus,” Bloom backtracks considerably: “He called me a jew and in a heated fashion offensively. So I without deviating from plain facts in the least told him his God, I mean Christ, was a jew too and all his family like me though in reality I’m not (16.1082-85). Despite this passage, the debate over Bloom’s Jewish bona fides has long been a feature of Ulysses scholarship.

Eriwin R. Steinberg, in his provocatively entitled essay “James Joyce and the Critics Notwithstanding, Leopold Bloom is Not Jewish,” provides a detailed catalogue of the numerous ways Bloom falls outside religious, ceremonial, and cultural definitions of Jewishness. For Steinberg, the continued scholarly insistence that Bloom is a Jew results from uncritical acceptance of Joyce’s extra-textual comments about his protagonist, rather than from textual evidence. Noting that, while Bloom is “labeled a Jew and discriminated against as a Jew, he
does not consider himself one and does not in fact qualify as one,” Steinberg asserts that “it is the supreme irony to be persecuted for something you are not and do not believe in” (48–49).

Scholars, then, “blink the facts just as the citizens of Dublin do,” and consequently “not only misunderstand Bloom’s martyrdom, but refuse to see, whether Joyce intended it or not, the real blindness and mindless prejudices of our world that are reflected in Ulysses” (Steinberg 49).

Other scholars, noting the inconsistencies in Bloom’s Jewish identity, nonetheless maintain that Bloom can rightly be termed a Jew. Lily Corwin finds that Bloom’s Jewish identity can be located in the structure of his mind and the content of his ideas, which “make him very much a Jew, whether he practices the religion or not” (294). Moreover, as Corwin continues, “the extent of his Jewishness…is certainly considered by his neighbors to be enough to make him decidedly ‘other’” (294). The evidence is in the novel’s numerous incidents of anti-Semitism, both casual and confrontational, which prove that, whatever Bloom may be, most of his fellow Dubliners regard him as definitively distinct from themselves and their community. Bloom himself is conscious of his otherness; even if he is not, technically speaking, a Jew, he recognizes that his Jewish background sets him apart from his fellow citizens.

In this regard, Corwin points towards the most important question surrounding Bloom’s Jewishness: why does it matter? The critical insistence that Bloom’s Jewish or non-Jewish identity is somehow paramount to interpreting Ulysses largely misses the point: Joyce could easily have written Bloom as an undeniably Jewish (or Catholic or Protestant) character, but consciously refused to do so. Assigning Bloom definitively to an umbrella heading of religious or ethnic identity is an impossible task, since Joyce did not write Bloom to fit into any such
category. This is not to say that Bloom’s identity is somehow of no interest to the novel; rather, simply that it matters largely because other characters make it matter. Just as Bloom is forced to define his identity in response to interrogations from fellow Dubliners, so have we been forced to define Bloom’s identity ourselves.

By broaching this subject, I hope to bring this debate into a new context. While discussions of Bloom’s Jewishness have often dialogued with nationalist politics, I hope to show how Bloom’s ethnic, religious, and national self-identification in Ulysses poses a problem for notions of nationalist identity as expressed by the leaders of the Easter Rising. While I do not wish to accuse the leaders of the Rising of anti-Semitism—such an accusation would hardly withstand scrutiny—I think it reasonable to argue that the relatively simple vision of Irish identity drawn by rebel leaders is one which would struggle to account for a man like Leopold Bloom. By drawing distinctions between the communal self and the communal other along categorical criteria, the leaders of the Easter Rising underestimated the considerable challenge that a minoritarian figure could pose to such categories. Since the very act of rebellion made the matter of Irish identity all more immediate, the place of Leopold Bloom within the Irish community became a matter of far greater significance.

While we should certainly acknowledge the probable influence of continental anti-Semitism on Joyce’s novel, the most immediate context for this discussion is Ireland’s own tenuous political and social situation before and during the composition of Ulysses, a time when fashioning a definitive Irish identity was the primary social issue at stake. While the Home Rule Crisis had brought the “Irish Question” to the forefront of Irish politics, the Easter Rising birthed
a new sense of immediacy. Prior to 1916, it was possible to be an Irish nationalist and nonetheless accept, or even desire, a continued political connection with Great Britain. Even comparatively radical voices, such as Arthur Griffith’s, refused to endorse complete separation from the British Crown. However, once the leaders of the 1916 Rising had been executed, notions of liberal-minded Home Rule were replaced by a hardened radicalism, accepting of neither conciliation nor compromise. The Irish, the argument went, were a people unto themselves and, therefore, deserving of a nation.

While the military council of 1916 was hardly anti-Semitic, their revolutionary aims nonetheless depended upon a particular, static vision of Irish identity. As we have seen, this vision frequently found its expression in the language of race and ethnicity. Inevitably, defining the nation became conflated with defining the nation’s people; by constructing their sense of identity in binary terms, the leaders of the Easter Rising, like many Irish nationalists, failed to consider those who could not be placed definitively in either binary category. The unintended consequence is that, by failing to account for those outside a reductive vision of identity, the leaders of the Easter Rising risked excluding many of Ireland’s citizens from the revolutionary program.

Given this circumstance, the question of Bloom’s Jewishness takes on a new significance. If Hungarian ancestry and Jewish roots mark one as an outsider, then Bloom cannot fit definitively into either binary. Careless rhetoric, when couched in essentialist terms, potentially breeds the ostracism of minorities. As such, Bloom’s very existence stands as a rebuke to all notions of ethnic purity, since reductive notions of essential identity cannot
adequately account for him. Attempts to define Bloom are sustainable only if we recognize the complexities inherent in any such definition. Reasonable efforts can be found from William C. Mottolese and Ira Bruce Nadel, both of whom emphasize Bloom’s nuanced ethnic and cultural roots. For Mottolese, Bloom is “an inside-outsider,” whose wanderings take him “along a culture’s margins, registering ethnographic observations from a perspective like that of the anthropological participant-observer” (95). Bloom’s otherness, therefore, is manifest both in how his neighbors regard him and in how he regards his neighbors.26 Nadel argues that “Bloom’s origin epitomizes racial mixture since his Hungarian Orthodox Jewish father converts to Protestantism in Ireland and marries a Catholic but thinks of himself largely as an Irishman, although the community considers him a Jew” (303). This, Nadel continues, makes his “predicament” that “of seeking to be Irish [while] unable to renounce his Jewishness” (304). As such, Joyce’s confrontations with the dominant ideologies of imperialism and nationalism reveal the inability of these ideologies to account for the existence of someone like Bloom, for whom identity cannot be a simple, reductive matter.

At issue throughout Ulysses is Bloom’s place within the as yet unrealized, but fervently longed for Irish nation. As Bhabha argues, “our nation-centered view of sovereign citizenship can only comprehend the predicament of minoritarian belonging as a problem of ontology—a question of belonging to a race, a gender, a class, a generation becomes a kind of second nature;  

26 Cormac Ó Gráda finds that much of the debate surrounding Bloom’s Jewish identity, ascribable to “rival definitions of Jewishness,” fails to consider “a key issue: what was it to be an Irish Jew [in 1904]?” (18). Ó Gráda’s study of the Irish Jewish community reveals an insulated, devoutly religious society from which Leopold Bloom, by virtue of both his “mixed parentage and his marrying out,” would have received “a rather cold welcome” (22). As such, Ó Gráda argues that Joyce’s characterization of Bloom likely owed more to Joyce’s Jewish friends and acquaintances in Trieste than to anyone the author may have encountered in Dublin. Therefore, Bloom, whether by accident or design, is something of an anachronism in the Dublin of Bloomsday.
a primordial identification, an inheritance of tradition, a naturalization of the problems of citizenship” (xvii). Existing beyond the pale of conventional definitions of Irish and Jewish identity, Bloom poses such an ontological challenge to overtly simplistic notions of race, religion, and, ultimately, citizenship. Accounting for Bloom, then, is an impediment for which most of the novel’s characters, and most of Joyce’s Irish contemporaries, are ideologically unprepared. The dichotomy between Gael and Sassenach, drawn by radical nationalists like Pearse and MacDonagh, is sustainable only if identity can be written in simple terms. Bloom cannot, and does not, suit such binary assertions. In this sense, Bloom has a place neither in the imperialist ideology (which regards him as definitively non-British), nor in the nationalist ideology (which regards him as definitively non-Irish). The place of the minority, never a primary concern of the nationalists anyway, was virtually ignored in the revolutionary program of 1916.27 It is no mistake that the Citizen confuses Bloom with the Sassenach in “Cyclops”; having accepted a binary vision of Irish identity, he is incapable reconciling any complications. Bloom, therefore, has no place within the dynamic, and is inevitably lumped together with the other strangers.

Joyce most explicitly engages with such matters in “Cyclops.” Formally, “Cyclops” is one of the more complex episodes in Ulysses; unique in that here, as nowhere else, we find a first-person narrative from the perspective of a marginal—and unidentified—character. Accounting for this narrator is difficult, since Joyce pointedly refuses to name him. All we know about him is what we can glean from the text, which, while enough to identify his occupation

27 Indeed, among Ireland’s minorities, only Protestants tended to attract the attention of nationalists.
and personality, is insufficient to tell us much else. Paul Schwaber describes this nameless figure as “a scurrilous and unnamed bill collector, a lowlife and a gossip who seems to have damaging information about everyone and a nasty vivid word for all” (99). This narrator’s account, Schwaber continues, is supplemented by another narrator, who “offers asides, often at considerable length, that slow the action but amplify the distinct tones, attitudes, or styles of experience in turn—articulating each in appropriate rhetoric—and pushing many of them, playfully and exuberantly, to absurdity” (99-100).

While Schwaber is correct to distinguish the nameless narrator from the voice at work in the episode’s numerous asides—which do not resemble the first-person narration in either tone or diction—his tacit assignment of the asides to a single narrator strains credibility. Indeed, these asides are so varied in style, tone, and content as to suggest a plethora of voices at work within the episode. These broadly satirical voices emerge without warning and from indeterminate sources, making them clear instances of metalepsis. This has led numerous scholars to speculate about the possibility of an “arranger” at work within “Cyclops” (and other chapters in the second half of the novel), who serves to structure the various competing voices. However, the existence of such a shadowy and ill-defined figure in no way resolves the curious existence of these interpositions; rather, it merely compounds the question by raising the issues

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28 As an intriguing, if unlikely, alternative, E.I. Schoenberg argues that the digressive passages are spoken by the episode’s narrator, who Schoenberg identifies as Simon Dedalus, arguing that these passages are “expressionistic interior monologues” rather than “the author’s interpolations” (537). The fault with this interpretation rests in Schoenberg’s excessive reliance upon circumstantial evidence to assume Dedalus could, and would, be at Barney Kiernan’s.

29 The idea is traceable to David Hayman, who first articulates it in Ulysses: The Mechanics of Meaning. Other scholars, including Richardson and Lawrence, have followed Hayman’s reasoning. See Bernard and Shari Bernstock’s “Narrative Sources and the Problem of Ulysses” for a more detailed survey of such matters.
of both the arranger’s identity (Joyce, the nameless narrator, or some other persona) and the source(s) from which the arranger draws these passages. A more apt account of the function of these interpositions can be found in Brian Richardson’s description of another passage in the episode.\(^\text{30}\)

It is entirely unclear, and I suspect unknowable, who is speaking, hearing, or writing these lines…These are problems as defined by (and unresolvable within) the modernist paradigm the whole episode seems first to evoke by playing with narrators…and then to frustrate by refusing to provide the explanatory parallax view that would resolve the ambiguity (1039-40).

By leaving this ambiguity unresolved, Joyce creates a “disorienting atmosphere,” prompting “feelings of uncertainty concerning issues of truth and fiction” (Wheatley-Lovoy 30). As such, we are often left bewildered, uncertain of what has happened in Barney Kiernan’s. The interpositions foster this narrative imbalance, while the main body of the narrative, according to Peter A, Maguire, comes from a narrator whose “general unreliability…raises serious questions about the whole series of incidents in Barney Kiernan’s pub—including the anti-Semitic incidents which lead to the flying biscuit box” (Maguire 313). Maguire further posits that, “given the stance of the narrator who portrays him, [the Citizen] may not be quite as unattractive as he appears to be,” a possibility which casts into doubt the assumed depiction of Irish nationalism within the episode (313). With all that has been written about the way “Cyclops”

\(^{30}\) Richardson is referring to the line “that’s the most notorious bloody robber you’d meet in a day’s walk,” (12.25-26), which he finds to be of indeterminate origin. However, I maintain that his description of this line is ascribable to all of the digressions in “Cyclops,” as no source is ever given or even implied.
subverts the content of radical nationalism, the inward subversion of the episode has received far less attention. By calling into question the veracity of the narrator’s account, Maguire directs us to Joyce’s undermining of his own narrator. The use of an unreliable narrator may not be a revolutionary technique, but by using such a narrator in the most politically heightened episode of the novel, Joyce destabilizes this political content. The consequence is that “Cyclops” constantly calls attention to its own artifice: appropriate in that this episode focuses upon the elaborately conceived artifice of Irish identity.

Joyce’s primary subject in “Cyclops” is the failure of nationalist essentialism to engender a coherent ideology or a cohesive community. The Citizen, at least as he is presented by the narrator, is the novel’s most vocal embodiment of essentialism, and so fashions his hegemonic vision with little regard to logic. His language, as Cheng notes, is the product “of binary opposition and essentializing; of the need to demarcate the Self and Other as polar enemies marked by absolute difference,” though he consistently fails to recognize the farcical limits of his expressed worldview (201). The Citizen, then, is essentially a comedic character.31 The irony with which he is presented allows Joyce his most direct satire of nationalist mores, which emerge as unsustainable and illogical. A useful example is the Citizen’s angry exclamation about the English language: “To hell with the bloody brutal Sassenachs and their patois” (12.1190-1). Unwilling, or unable, to express his ideals exclusively in the language he venerates, he instead turns to an amalgamation of English, Irish, and French. Even when arguing

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31 As Maureen Waters argues, the Citizen’s “posture is so offensive that he would be an intolerable character if he were not rendered comic through the perspective of the narrator” (97).
for homogeneity, the Citizen is only able to do so in heterogeneous language. Throughout the entirety of the episode, the only complete sentence the Citizen manages to express in the Irish language is directed towards his dog; when he uses Irish in his conversation with Bloom, his purpose is to delineate the distinctness of the Irish people, though even this is a failed endeavor:

*Sinn Fein*! says the citizen. *Sinn fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us (12523-24).

While the Irish the Citizen uses (“We ourselves! We ourselves alone!”) is meant to exclude Bloom, the phrase resonates because of its association with Arthur Griffith’s newly formed Sinn Fein party—ironic, in that Bloom has, at least allegedly, been heavily involved in Sinn Fein. While we are never entirely sure of its truth, John Wyse does suggest that “it was Bloom gave the ideas for Sinn Fein to Griffith to put in his paper all kinds of jerrymandering, packed juries and swindling the taxes off the government and appointing consuls all over the world to walk about selling Irish industries” (12.1573-777). Wheatley-Lovoy indicates that some of the rumors we hear about Bloom in “Cyclops” seem to be “corroborated” elsewhere in the novel (30). For Bloom’s involvement in Sinn Fein we can look to “Penelope,” where Molly frets that Bloom may be “coming home with the sack soon out of the Freeman too like the rest on account of those Sinner Fein or the freemasons” (18.1226). How involved Bloom may be is unspecified, though some association with Griffith’s party is evident. The joke, of course, is not only on the Citizen but on the anti-Semitic Griffith, since Bloom will shortly proclaim himself to be, in no uncertain terms, a member of the Jewish race.

Moreover, consider the episode’s reference to Roger Casement: “He’s an Irishman,”
the Citizen says, though one must wonder why, in 1904, the Citizen was so quick to adopt Casement as one of his own (12.1545). While the future rebel was undoubtedly an anti-imperialist icon after his investigation into Belgian colonialism in the Congo was published in 1904, the investigation was carried out at the behest of the British Government, which Casement served as a foreign consul, representing the interests of the British Empire. Casement was not yet an Irish rebel on Bloomsday, nor was he yet particularly active in Irish politics. As a member of the Anglo-Irish elite, later honored by a knighthood for his service the Crown, Casement was, by the Citizen’s own apparent definition, a stranger in the house. As such, the Citizen falls into a nationalist trope satirized in the episode: the claiming of Irish identity for heroes, regardless of that claim’s truth or logic. This trope manifests itself in one of the narrative’s most absurd asides: the list offered in “Cyclops” of the “many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity,” a ludicrous rendering of an already ludicrous practice, as it includes Goliath, Dante, Columbus, Charlemagne, the Last of the Mohicans, the Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, Napoleon, Franklin, Cleopatra, Caesar, and Patrick W. Shakespeare, among many others (12.176-199). Richardson notes that, in this passage, “the figures grow increasingly implausible and the list parodies ever more heartily the nationalists who, in their zeal to gain recognition for neglected Irish figures or persons whose Irish origin had been erased, defied historical accuracy while enlisting every imaginable positive individual as a supporting member of the cause” (1040-41).

32 Casement is the only figure of the Easter Rising explicitly named in the whole of Ulysses. This may owe to the comparative prominence that Casement enjoyed in 1904, while his future fellow revolutionaries were either absent from Ireland or obscure.

33 Shakespeare’s inclusion should call our attention to an earlier scene from “Scylla and Charybdis,” where John Eglington, noting the various conspiracy theories surrounding Shakespeare and his plays, asks, “Has no-one made him out to be an Irishman? Judge Barton, I believe, is searching for some clues. He swears (His Highness not His Lordship) by saint Patrick” (9.519-21).
This tendency, of course, is paradoxical here: the impulse to define “Irishness” in limiting terms conflicts with the simultaneous impulse to define “Irishness” along positive lines. When these aims clash, the conflict is not resolved; rather, the ideology slips into incoherence by violating its own rigidity. Joyce’s comically hyperbolic list, laughable in its exaggeration, reminds us how freely radical nationalists would violate their own notions if advantageous to their project.

Again, as Joyce calls attention to the artifice of his episode, he also calls attention to the artifice of essentializing. As Cheng indicates, despite the Citizen’s belief in ethnic purity, the pub patrons “are all foreigners, having been descended from Celts, Danes, Saxons, and others who each had in their turn had once been ‘strangers in our house,’” rendering any argument for an essential Irish identity patently absurd (208). At the very least, the idealized artifice of Irish identity is complicated when one notes the ethnic diversity that comprises the so-called Irish race. The fault rests not merely with the Citizen, whose rhetoric represents the grossest strains of Irish essentialism, but with the other patrons of Barney Kiernan’s, all of whom fail to recognize the diversity of the Irish people, to say nothing of the diversity of the drinkers at the pub. James Fairhall avers that, while the characters in “Cyclops” are disparate in terms of politics and religion, including “a Castle Catholic” (Cunningham), “a Protestant Unionist” (Crofton), and “a radical nationalist” (the Citizen)…they all agree on a tacit definition of Irishness that includes themselves and excludes Bloom” (174). This definition is as self-serving as it is illogical; the Citizen’s assault upon Bloom—who is, of course, more active in Irish nationalist politics than most in the novel—is inconsistent with the Citizen’s expressed political ideology. Surely Bloom is less a threat to Irish liberty than Cunningham, whose occupation actively supports the English colonial presence in Ireland, or Crofton, whose political affiliation expressly endeavors to
maintain the British aegis. Yet Bloom becomes the episode’s scapegoat, excluded from the community by virtue of his Jewish roots.

As such, Christy L. Burns finds that “Cyclops” is “an astute study of how racialism leads to racism, not only through the obvious excesses of the Citizen’s angry, negating discourse but also in the celebratory stereotyping of the mock-heroic passages, which function as an inverted mirror of the Citizen’s ‘low’ version of racialism” (240-41). While this fits nicely with typical postcolonial readings of the episode, Burns goes further by considering Bloom’s response to the Citizen, arguing that “his angry appropriation of martyrdom [at the end of the episode] functions as a continuance of the binaristic purification that Joyce critiques” (241). We should, therefore, be careful not to “overlook the parodies” and “the broader critique of celebratory stereotyping in literature” (242). For Burns, Bloom is guilty of the same offense as the Citizen: the ahistorical, mythmaking enterprises that compound bigotry. Most readers, of course, will have difficulty indicting Bloom; his response to the Citizen’s racism (and the aggregated anti-Semitism he encounters throughout Bloomsday) seems largely understandable, even laudable. However, an unexamined celebration of Bloom’s courageous response to the Citizen’s prejudice loses sight of Joyce’s nuanced presentation of the scene.

Understanding the increasingly tempestuous dialogue between Bloom and the Citizen demands that we account for the dynamics at play between the two. The Citizen is the proponent of a hegemonic construct that excludes Bloom, while Bloom is the oppressed figure set apart from that hegemony; as such, their confrontation echoes, albeit in imperfect and deliberately subversive form, many of the dynamics found in the relationship between colonizer and
colonized. As Randall J. Porgorzelski has noted,

The tyranny of the citizen is his oppressive agenda of Irish purity. Though the citizen’s aim is to liberate his colony from the British, he in his own way colonizes the Irish…The citizen’s desire for a pure Irish identity is a mirror of British colonization. The intertextual and covert presence of the mirroring within Irish identity sets up the anti-colonial strategy as a problem of imperial succession (461).

If, as we have seen, nationalist prejudice emerges as a way to counteract the prejudices voiced by the colonizer, then we can locate Bloom’s response to the Citizen within the We/They dynamic engendered by the fact of colonialism. Here emerges the ontological problem Bhabha discusses: Bloom, as Jew and Gentile, Hungarian and Irishman, citizen and outsider, is pushed in “Cyclops” to identify his nationality for the first time. While many in the bar would argue that his definition of a nation—“the same people living in the same place”—excludes him, Bloom nonetheless claims Ireland as his nation, much to the Citizen’s displeasure, who responds by spitting on the floor (12.1421-33). While Bloom categorically identifies himself as an Irishman—“I was born here” is, for him, sufficient grounds for citizenship—the others in the bar struggle to account for Bloom’s minoritarian position (12.1431). “Is he a jew or a gentile or a holy Roman or a swaddler,” asks Ned, “or what the hell is he?” (12.1631-32). The answer should hardly matter, but the reductive notions of Irish identity operating in Barney Kiernan’s make it paramount. Then, when Bloom feels pressed to respond to the Citizen’s continued aggression, he at last self-identifies as a Jew. And, when the threat of violence becomes real, Bloom’s self-identification becomes itself more aggressive.
As Bloom finds himself in physical danger, his speech resembles more closely the rhetoric of radical Irish nationalism. In particular, Bloom’s invocation of Mendelssohn, Marx, Mercadante, Spinoza, Jesus, and Joseph at the end of the episode seems comparable to the nationalist tendency mocked in the ludicrous list of Irish heroes. Joyce could have chosen more appropriate names, as some of these figures, such as Marx and Spinoza, were Jewish only in complex, nuanced ways. Marx, of course, rejected all religion and espoused a strict materialist viewpoint, while Spinoza was excommunicated for his “unorthodox” beliefs (Gifford 378). Moreover, Mercadante was not Jewish at all, so his inclusion here is a rather serious error on Bloom’s part. In his haste to celebrate an identity impinged upon by violent opposition, Bloom goes too far. Like that farcical catalogue of the Irish heroes of antiquity, it is an ironic and somewhat incoherent practice.

The comparison between Bloom and the radical nationalists falters, of course, when one considers that Bloom, though his rhetoric grows more aggressive at the end of the episode, never engages in violence. Burns suggests that Bloom “gives in to the polarization that breeds violence,” though Bloom’s refusal to engage violently should make us wonder at the aptness of the comparison (42). Bloom’s earlier invocations of love and pacifism stand in stark contrast to Burns’ estimation, and his aggressive appropriation of ethnic polarities makes him the target, rather than the perpetrator, of violent action. Violence results, of course, when the Citizen, furious at Bloom’s characterization of Christ, hurls a Jacobs’ biscuit tin at him. While the Homeric parallel is clear—the biscuit tin is an ironic version of the boulder Polyphemus hurls at Odysseus—the tin carries other suggestions. As Susan del Sola Rodstein notes, the Jacobs’ tin—Joyce is specific about the brand name—reminds us of one of points of fighting during the Easter
Rising, making it a “synecdochic reminder” of Easter Week itself (149).\textsuperscript{34} It seems no coincidence that, here in the episode most deeply invested in questions of Irish identity, the episode most directly concerned with Irish nationalism, that the episode would close with an act of violence obliquely referencing the Easter Rising. From Rodstein’s insight, we might plausibly find that, by adopting a homogenous and binary vision of Irish identity, the leaders of the Easter Rising, knowingly or not, risked excluding all outsiders. That this could potentially breed violence against innocent victims seems a reasonable objection. Bloom, as a so-called Stranger who falls beyond that vision, is subject to the same violence as the English.

The final description of Bloom renders the entire episode at last absurd: “And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of fortyfive degrees of Donohoe’s in Little Green street like a shot off a shovel” (12.1915-18). The curious amalgamation of both biblical prose and Dublin-based colloquialisms seems inherently contradictory; we cannot be sure if the voice here belongs to the nameless narrator or some other unidentified voice. Is this the main narrative of the action, or is it yet another interpolation of a parodied style, or is it some amalgamation of the two? Again we find the text drawing attention to its own artifice, though the sight of ben Bloom Elijah flying over Donohoe’s again complicates the supposedly simple dynamics of essentialist signification. The passage uses both Jewish and Irish content without resolving the dialectic between the two. Perhaps this is because that dialectic need not be resolved in the first place; it exists only because identity, when constructed in binary terms, demands resolution. A binary vision, by its nature,\footnotetext{\textsuperscript{34} Rodstein also points to the setting of the episode in Arbour Hill, near the cemetery where the leaders of the Easter Rising are buried.}
requires that everyone be placed in one category or the other, leaving no room for nuance.

Bloom, as the “inside-outsider,” is the embodiment of that nuance ignored by radical nationalists; by virtue of his very existence, Bloom renders binarity absurd. If binaries are intrinsically absurd, artificial categories, then the dialectic between communal self and other, between the “We” and the “They,” need not be resolved. The episode’s ending reminds us that Bloom—or any Irishmen, for that matter—should not be held captive to irrationally reductive identification.

With this in mind, we can read Joyce’s masterpiece as a repudiation of essentialist polarization, a call to remember that diversity is an intrinsic part of all national identities. The oversimplifications of imperialism, in becoming those of nationalism, give way to ethnic battle lines too reductive to recognize diversions from the supposed ethnic norms. This practice, whether in nationalism or imperialism, is destructive, engendering violence and tumult as ineffectual as it is calamitous. Joyce’s application of parody and metalepsis to this ideology, by calling attention to the text as aesthetic artifice in progress, reminds us that Ireland, like *Ulysses*, is not a fixed entity moving towards a preordained end. This emphasis on process and potential, so crucial to *Ulysses*, is taken even further in *Finnegans Wake*.

**So this is Dyoublong?**

Andrew J. Mitchell, echoing generations of readers, avers that “to engage with the *Wake*…we have to learn how to read anew” (59). Joyce’s radical style, a series of multilingual puns and multicultural allusions, makes even the most basic components of narrative—plot,
character, setting, voice—difficult, if not impossible, to discern. As Michael Begnal notes, “one central characteristic of the *Wake* narrative is that it constantly strains against itself, rebels against the forward impulse and turns back to what has gone before” (15). From this, Begnal claims that reading *Finnegans Wake* is like “[jogging] in place,” as the text constantly commands us to “jump back to the beginning of a piece and reassess it before moving along once again” (18). For Begnal, “*Finnegans Wake* has suspended closure on its surface appearance, but it does not have suspended meaning” (4). While his point is well-taken, we should recognize the extremely tenuous nature of any interpretation of that meaning, owing to Joyce’s language. It seems no accident that the working title for *Finnegans Wake*, under which several sections of the novel were published before Joyce completed its composition, was *Work in Progress*; no other novel in the Western Canon so gleefully calls attention to the reader’s role in constructing and interpreting the text.\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) This analysis, we should note, is hardly universal. Roland McHugh, in the introduction to his invaluable *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* claims that, “provided the reader can repudiate his early assumptions, the Wake’s subtle unifiers ought eventually to be discerned.” As such, our experience of the Wake, McHugh claims, is “like learning a language: one unconsciously inculcates background material while focusing upon odd nuclei of sense, which are due to aggregate at some future date” (v). If we can learn the language, the argument goes, we can account for the Wake’s plot. Numerous critics have attempted to summarize the action of *Finnegans Wake*, most notably William York Tindall in *A Reader’s Guide to Finnegans Wake*, and John Bishop in *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*. Without discounting an inherent logic to the *Wake*’s language, I nonetheless maintain that Joyce’s technique, by alienating us from the familiar, destabilizes its own meaning.\(^{36}\)

\(^{36}\) For Begnal, “[*Finnegans Wake* has suspended closure on its surface appearance, but it does not have suspended meaning]” (4). While his point is well-taken, we should recognize the extremely tenuous nature of any interpretation of that meaning, owing to Joyce’s language.

\(^{37}\) Perhaps coincidentally, we might term the Irish nation itself a “Work in Progress” during the seventeen years Joyce spent composing *Finnegans Wake*. While the composition of *Ulysses* spanned the period of Ireland’s movement from a fully integrated province of the United Kingdom to a Free State, the composition of the *Wake* spanned much of the Irish Free State’s gradual movement towards full political independence. Published two years after the Constitution of 1937, which, by declaring Ireland a sovereign nation, virtually ruptured the connection between Ireland and Great Britain, *Finnegans Wake* is heavily concerned with the movement towards independence. Allusions to this process abound, most notably dozens of references to the partition of Ireland (the numbers twenty-six and six, alluding to the division of Ireland’s thirty-two counties, frequently appearing in juxtaposition). It is, therefore, tempting to read the style of *Finnegans Wake* as a metaphor for the development of the Irish Nation. While the *Wake* is hardly a national allegory like, say, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, the growing pangs of a new nation seem inseparable from its “plot.”
reconstructing the work’s meaning.\textsuperscript{38}

Joyce’s style is not merely aesthetic play; rather, it garners political significance when one contextualizes Joyce’s experimentation in reference to prevailing political ideologies of Twentieth century Ireland. Michael Patrick Gillespie notes that, in \textit{Finnegans Wake}, “alternatives abound, but certainty eludes us,” so that “the traditional application of either/or questions in a binary, discriminatory pursuit of meaning will not exhaust the possibilities of the work” (2). While Gillespie is not interested in Joyce’s politics, the political implications of such a style are readily evident. Irish nationalism justified its ends in reference to presumed certainties, including the binary essentialism that divided the Irish from the English. For the leaders of the Easter Rising, this binary was foundational; the legitimacy of Ireland’s national aspirations depended upon the distinctness between the Irish people and their conquerors, between Gael and \textit{Sassenach}. If, as Gillespie suggests, either/or questions cannot function in \textit{Finnegans Wake}, then this division becomes unsustainable.

This point is crucial: if binary terms cannot be applied to anything within Joyce’s dream novel, essentialism is, in consequence, rendered absurd. Kimberly J. Devlin finds that, in the \textit{Wake}, “selfhood is in essence protean inscription, a process of perpetual figuration and refiguration” (xi). If we cannot define the self with any certainty, the binary of self/other becomes an incoherent artifice. The proof is in the text: any attempt to categorically define the individual essence of any given character of the \textit{Wake} must reconcile that character’s existence

\textsuperscript{38} See James M. Cahalan, “Dear Reader and Drear Writer: Joyce’s Direct Addresses to His Readers in \textit{Finnegans Wake}” (1995).
with the innumerable transformations and transmutations he undergoes throughout his career in Joyce’s dream world. The individual is, therefore, as alienated from himself as he is from other characters. Moreover, attempts to define the self in reference to communal signifiers inevitably fail. By rupturing the division between self and other, Joyce consequently ruptures the postcolonial division between the communal self and the communal other, the binary between the “We” and the “They.” If, as, Devlin notes, “personal identity and racial identity are simply myths of different proportions, both being cultural constructs artificially defined,” then the application of such myths to an already destabilized conception of selfhood becomes an untenable endeavor (86). If this dichotomy is unsustainable, the primordial justification of rebellion slips into incoherence. Indeed, according to Burns, “Joyce initiates a complex critique of nationalist extremes and then builds a new concept of interaction between culture and individual subjects that calls into question the nature of group identity and ideological subscription” (239).39 These extremes, according to Michael Mays, manifested in a “complete indifference to the differences other than those defined by the logic of colonialism (Irish/English, Celtic/Anglo-Saxon, Catholic/Protestant, Nationalist/Unionist) [which] resulted in the hegemonic domination of their own cultural others, including Unionists, women, and non-Catholics” (27). As such, the nationalist project operated “in ways that were often as racially

39 While Burns recognizes this as part of Joyce’s interrogation of Irish nationalism, the ramifications are broader, “creating the conscience or consciousness of an audience he could not locate, for a form of political awareness that did not yet exist” (239). This, Burns claims, is a continuation of a thematic pattern begun in Joyce’s earlier works—that of “the subject’s impossible struggle towards self-determination,” which Joyce “transforms…into a comical dialogue between social and representational fixities and the dissonances that enable subjective and societal change” (240). It is, therefore, “in Finnegans Wake [where] Joyce finally succeeds in rupturing the paranoid opposition between self and community” (251).
over-determined as any of those perpetrated against them by the English” (Mays 27).  

Devlin, Burns, and Mays keep their analyses in general terms; their interest is in Irish nationalism as an historical movement, rather than in any particular manifestation of that movement. While the scope of Finnegans Wake is sufficiently broad so as to interrogate Irish nationalism in its many varieties, our present concern is with the Easter Rising, a specific incarnation of Irish nationalism for which none of these critics adequately account. Moreover, the continued insistence that we can speak of Irish nationalism as a singular ideology strains credibility. Historically, Irish nationalism existed in myriad—and oft-competing—forms. Even narrowing our gaze to radical nationalism alone does not resolve the complexities. We can locate a single ideology in various manifestations, but the tacit claim that a singular ideology can be ascribed to every nationalist organization goes too far. Surely by 1923, when Joyce began writing Finnegans Wake, the notion of a unified, radical nationalism had been thoroughly discredited by the Civil War, fought by former allies in no small part over ideological differences.

As such, the interpretations offered by Devlin, Burns, and Mays, useful though each may be, require the more concrete application of a singular incarnation of Irish nationalism to Joyce’s novel. The Easter Rising provides a useful point of entrance; Finnegans Wake is

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40 More recent scholarship has revealed a broader context of the racial commentary of Finnegans Wake. Len Platt, in Joyce, Race and Finnegans Wake, finds Joyce engaged in dialogue not only with aggressive Celticism, but with the growing strains of scientific racism that characterized intellectual discourse in the first half of the Twentieth century. This racism, a natural development from fin de siècle racial discourse in dialogue with prevailing theories of eugenics and Darwinism, found its natural, tragic culmination, Platt argues, in the horrors of the Holocaust. However, as Platt notes, such ideas, in the years preceding both the Second World War and the publication of Finnegans Wake, found a sympathetic audience among many of Europe’s modernists, including Yeats, Lewis, Pound, and Eliot.
fascinated with the Rising, which appears in numerous references scattered throughout Joyce’s literary stream. Given the importance of the Easter Rising to the development of both Irish nationalism and the composition of *Finnegans Wake*, we can plausibly read Joyce’s critique of nationalist extremes in more explicit reference to the ideology that informed 1916. From this starting point, we can combine our study of the Rising’s ideology with the critical foundation offered by other scholars to develop tenable assumptions about the way racial identity typically functions within the body of Rising literature, and the way Joyce subversively appropriates such discourse in *Finnegans Wake*. First, teleological Irish nationalism, when expressed in the language of race, invariably views ethnic conflict as the inevitable ascent of one race and, consequently, the descent of another. As Mays argues, the *Wake* is a novel of “textual insurgency,” which he defines as “the endless interpositions, diversions, and obfuscations that disrupt the historicist’s would-be ineluctable linear flow of time and narrative toward an eschatological moment” (25). Essentialist criteria, by opposing the “Irish” to the “Other,” fashion a nationalism that points towards the day when Ireland will be not merely free from British rule, but free and Irish. *Finnegans Wake*, as a novel utterly resistant to teleology, is structured around the rise and fall of various figures and *zeitgeists*, inevitably concluding only in its own continuation. Second, the theme of race in *Finnegans Wake* is consequently conceived as a continuous power struggle, with the primary adversaries being in constant flux, since racial modes of self-identification, like all modes of identification in the *Wake*, are consistently

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41 Noting that the text itself serves as a rejection of colonialist discourse, a veritable revenge upon the dictates of the English language, Mays asserts that “it is not just the usurpation of power in the interest of colonial domination that Joyce is intent upon dissecting, but the fluidity of power and the exchange of force flowing through the circuits of the social field” (26). In other words, *Finnegans Wake*, while rejecting the metanarratives of both imperialism and nationalism, explores the power struggle that ensues from the first colonial moment, interrogating both ideologies without endorsing either.
subverted. As such, the *Wake* renders the supposedly fixed, essentialist binaries upon which the leaders of 1916 depended unsustainable through the very language used to express that ideology.

The relationship between language and identity in *Finnegans Wake* becomes even more significant when we consider the role that language played in nationalist ideology, including that which informed the Easter Rising. Pearse, in particular, viewed the Irish language as a necessary component of Irish identity; having been stripped of their language by the English invaders, the Irish could only reclaim their essence by reclaiming their native tongue. In *Finnegans Wake*, language, far from being a mark of ethnic fixity, becomes the mark of fluid identity. Joyce places the Irish language in dialogue with dozens of others; as a source it is less crucial to the work than English, which is, to some degree, its primary language. Upon the finding of ALP’s letter in the first chapter of the *Wake*, Joyce draws the connection between questions of language and questions of ethnicity:


The source for this passage, as Roland McHugh indicates, is Swift’s *Epigram on the Magazine*, allegedly the last piece of poetry Swift ever wrote (13). Here, describing a piece of

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42 “When Ireland’s language is established, her own distinctive culture is assured...All phases of a nation’s life will most assuredly adjust themselves on national lines as best suited to the national character once that national character is safeguarded by its strongest bulwark” (quoted in Moran 115).

43 “Behold a proof of Irish sense! Here Irish wit is seen! Where nothing’s left that’s worth defence, They build a magazine” (McHugh 13).
written language, Joyce presents a contrast between “Irish sense” and English that he leaves unresolved—note the series of unanswered questions which disguise, by interrupting, Joyce’s approximation of Swift’s meter. Irish sense, which Swift took as an oxymoron, is re-imagined as an echo of the “Irish character” cited in the previous chapter, left undefined, but placed in opposition to “English,” which “might be seen”—an apparent reference to both the English people and the English language. The allusion to the sovereign reminds us not only of the British coinage, but the English Monarchy as well. This sovereign, having been “punned to petery pence,” is, McHugh asserts, a reference to money donated to the Catholic Church, ironic as the sovereign monarch to which Joyce refers is head of the Church of England (13). The contrast between English and Irish emerges here in language, economics, religion, and governance; yet, paradoxically, it is silence, rather than sound, that speaks. The entire passage is finally thrown into doubt by its exclamatory final sentence (“Fake!”), which emphatically rejects the validity of the letter, its language, and the language used to describe the letter in the first place.

Having left the questions unanswered and the contradictions unresolved, Joyce poses one of the Wake’s most pointed questions: “So This Is Dyoublong?” (13.4). McHugh finds this an allusion to M.J. MacManus’ So This is Dublin, a work which “derides” James Joyce (13).\textsuperscript{44} We might, therefore, read the question as one asked by the author to himself, broaching the subject of Joyce’s exile from his native land. However, given the unsettled dynamic between the English and the Irish explored in the preceding passage, the pun on Dublin makes the question

\textsuperscript{44} MacManus was a biographer of Eamon DeValera and a noted man of letters. Additionally, he was publicly sympathetic to the Easter Rising.
all the more poignant—it is simultaneously a matter of geography and of identity. Dublin, once
the Second City of the British Empire, becomes a city characterized by its limited—and
limiting—vision of belonging. As the primary venue for the Easter Rising, the home to radical
nationalism and its provisional government, Dublin is a city inseparable from the Easter Rising
and its aftermath. By calling our attention to questions of alienation and ostracism, Joyce
suggests that the new Dublin, the one which emerged from the ashes of the General Post Office,
is a place where outsiders are reminded of their otherness. The question receives no answer, just
a series of warnings spelled out in Joyce’s ever-present HCE formula (“Hush! Caution!
Echoland!”), suggesting that such matters must be broached carefully (13.5). Yet questions of
belonging dominate the Wake, as the novel’s primary characters repeatedly struggle against
feelings of alienation, manifested most poignantly by Shaun’s nationalist project and HCE’s
confrontation with the Cad.45

The latter is the work’s first obvious instance of Irish-Anglo ethnic conflict. Earwicker,
“that homogenous man” (34.14) sets out “one happygogusty ides-of-April morning (the
anniversary as it fell out of his first assumption of his mirthday suit and rights in appurtenance to
the confusioning of human races)” where he encounters the cad (35.3-5). Greeting HCE in what
William York Tindall recognizes as “corrupt Gaelic” for “how are you today, my blond

45 Nationalists had long sought to establish ethnic identity in reference to the mythos of pre-Christian Ireland. The
figures of Finn MacCool and Cuchulain were of primary importance to this endeavor, providing the context for
future rebellions by serving as instruments of national pride. Joyce borrows from these myths at will—the Wake
belongs, at least in part, to Finn MacCool—but makes them part of his referential literary stream. The Wake is
partially a re-imagining of Irish mythology, but that mythology is continually placed in dialogue with the mythoi of
other cultures, as well as politics, geography, and popular culture from hundreds of civilizations. Finnegans Wake
may be an Irish novel, but Irish source material is continually juxtaposed with non-Irish stories, creating a narrative
that rejects ethnic essentialism in favor of Joyce’s monomyth. The mythos of the Wake is deep and diverse, brought
together by Joyce’s imaginative revisions.
gentleman,” he asks HCE the time (58). While this is a seemingly innocuous question, owing to a seemingly innocuous encounter, the scene, as Joyce describes it, is far more sinister and violent. Indeed, HCE fears for his life—“unwishful as he felt of being hurled into eternity right then”—and is preparing for battle when the church bells interrupt and answer the Cad’s question (35.24-25).

According to Tindall, HCE’s nervous response to the Cad’s question can be partially explained by politics. “It is the ides of April,” writes Tindall, “a time that recalls not only Caesar’s fatal Ides of March” but the Easter Rising, alluded to by Joyce’s subsequent reference to the “fenian rising” (59; 35.24). “Earwicker’s fear of a rebel,” therefore, “is that of the established Englishman” (Tindall 59). As a “homogenius man,” HCE represents a sort of racial purity that he seeks to protect even as such notions fall into disrepair (“the confusioning of human races”). Like the nationalist rebels he fears, HCE defines his existence in reference to a supposed fixity; he is the mirror vision of aggressive Celticism which marks him as the Other. Tindall further finds the matter of time inherently threatening, as a young man (“cad” suggesting also “cadet”) asking an old man the question hints towards the older generation’s inevitable overthrow at the hands of the young (59). Combining these possibilities, we find that the social order to which HCE adheres is in its dying days, threatened to be violently replaced by the new nationalist order. Thus confronted, HCE’s response is pregnant with imperialist, establishment rhetoric:

46 While HCE seems here to consider himself Anglo-Irish, commentators have indicated that that the ethnic self-identification is hardly static. As Len Platt notes, “for all the relative stability of HCE’s Anglicized status, this, like all other race identities in the Wake, is highly qualified and subject to slippage” (31). Moreover, Ira Bruce Nadel has found that HCE, and “his inability to protect the purity of his seed,” is the clearest manifestation of Joyce’s belief in a heterogeneous Irish ethnicity (303).
I have won straight. Hence my nonation wide hotel and creamery establishments which for the honours of our mewmew mutual daughters, credit me, I am woo-woo willing to take my stand, sir, upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption, any hygienic day to this hour and to make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaster’s (I lift my hat!) and in the presence of the Deity Itself andwell of Bishop and Mrs. Michan of High Church of England as of all such said my immediate with dwellers and of every living sohole in every corner where over of this globe in general with useth of my British to my backbone tongue and commutative justice that there is not one tittle of truth, allow me to tell you, in that purest of fibfib fabrications (36.20-33).

The monument to which HCE refers, calling it “that sign of our ruru redemption” seems to be the Wellington Monument in Phoenix Park (site of both the confrontation with the Cad and HCE’s mysterious transgression), introduced in the previous chapter as the “Wallinstone national museum” and the “Willingdone Museyroom” (8.1; 8.10).47 The Duke of Wellington serves as an embodiment of both British military glory and the Anglo-Irish community to which HCE belongs. For questions of ethnicity, an allusion to Wellington seems appropriate: in an almost certainly apocryphal story, Wellington, when discussing the accident of his birth in Ireland, allegedly replied by alluding to the Nativity story: “being born in a stable does not make one a horse.” The “Open Bible” upon which HCE pledges to make his oath is, as McHugh notes, a symbol of the Orange Order, while “the Great Taskmaster” to whom he swears

47 The “Outline of Chapter Contents” refers to it simply as “The Willingdone Museum” (xxxi)
is an apparent reference to the Great Architect of Freemasonry (36). By referring to these orders, HCE marks himself as defiantly “other” to the Cad and the Irish Catholic community that HCE takes the Cad to represent. Catholics were not allowed in either organization, and most of Ireland’s population regarded the Orange and Masonic lodges with distrust and resentment. As such, HCE speaks as an Anglo-Irishman under threat from radical Irish rebels, finding his security in the symbols and slogans of the Protestant Ascendancy.

And yet, further implications of the passage destabilize that reading. “Bishop and Mrs. Michan of High Church of England,” while an apparent reference to the Anglican St. Michan’s Church in Dublin, a symbol of the Anglo-Irish establishment to which HCE clings, also carries contradictory associations, due to its relevance to Ireland’s rebellious history. St. Michan’s parish, the region of North Dublin that surrounds the Church, is also the site of Barney Kiernan’s. Joyce’s earlier description of St. Michan’s in Ulysses, couched in a parody of Revival literature, points to the area’s significance to revolutionary nationalism:

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48 McHugh misses the more immediate allusion here to Milton’s Sonnet Seven (“All is, if I have grace to use it so./As ever in my great task—Master’s eye.” The phrase also appears in Carlyle’s “Corn-law Rhymes” (presumably alluding to Milton).

49 The Orange Order is an expressly Protestant fraternal organization, forbidding entry to Catholics and other non-Protestants under its general rules (though, of course, few Catholics would be interested in joining anyway). The Masons have never excluded Catholics from membership—they only require their members to have a belief in the Divine—but the Catholic Church has long forbidden Catholics to join the Craft under pain of excommunication. By conflating these two organizations, Joyce not only establishes HCE’s outsider status, but also points to the Masonic influence on the Orange Order, a society modeled after Freemasonry in its structure and iconography. Catholic distrust of these secret societies can be found in Joyce’s earlier fiction: in “Araby,” the boy’s aunt frets that the titular bazaar is “some Freemason affair.” In Ulysses, the Citizen’s first comment about Bloom (“What’s that bloody freemason doing…proving up and down outside?”) denigrates Bloom for being a mason, rather than for being a Jew (12.300-01). References to Bloom’s membership abound throughout Ulysses, including Bloom’s use of masonic gestures in “Circe.” Gifford argues that, “in context, the Masonic sign suggests an attempt to assert influence with or membership in the Anglo-Irish establishment,” which most Catholics would have found “suspicious and fearful” (462).
In Inisfail the fair there lies a land, the land of holy Michan. There sleep the mighty dead as in life they slept, warriors and princes of high renown (12.69-70).

Gifford identifies “the mighty dead” as “several leaders of the Rebellion of 1798, including the brothers Sheares, Oliver Bond, and Dr. Charles Lucas” (317). Of greatest interest are the Sheares brothers, both buried in the vaults of St. Michan’s and explicitly mentioned later in “Cyclops” alongside Wolfe Tone and Emmett (12.498-500). Although they were members of a prominent Anglo-Irish Protestant family, the Sheares brothers rebelled against that establishment, becoming martyrs to the nationalist cause.\(^50\) The certainty of establishment symbolism, then, is destabilized, since St. Michan’s also represents the same violent rebellion that HCE fears.\(^51\) While perhaps a coincidence, the allusion to St. Michan’s takes on new significance if we recognize that, while HCE uses it as a symbol of Anglo-Irish ascendancy, it is also a symbol of rebellion, one cherished by radical nationalists. Were radical nationalism merely a thing of the distant past, we might presume to relegate the bones of the Sheares brothers harmlessly to the grave; however, the Easter Rising, by reviving the radical, republican nationalism espoused by the United Irishmen renews the nationalist claim to the symbol. St. Michan’s crypt becomes a more potent symbol if we bring HCE’s allusion into dialogue with Pearse’s “Funeral Oration for Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa,” where the rebel proclaims his movement’s ownership over patriot dead:

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\(^{50}\) We would do well also to remember that “Cyclops” begins with the unnamed narrator “passing the time of day…at the corner of Arbour hill,” the area adjacent to St. Michan’s and home to Arbour Hill Cemetery, where Wolfe Tone, Connolly, Pearse, and MacBride are all buried (12.1-2).

\(^{51}\) Moreover, St. Michan’s may also here refer to the Dublin St. Michan’s constituency, which would, in 1918, elect Michael Staines, a member of Sinn Fein and a veteran of the Easter Rising.
They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! - they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace (137).

Pearse’s language, though figurative, becomes literal in Joyce’s vision. This brand of radical separatism, by tracing its origins to the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rising, claims ownership of the patriots’ final resting place. St. Michan’s, as the home to nationalist martyrs, belongs to the rebels, not to HCE. 52

HCE’s rhetoric hinges upon the certainties of the Anglo-Irish establishment, but those certainties have apparently been ruptured. The Cad, assuming he represents the violent ethnocentrism of revolutionary nationalism—speaking Irish on the Ides of April may well be threatening—has pushed HCE to grasp at the symbols of the Sassenach, but those symbols no longer belong to HCE. Like HCE himself, the symbols stutter, obfuscating their intended meaning by emitting incomplete resonances, their once-apparent certainty now darkened by new significance. The old order, fearing the violence of the new, cannot express itself coherently. While the Cad’s ethnicity is left unspecified, HCE’s association of him with fenian rebellions and the sinnfinners suggests that, at least in HCE’s mind, he is of the aggressively Celtic bent

52 We may also consider that, while McHugh is definitive in attaching the reference to St. Michan’s to the Church of England, St. Michan’s was also a Roman Catholic Parish and the name of a Catholic Church located on North Anne Street. James Fraser’s *Handbook for Dublin and its Environs* (1862) includes both the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches in his registry of Dublin’s churches (12). Samuel Lewis’ *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (1837) and George Newenham Wright’s *An Historical Guide to the City of Dublin* (1825) both describe the Chapel on North St. Anne’s Street as a part of St. Michan’s parish.
characteristic of so much of the rhetoric surrounding the Easter Rising. HCE, with his self-
identification with the establishment Church and the imperialist presence in Ireland (and across the globe) becomes connected to the Anglo-Irish side. The first encounter between these competing political ideologies hints towards a conflict unavoidable when ethnic determinism functions within revolutionary programs. HCE may be overreacting (it is, of course, difficult to tell what reactions are appropriate within the *Wake’s* bizarre world), but he does so because he is aware that any incarnation of violent ethnocentricity will consider him the enemy. When so approached, HCE prepares for danger, fearing for his life. The impulse to attack in self-defense is strong, largely because HCE fears a new, revolutionary order and what it may mean for his prosperity and survival.

However, if we further contextualize this encounter by acknowledging how Joyce presents the scene, we find that, characteristic of the *Wake*, certainty eludes us yet again. Consider Joyce’s introduction to HCE’s speech:

> In greater support of his word (it, quaint anticipation of a famous phrase, has been reconstructed out of oral style into the verbal for all time with ritual rhythmic, in quiritary quietude, and toosammenstucked from successive accounts by Noah Webster in the redaction known as the Sayings Attributive of H.C. Earwicker, prize on schillings, postlots free (36.7-13).

In other words, Earwicker’s ensuing speech is a reconstruction, rather than the original. Located in Webster’s “redaction,” HCE’s response might plausibly have been changed at some point during its reconstruction, causing serious doubts as to the accuracy of any such report. The
telling and re-telling, recording and re-recording of incidents and events, at the core of both this chapter and *Finnegans Wake* as a whole, suggests that meaning is always at risk of alienation, since accuracy can hardly be preserved without fault. The encounter subsequently leads to a series of rumors about HCE, culminating in “The Ballad of Persse O’Reilly”\(^{53}\) which closes the episode: “He was one time our King of the Castle/Now he’s kicked about like a rotten old parsnip./And from Green street he’ll be sent by order of his Worship/To the penal jail of Mountjoy” (45.7-10). It is an evident inversion of roles: the one-time monarch has been displaced by the new rebellious order, which punishes their former King the way kings once punished and executed rebels.\(^{54}\)

As with all encounters in the *Wake*, the confrontation between HCE and the Cad is continually replayed, in different contexts and towards different ends. It is, after all, the Cad who begins the series of rumors about HCE that form both the basis of the “Ballad” and the core of *Finnegans Wake*. However, our inability to categorically assign truth or falsity to any of these rumors in any given incarnation indicates that Irish identity, for Joyce, is too difficult to describe in simple, categorical terms. Joyce’s concerns, however, are not shared by his characters, whose attempts to define themselves in communal language dominate much of the book.

In contrast to HCE, his twin sons Shem and Shaun are generally taken to be “Irish,”\(^{55}\) if

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\(^{53}\) Tindall notes that the title of the ballad is simultaneously an allusion to the French word for earwig (*Perce-oreille*) and both Pearse and The O’Rahilly (who died leading a charge in the Easter Rising).

\(^{54}\) Mountjoy has a long-standing association with radical nationalism, having been host to rebel prisoners throughout the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries.

\(^{55}\) To label Shem and Shaun as HCE’s literal sons—or even literal characters—is a difficult task. John Gordon suggests that the two sons are, in fact, parts of HCE’s personality, rather than characters in their own right. “They
only in enigmatic ways. Shaun, who ultimately overthrows HCE and briefly takes his place, is the novel’s most vociferous representative of radical Irish nationalism. As Shaun the Post, the deliverer of ALP’s letter, he is necessarily associated with the Easter Rising, since the central (and most famous) venue of the insurrection was the General Post Office in city centre Dublin. Tracing Shaun’s career throughout Book III makes the connection unavoidable; as the usurper of HCE’s place, if only temporarily (before transforming back into HCE), Shaun represents that new Irish generation that HCE fears. Having claimed primacy in the novel, Shaun begins Book III delivering ALP’s letter, then lecturing his sister Issy and her schoolmates on the need to preserve the integrity of Ireland and the Irish race, and prophesying his glorious return to usher in a new dawn at the chapter’s end (“ere he retourney’s postexilic, on that day that belongs to joyful Ireland”) (472.34-35). The imagery on the chapter’s final page hearkens to the Easter Rising: “The phaynix rose a sun before Erebia sank his smother” (473.16-17). The phoenix, as a representation of death and resurrection, is easily associated with Easter, and a common symbol in Republican iconography for the Rising. What the phoenix brings is a new order, which Shaun predicts will come “ere Molochy wars bring the devil era” (473.7-8). The final two words are a clear pun upon the name of Eamon de Valera, confirming readers’ suspicions that Shaun and de Valera are somehow connected. The parallels are certainly inviting: Shaun progresses from the action of revolution (delivering ALP’s letter) to sermonize a conservative, protectionist

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are figments,” Gordon claims, “and nothing else…in the language of theology, they are processions, not persons” (50).

56 The GPO remains, to this day, a fully functioning post office.

57 Republican murals of the Easter Rising in present-day Northern Ireland often feature the image of the phoenix in the background. The link between the phoenix and Irish nationalism, of course, predates 1916; Joyce himself has Hynes use the symbol in his “The Death of Parnell” in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room.”
ideology. While not a signatory of the Proclamation of 1916, de Valera was the Commandant of the Rising forces stationed at Boland Mills and was originally sentenced to death for his role in the rebellion, though that sentence was commuted and he was eventually released. De Valera’s subsequent career, as head of the Irish Republican Army and Sinn Fein, a prominent opponent of the Treaty, founder of Fianna Fail, Taoiseach, and President of the Irish Free State, supposedly represented an unbroken chain of connection between the ideology of the Easter Rising and the practical politics of the Free State.

Joyce’s antipathy towards de Valera and the Free State government is well-known—“devil era” might be the Wake’s least subtle pun—and by constructing Shaun’s progress in Book III as an approximation of de Valera’s political career, Joyce assaults both the ideology of the Easter Rising and the influence of that ideology upon the subsequent institution of the Irish Free State. Primary to this assault are matters of ethnicity; Shaun’s position as revolutionary and politician is predicated upon a singular, binary understanding of Irish identity. Like the leaders of the Easter Rising, de Valera included, Shaun takes an essentialist pose, and his hysterical attempts to protect that essentialism provide some of Joyce’s most devastating critiques of the ideology of 1916.

When he first appears in Book III, Shaun is described as “jarvey jaunty with a romp of a schoolgirl’s completion sitting pretty over his Oyster Monday print face,” the pun on Easter Monday further solidifying Shaun’s association with the Easter Rising (407.6-8). His voice, “the voce of Shaun, vote of the Irish” emerges “as the green to the gred was flew, was flown” (407.11-14). The episode takes the form of an interrogation; after Shaun’s introduction, he is
asked a series of questions, to which his answers suggest Joyce’s playful subversion of the tenets of nationalism, all the more pressing given the established, if always slippery, connections Joyce draws between Shaun and the Easter Rising. “Dear dogmestic Shaun,” as the interrogator pointedly names him, has “while away painted our town a wearing greenridinghued” (411.23-24). “Dogmestic,” by combining “dogmatic” with “domestic,” points to Shaun’s narrow political ideology, and Shaun’s occupation (painting Dublin green) seems an apt description of various nationalist movements, including those of Pearse and his cohorts.58 “Greening Dublin” is a figurative example of nationalism’s insistence upon a singular identity,59 one which will exclude Shaun’s Anglo-Irish father. That Shaun’s response, an emphatic series of confessions, culminates in his exclamation of “Down with the Saozon ruze!” indicates that Shaun, like the leaders of the Easter Rising, opposed the “Green” Irish to the Saxon rulers, whose rule and trickery (“ruze”) Shaun roundly rejects (411.30).

The “Sazon ruze” that Shaun rejects is a pun that combines the phrase “Saxon rule” with two Breton words: saoz, meaning “English”; and ruz, meaning “red” (McHugh 411). By using the color red, Joyce refers to the British military uniform, the so-called redcoat, an appropriate symbol of the British colonial presence in Ireland and abroad. This sentence leads to an image of a waistcoat on fire (“blazing on the focoal”), which soon transforms into an image of fire burning the presumably English enemy (“blazing upon the foe”) (411.30-33). Hugh Kenner argues that these lines find Shaun “[boasting] of his exploits in the Post Office fighting,” which,

58 McHugh notes that after “independence postboxes were painted green” (411).

59 A humorous example of such tendencies can be found in Flann O’Brien’s At Swim-Two-Birds, also published in 1939, where the character Dermot Trellis will only read books with green covers.
given the violence of the description certainly seems plausible (273). However, Kenner does not account for Shaun’s subsequent self-description—“Like the regular redshank I am”—which seems to destabilize Shaun’s exploits. The meaning of “redshank” here seems obscure. One possibility comes from John Bishop, who sees “redshank” as Shaun’s recollection of his parents’ copulation on the night of Issy’s conception; since apparently ALP “was wearing red stockings throughout” and “the sight of [her] kicking legs is what makes the greatest impression” on the confused Shaun (84). The trauma wrought by witnessing his parent’s violent lovemaking, Bishop argues, renders violence synonymous with sex in Shaun’s mind. However, we should question why Shaun associates himself with color red, having just declaimed that color as that of the English oppressors. At the least, Shaun’s self-description here destabilizes the assumed ethnic dichotomy he wishes to draw, in violent terms, between the Irish and the Saxon.

Similarly, Shaun’s nationalism, like everything in *Finnegans Wake*, is subject to flux. Earlier in the chapter, Shaun introduces himself as “a mere mailman of peace,” one “unwordy…as to be the bearer extraordinary of these postoomany missive on his majesty’s service” (408.10-14). Shaun, of course, is not serving the king—his vocation is delivering his mother’s letter, written by his brother—yet he identifies his vocation as a servile one for which he feels unworthy.

Like de Valera, Shaun proceeds from the post (figuratively, of course, since de Valera was not stationed in the GPO) to protectionist politics. “Burn only what’s Irish,” he enjoins his sister in Chapter Two, “accepting their coals” (4474-5). McHugh finds this an allusion to Swift’s “burn everything English, excepting their coals,” though it reflects the economic policies

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60 The eroticism attendant upon nationalist violence will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.
of the de Valera government, which sought to build self-sufficiency by rejecting English goods (447). Protectionist politics apply not only to goods, but to the purity of the Irish race:

The racist to the racy, rossy. The soil is for the self alone. Be ownkind. Be kithkinish. Be bloddysibby. Be Irish (465.30-31).

Shaun’s command to Issy—“Be Irish”—is undeniably curious. While it echoes the efforts of cultural nationalists to battle “foreign” influence over Irish culture, it seems anachronistic to Shaun’s vision of Irish identity, and the vision expressed by most radical nationalists in the early Twentieth century. If identity is innate, essentialist material, then the command is redundant. As such, Shaun’s command, voiced in the imperative, reminds us that the Irish identity cherished by Irish nationalists was a cultural construct and an artifice. The command, of course, covers not only the constancy of the Irish race, but its integrity. Shaun, by placing a premium upon ethnic purity recalls the ethnocentricity incumbent upon radical nationalism. The future of the Irish nation (here, the “soil,” belonging to *sinn fein*) demands that the Irish race remain pure, even if it requires incest (”kithkinish” suggesting “kissing kin”). The irony, of course, is that Shaun is, at least in some sense, the product of mixed parentage, of an Anglo father and an Irish mother.  

Joyce here reminds us of that mixed parentage, subverting their notion of an Irish race distinct from other races, by pointing to the incoherence of purity.

By destabilizing this vision, Joyce reminds his reader that the so-called Irish race exists only by

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61 This irony grows more pronounced when further contextualized; Shaun’s mixed parentage is hardly unique among Ireland’s nationalists, including those with whom Shaun is most readily associated, Eamonn de Valera and Padraic Pearse. De Valera was born in Brooklyn to a Spanish father and an Irish mother, while Pearse was the son of an Englishman.
virtue of “Miscegenations on miscegenations” (18.20). Shaun’s own project is rendered absurd and grotesque, ludicrously demanding that this race be preserved, even if such preservation demands incest.

Given Shaun’s nationalism, and his connections to both de Valera and the Easter Rising, his sense of Irish identity is plausibly read as Joyce’s interpretation of the Easter Rising and its ideology. This ideology, with its excessive emphasis on the Irish race and the notion of an essential Irish identity, culminates in Shaun’s grotesque, racist rant to Issy. Of course, such notions of purity will inevitably falter in Joyce’s dreambook, which repeatedly subverts attempts at definition. “For Shaun,” Mitchell argues, “identity must be something fixed and in place, not requiring any sort of dialectical severance and return in order to be itself; for him, it should be enough for identity simply to be itself naively” (64). Such notions of fixed identity, so crucial to the ideology of the Easter Rising, are surely an anathema to the fluidity of the Wake world in which Shaun lives. If, as Mitchell maintains, Shaun’s “position entails an elimination of the other or, at the very least, a denial of alterity,” then Shaun’s project is necessarily at odds with Joyce’s universe (65). Shaun’s essentialism, by demanding an incoherent purity, fails to withstand Joyce’s metalepsis.

Within such passages, we find Joyce replying to ideas of essentialist differences, always impossible to maintain within the context of Joyce’s dream book. Joyce’s refusal to oversimplify matters of identity within his narratives reveals a substantive break with an ideology that Joyce evidently found presumptuous. If the ethnic make-up of the Irish can be complicated beyond the Gael opposed to the Sassenach, then much of the supposed moral
The righteousness of the cause espoused by the Easter Rising’s leaders can be thrown into doubt. Without this first, vital justification for rebellion, the credibility of the ideology is severely damaged. However, as Joyce was aware, the ghosts of history are not so easily exorcised.
Chapter Three:

History as Her is Harped

In “Eumaeus,” as Stephen and Bloom recover from the trauma of “Circe” in a cabman’s shelter, we are given an account of Bloom’s encounter with Parnell late in the politician’s career. Bloom, noticing that Parnell had lost his hat, recovers it and returns it to the “Uncrowned King of Ireland,” who responds by simply saying, “Thank you, sir” (16.1523). This, we are reminded, is much like an incident in “Hades,” when Bloom performed the same service for John Henry Menton to be rewarded with only “thank you” (6.1026). The later incident is thus described as “history repeating itself with a difference” (16.1523). Setting aside the irony that neither occurrence is actually “a matter of strict history,” both being Joycean inventions, we still find that the connection between these incidents is extremely tenuous (16.1514).¹ Coincidence provides two ostensibly similar events, which Bloom, or Joyce’s implied narrator, interprets within a single framework.

The tenuousness of this interpretation becomes more pronounced when we consider that Bloom’s encounter with Parnell is recounted more than once in “Eumaeus.” Earlier in the episode, when the subject is first broached in briefer fashion, Parnell’s response is rendered identically to Menton’s: “thank you,” rather than the more polite “thank you, sir” (16.1336). While a seemingly innocuous difference, it has drawn the attention of Fritz Senn, for whom “the

¹ As Michael Begnal notes, “literally it is not history at all” (242). See his “Art and History: Stephen’s Mirror and Parnell’s Silk Hat” for a more detailed discussion of the scene.
divergence is minute, but enough to cast the sort of doubt on authenticity that *Ulysses*, in turn with what we know about the risks of all communication, tends to induce” (48). Unable to assume that either account is more accurate than the other, we are left grasping for the certainty that Joyce denies us. History, insofar as this minor event can be termed history, becomes elusive. Such matters have prompted Franco Moretti to declare that,

> The status of history in *Ulysses* is intrinsically rather low: to put it plainly, very little happens in the book. But more than that, *Ulysses’* multiplicity of styles forces our attention *away* from whatever happens and focuses it entirely on the various ways in which events can be seen. To use narratology’s standard terms, Joyce radicalizes that narrative tendency which aimed at overdeveloping the level of discourse at the expense of the ‘story.’ What is really meaningful is not what happens—the logic of events and decisions—but unmotivated, ‘free’ subjective reactions to it (247).

*Ulysses*, then, is a novel more concerned with the interpretation of what happens than with what actually happens. This, as Moretti notes, owes to the numerous styles Joyce employs throughout the novel, all of which serve to destabilize our understanding of the events narrated. Every style serves the metaleptic function of highlighting the narrative’s artifice, constantly reminding us that our understanding of the novel’s occurrences is faulty at best and nonexistent at worst. While no novel before or since has sought to account so thoroughly for the events of a single day, no novel before or since has so gleefully reveled in destabilizing our understanding of these events. Attempts to provide a comprehensive account of what happens on June 16, whether undertaken by academics or Bloomsday tour guides, inevitably fall into contingency and, subsequently, incoherence.
This concern receives its most detailed treatment in “Nestor,” when Stephen rather ineptly leads a lesson about the Battle of Asculum. The battle, remembered incompletely from textbooks passively read by privileged students both ignorant and indifferent to their ignorance, sparks Stephen’s ruminations about the nature of recorded history: “Fabled by the daughters of memory. And yet it was in some way if not as memory fabled it” (2.7-8). Stephen’s wonderings about the Battle of Asculum point towards the role that memory and fable play in distorting the objective reality of events when recorded in narrative form. Though unable to access such objectivity in his imagination, Stephen nonetheless postulates that it must exist in some form or another. As such, Stephen draws a virtually Platonic division between what actually happened in the past and how what happened has been reported by the chroniclers of human events. While Stephen, like Joyce, is no Platonist—the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode makes that much abundantly clear—his desire to distinguish between how the Battle of Asculum “was in some way” and “how memory fabled it” postulates a clear distinction between the ideal, form-like existence of history and that version of history corrupted by memory and fable which Stephen, like all teachers of the subject, presents to his students in place of the former (2.7-8).

At issue here, of course, is the relationship between the events of the past and the manner in which those events are recorded in language. Stephen’s students, though they cannot remember the setting of the battle, can recall Pyrrhus’ pithy phrase delivered in the battle’s aftermath: “another victory like that and we are done for” (2.14). This, as Stephen notes, is the “phrase the world had remembered,” though this phrase is here remembered in corrupted form. Whatever Pyrrhus may have said, assuming he said anything of the sort, he surely said it in Greek. The phrase was subsequently recorded by Plutarch in Latin, translated into English, and
then translated yet again from formal speech into a more contemporary, Dublin-based vernacular—as Senn notes, the phrase “done for” is surely an anachronistic translation (51).

Stephen’s particular interest in Pyrrhus’ words suggests that language leaves us alienated from an objective reality. The alienating nature of language is, of course, nothing new for Stephen, who had engaged with the question in *Portrait*:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language (221).

This shadow grows darker when language is brought into relation with the past. As the primary means by which history is recorded and disseminated, language serves to construct narratives inherently alienated from the actualities of the events they presume to record. This alienation, for the great majority of people, is a matter of no consequence: ignorance or indifference allows for certain historical narratives to become accepted as master narratives, hegemonic accounts of the past accepted as truth itself. Gregory Castle, noting this subject in *Ulysses*, has argued that Joyce’s primary project is to formulate “a critique of historical conventions,” making *Ulysses* “a struggle against the master narratives of history which determine social conventions of all kinds” (306; 307). Castle’s argument focuses upon those master narratives established by British Imperialism and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholicism, though he does not consider the master narrative constructed by Irish nationalism. Joyce’s response to this particular narrative will be the primary focus of the remainder of the chapter.
Considering this master narrative in reference to *Ulysses* returns us to Stephen’s musings about the past, specifically his distinction between how “it was in some way” and how events have been “fabled by the daughters of memory” (2.7). As explained in Chapter One, I have chosen to term the former half of this division “History,” while calling the second half “Storiella.” The advantage of such terminology is that it provides a means to distinguish between the actual events of the past and the manner in which those events have been recorded and disseminated. Since *Ulysses* is concerned with the inadequacy of master narratives, Joyce’s emphasis upon Storiella’s failure to capture the truth of History seems most pertinent here. To a contemporary reader of *Ulysses*, of course, this division might seem somewhat pedestrian. Philosophy has long highlighted the influence of perception upon ontology and epistemology, and the developments of phenomenology, modernism, and postmodernism have further developed the notion that an objective reality is either inaccessible or altogether nonexistent. In the aftermath of poststructuralism, we have been conditioned to expect the inevitable tenuousness of interpretation, with the prevailing notion being that such logocentric notions as History are merely the product of pervasive ideologies, the assumed authority of traditional modes of thinking which are, by their nature, incoherent. And yet, in “Nestor” we find Joyce himself, through the mouthpiece of Stephen Dedalus, imagining its possible existence. His desire is tantalizing, though the whole of *Ulysses* stands as a rebuke; History, as the reader of *Ulysses* well knows, is at least inaccessible. As such, Stephen’s ruminations, after shifting to Aristotelian speculations about alternate histories, turn from rational discourse to prophecy: “Weave, weaver of the wind,” thinks Stephen, an ironic allusion to Irish mysticism (2.52-53). However ironically this thought is intended, it nonetheless suggests the limits of Stephen’s
understanding. He cannot access History, and is so left with Storiella, an imperfect substitute.

It seems telling that Stephen’s thoughts (and the lesson) are suddenly and impertinently interrupted by an unnamed student’s request for Stephen to tell them a story. Unknowingly, the student compounds the division between History and Storiella by asserting the primacy of narrative. Having accepted the account of Asculum at face value, the student differentiates between the lesson and the ghost story he desires, unaware that both may well be fictional narratives. Storiella has become reified as History. In Stephen’s classroom, the instructor alone seems the least bit concerned about this ontological dilemma. For his pupils narratives of the past are expressions of things as they were: recited by professors and repeated by rote by students, these are canonical accounts, the veracity of which hardly merits further inspection. Of course, these students lack not only Stephen’s imagination, but his engagement and intellect. Unable to distinguish between History and Storiella, Stephen’s students accept the two as one in the same, just so long as the teacher dismisses them in time for hockey.

This indifference is hardly unique to the students of Dalkey. Throughout Ulysses, the past is invoked countless times, accounts being accepted or dismissed without any coherent criterion. The citizens of Dublin repeat rumor and gossip quite freely, often without questioning its truth. Driven by prejudice, at times the prejudice of ideology, these Dubliners are willing to accept narratives of events as true without bothering to verify them. At times this practice becomes literally dangerous, as with the confusion over Bloom’s supposed gambling windfall on Throwaway. A misinterpreted comment yields a supposition which, once repeated to an audience predisposed to assume the worst about the subject, becomes accepted as truth. This misinterpretation allows the patrons of Barney Kiernan’s to construct a faulty, but convincing
narrative of the day’s events. Bloom’s temporary retreat from the bar, rather than having a charitable purpose, is to collect his winnings. Bloom’s refusal to stand a round comes from his greed, rather than the fact that he, alone among the bar’s patrons, is not drinking. Coupled with the shared anti-Semitism of those present, this assumption becomes reified as an objective truth. The danger of this is evident when the Citizen threatens Bloom with violent harm.

This phenomenon is what Linda Orr calls “the ruse of history,” which she defines as “that impression it gives, like language, of always being logical or natural, making ultimate, even intimate sense” (18). The past can, once arranged in narrative form, yield a convincing plot, which allows us to construct a convincing interpretation. However, as Orr continues, “like language, the ‘free’ signifier is constantly realigning the whole slippery system, [so] everything can change from one day to the next,” rendering all interpretations contingent and, ultimately unstable (18). Nonetheless, the desire to uncover the logic of events remains tantalizing: Stephen speculates about that possibility, employing the techniques of rational discourse (both Platonic and Aristotelian), before leaving the matter to prophecy and largely abandoning it altogether.

Later in the episode, when in awkward conversation with Deasy, amidst the reminders of Ireland’s traumatic past, Stephen makes his most oft-quoted remark in the whole of the novel: “History…is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (2.377). Deasy’s reply, a tired repetition of the Victorian Myth of Progress, puts past, present, and future into a divine context, “[moving] towards one great goal, the manifestation of God” (2.381). “The ways of the Creator are not our ways,” Deasy reminds us, so our understanding of past, present, and future is necessarily limited, at least until the eschatological moment of Christ’s Second Coming.

As divergent as Stephen’s metaphor and Deasy’s Myth of Progress might be, they both
nonetheless return to Stephen’s earlier division between History and Storiella. Stephen’s formulation suggests that the past is at once confining and illusory; a nightmare is merely the projection of one’s unconscious played out in an unconscious state. By identifying History as a dream, Stephen indicates that he is trapped in an illusory product of his own consciousness. Deasy’s definition, by contrast, asserts that History does exist, even if we cannot know it in its entirety. While such notions may seem quaint and outdated to contemporary audiences, we must remember the tremendous influence they held in Nineteenth and Twentieth century Europe, and particularly in Ireland in the aftermath of the Easter Rising.

Joyce’s own vision sharpens the distinction between History and Storiella. The substance of Joyce’s narrative, as Senn and Moretti have already noted, is one which destabilizes our notion of the former by presenting us only with the latter. While neither Senn nor Moretti adequately contextualize their findings in reference to political circumstances, their omission can be corrected: by destabilizing nationalist notions of History, Joyce destabilizes the whole of the philosophical system at the heart of 1916. Although Joyce recognizes, at least speculatively, the existence of History, he never actually finds it. To paraphrase Descartes, Joyce posits that History is, but never answers what manner of thing it is. As such, History becomes a sort of Platonic form—or Neo-Platonic gnosis—without the requisite portal of discovery postulated by men like Connolly and Pearse. Their presumptions, then, are easily dismissed: if there is no interpretive mechanism to allow us access to History, all interpretations of the past are contingent and, ultimately, false, or at least alienated from the truth of History. This alienation renders all attempts to contextualize the present in reference to the past, and all attempts to predict the future in reference to the presumed logic of events, incoherent.
Joyce’s confrontation with the master narrative established by the Rising’s leaders occurs largely in response to versions of that narrative expressed in popularly consumed texts. If, as Stephen notes in “Nestor,” “history was a tale like any other too often heard, [Ireland] a pawnshop,” we should acknowledge the means by which radical nationalists like Pearse and Connolly “purchased” the Irish insurrectionary tradition to recreate it in narrative form, and how that form became culturally pervasive in Irish culture (2.46-7). S.C. Lanier, noting that “nationalists have found platforms through journalism and through popular productions of poetry, history and fiction,” argues that once these platforms yield their influence over public consciousness, “a situation soon develops where text comes to be reified and is perceived as being something more than just a representation of knowledge; it is perceived as being knowledge itself,” establishing itself as “a singularly authoritative voice” (2-3). This nationalist narrative owes its genesis, at least in part, to the various commemorations of the nationalist past appearing in popularly consumed texts. These texts, which include works published by the Rising’s leaders and other prominent nationalists, served to shape Irish attitudes towards the island’s rebellious tradition, establishing a master narrative of Ireland’s past. This narrative idealized Ireland’s “chain of Separatism,” creating a sentimentalized, romanticized, and occasionally sanitized narrative of Irish Storiella posing as History. While Joyce engages with such narratives throughout *Ulysses*, this chapter will focus upon “Sirens,” where this engagement is most pointed.

“Sirens” incorporates three significant nationalist texts into the narrative: “The Croppy Boy,” a romantic Nineteenth century Ballad about the 1798 Rising; “The Memory of the Dead,”
John Kells Ingram’s poem, later set to music, commemorating the 1798 Rising; and the peroration of Emmet’s Speech from the Dock, delivered in 1803 at the conclusion of his trial for treason. At first glance, these texts may seem fairly innocuous expressions of nostalgic, sentimental nationalism. The Ormond’s patrons, while obviously affected emotionally, are not interested in rebelling themselves. So much is true of most Dubliners in *Ulysses*, who seem to regard such texts as the antiquated documents of a distant antiquity. As such, these texts can move emotionally but not politically. “Bad times those were,” thinks Mr. Kernan in “Wandering Rocks,” as he passes the site of Emmet’s execution, but the bad times are “over and done with.” (10.767). Kernan’s fleeting thought largely speaks to the predominant, if not universal perception of the Irish past among Dublin’s citizenry in the novel. With the obvious exceptions of the Citizen (the most virulently nationalist character in *Ulysses*) and the novel’s two protagonists, the citizens of Dublin seem to be at a remove from their national past. These three texts are treated superficially by the patrons of the Ormond, as emotional, not insurrectionary, ballast. However, given the events against which Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, the texts referred to in “Sirens” acquire new resonance when considered from the prism of 1916 and beyond.

This new resonance emerges through the formal and rhetorical implications of allusion itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, allusion forms a tension between the primary text and the secondary text, one which becomes more pronounced when the reader has knowledge which the characters lack. Specifically, the reader of *Ulysses* is cognizant that the sentimental, idealistic, rebellious *zeitgeist* celebrated in “The Croppy Boy,” “The Memory of the Dead,” and Emmet’s Speech from the Dock is, while seemingly out of place in the Dublin of 1904, hardly anachronistic to Twentieth century Ireland in general. The reader must therefore place the
artifacts of the past into a context foreign to the setting of the novel.

Should the reader undertake such an endeavor, the reward will be a new sense of the episode’s implications. The Easter Rising presented Ireland with a new legion of Croppy Boys (Catholic rebels motivated by love for country), a new set of idealistic voices emanating from the docks (the stirring final words spoken by the executed leaders), and a new pantheon of role models for future revolutionaries (the sixteen men executed for their role in the Rising). Given the explicit importance of 1798 and 1803 to 1916, and given our knowledge of the coming revolution (knowledge shared by the author, but obviously not by his characters), the reader can forge a new context through Joyce’s allusions, whereby “Sirens” ironically invokes not only the events of 1798 and 1803, but those of 1916, as well.

To return to the distinction made between History and Storiella, we should note that this new context, built from the pieces of sentimental discourse Joyce presents throughout the episode, falls squarely in the latter category. Taken in sum, “The Croppy Boy,” “The Memory of the Dead,” and the Speech from the Dock present a narrative of Ireland’s past that is sentimental, heroic, and reductively simplistic. As such, incorporating these texts serves a metaleptic function by reminding the reader that such narratives are artificially designed, like the novel itself. Such an interpretation renders the whole of “Sirens” a metaleptic account of one’s relationship with the conceived artifice of nationalist Storiella.

The episode, like so much of Ulysses, parodies the sense produced by Storiella that, given the proper interpretive mechanism, we can adequately predict the future. The fundamental assumption of teleology is highlighted by the episode’s complex structure. “Sirens” opens with a sixty-three line “overture,” a series of words and phrases seemingly divorced from sense. No
action is narrated, so the reader enters the episode unsure of its temporal and spatial setting. However, as Don Gifford indicates, each fragmentary line predicts elements of the episode as yet unperformed. Gifford describes the opening “as an introductory announcement of the episode’s musical motifs,” or “the ‘keyboard’ on which the ‘fugue’ is to be performed” (290). In a sense, the overture is comparable to the dumb show that precedes the players’ performance of *The Mousetrap* in *Hamlet*; it announces the argument of the episode without narrating the necessary context. From a narrative perspective, the overture is of greatest interest in that, for the first time in the novel, Joyce wholly violates the temporal order. While Joyce plays with temporality throughout *Ulysses*, every scrap of narrative extant before the overture to “Sirens” is applicable to a specific time. The motifs, all of which are traceable to parts of the narrative action, are expressed without being narrated in space or time, making sense only when juxtaposed with the corresponding incidents in the episode.

Arthur Netrovski finds that the overture can only make sense in hindsight: “retrospective writing made of this a prospective arrangement; retrospective reading wakes synoptic writing here” (21). In other words, the overture, by metaleptically breaking both syntactic and temporal

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2 Gilbert identifies the technique of the episode as “fuga per conone,” though the accuracy of this label is a matter of considerable dispute (211). Arthur Netrovski asserts that, “from a strictly musical point of view, the chapter makes more sense as an operatic act, complete with introduction, duets, a tenor aria, a trio, a quintet, a baritone solo, and several comings and goings, than as a fugue, which would not have allowed for such variety” (22). Nadya Zimmerman, responding to the controversy, notes that “because there is no accepted formula for translating a musical form into written language, each scholar will have his or her own standards by which to judge whether the musical form in Sirens is a successful translation,” rendering the issue “one without resolution” (109).

3 For the most part, the narrative of *Ulysses* proceeds in virtually perfect temporal order, though “Telemachus,” “Nestor,” and “Proteus” take place concurrently with “Calyxpo,” “Lotus Eaters,” and “Hades.” “Penelope,” alone among the episodes, is denied a specific time; as Gifford notes, “Molly does not pattern her life by the clock” (610).

4 Gifford’s notes provide a comprehensive correspondence (290-95).
order, is virtually nonsensical when first read, and it remains nonsensical if read in isolation from the rest of the episode. Only after reading (and re-reading) the ensuing narrative can the reader account for the overture’s meaning. Joyce’s prose overture suggests major themes to be developed further in the coming piece, sounds which will soon be contextualized by corresponding incidents. Furthermore, the overture foreshadows the format of the chapter: by removing these sixty-two lines from temporal placement, Joyce forecasts further ruptures in temporality throughout the episode. Nadya Zimmerman argues that, by drawing upon the fugue form for “Sirens,” Joyce necessarily confronts that form’s “fundamental attribute—simultaneity” (110). While the limits of prose suggest that such an attribute is impossible to replicate, Joyce nonetheless “[manages] to create a written equivalent that might be called ‘verbal simultaneity’” (Zimmerman 110). If “Wandering Rocks,” the preceding episode, ruptures spatial placement by shifting between incidents occurring in temporal order across the whole of Dublin, then “Sirens” does something similar with temporality, offering a series of events occurring simultaneously but narrated in succession. The implications for both temporality and narrative structure are complex. Zimmerman claims that, “if narrative is an organizing principle by which people give coherence to their experiences over time, the use of a fugal structure subverts the reader’s expectation (conscious or not) of teleology” (199). As Zimmerman continues,

By translating a fuga per canonem into prose, Joyce is able to appropriate music’s capacity for simultaneous development and thus to offer a new approach to literary narrative. Prose, unavoidably, imposes linearity on the reader—we read the words on the page in the order in which they appear. This developmental narrative of events occurring

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5 Zimmerman provides charts approximating a musical score to illustrate her point (112-117).
in temporal succession has come to dominate the way in which we conceptualize life, the ways in which it proceeds, and in which we relate past, present, and future. By evoking a musical form, Joyce derails that linearity with the simultaneity that only music possesses (117).

By its very structure, then, “Sirens” stands as a rebuke to teleological notions of development. While Zimmerman’s focus is not political, it is necessary to bring her interpretation into conversation with the political implications resultant from the derailment of linearity, as “Sirens” is one of the most political episodes in *Ulysses*. Although the ghosts of personal pasts—Rudy Bloom, Mary Dedalus, and others—loom over the Ormond bar, the episode also explicitly confronts the national past of Ireland through pointed allusions to “The Croppy Boy,” Emmet’s Speech from the Dock, and Ingram’s “The Memory of the Dead.” Understanding these allusions demands that we account for Joyce’s deployment of them in both the overture and the subsequent narrative. We may, paraphrasing from “Eumaeus,” call Joyce’s metaleptic technique here “repetition with a difference.” While the overture provides some of the most crucial instances of this method, we may first look to a seemingly insignificant moment in the Ormond hotel where Joyce points his reader backwards in time and place. As Bloom eats his dinner, we are reminded directly of our first encounter with the novel’s protagonist:

Pat served, uncovered dishes. Leopold cut liverslices. As said before he ate with relish the inner organs, nutty gizzards, fried cod’s roes while Richie Goulding, Collis, Ward ate steak and kidney, steak then kidney, bite by bite of pie he ate Bloom ate they ate (11.519-22).

The passage, like so many passages in “Sirens,” violates syntactic convention to obscure
its meaning. The third sentence quoted above begins by pointing us backwards (“As said before”), but ruptures the backwards glance by returning us, without warning, to present action.

In essence, the attempt to contextualize present action in reference to past narration is interrupted by the pressing need to move forward. Moreover, while the third sentence should immediately remind us of the novel’s first description of Bloom, the phrasing is hardly identical:

Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods’ roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine (4.1-5).

A comparison of these two passages reveals several significant differences. Specifically, the passage in “Sirens” is severely adumbrated from the passage in “Calypso.” Joyce, or the narrator, removes the prepositional phrase “of beasts and fowls” and truncates the much longer list to omit giblet soup, roast heart, and liverslices (though, as to the liverslices, it seems to be Bloom’s slicing of liver that sparks the repetition). Moreover, Joyce transforms “fried hencods’ roes” into “fried cods’ roes”: a change that, while seemingly insignificant, merits further inspection. Joyce here replaces an invented word (“hencods”) with an existing word (“cods”).

If “hencod” is a Joycean invention, the most plausible interpretation is that it refers to a female cod; the prefix, then, is entirely unnecessary, as only female fish produce roe. Joyce has removed the unnecessary and nonsensical from his description, providing a more succinct and sensible account of Bloom’s culinary tastes.

6 “Hencod” is nowhere to be found in the OED and, to my knowledge, Joyce is the first and only writer to use the word in print.
If we approach *Ulysses* as, at least in part, a progressive narrative of Bloom’s day, the repetition-with-difference of the earlier description of Bloom garners new significance. The backwards glance in the narrative is prompted by a current occasion—Bloom is having a dinner of sliced liver—thereby rendering Joyce’s description of that dinner an attempt to interpret present action in reference to past occasion. However, in that interpretation, elements of the past occasion are altered or omitted in an apparent attempt at clarity and concision. If we pause to consider the implications of the omissions, we are forced to question why some elements are deemed important enough to repeat and others are not. Why, for instance, should we care that Bloom enjoys gizzards or cod roes when he is eating liver? Is it not more important that he enjoys “liverslices with crustcrumbs”? Why is this detail omitted? And, for that matter, what is the importance of “crustcrumbs” to Bloom’s enjoyment of his dinner? How has his liver been prepared—with crustcrumbs or without?

While Bloom’s diet is probably unrelated to Irish politics, Joyce’s technique has political implications when considered in reference to the shape and form of all master narratives, including that one formulated by the leaders of the Easter Rising. By its nature, a master narrative assumes that all events can be interpreted within the narrative’s framework; thus present occasion can be interpreted in reference to the past, so long as the proper interpretive mechanism is used. Consequently, the strain of maintaining a coherent narrative demands the excision, consciously or not, of those details deemed incoherent, irrelevant, or indifferent to the

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7 Joyce’s description of Bloom in “Calypso” is not, of course, an event in the plot, but it is an event in the narrative of *Ulysses*, temporally placed by virtue of our linear experience of the novel. When we read the repetition-with-difference of this account in “Sirens,” we are reminded of that event now several hours past.
narrative’s shape. Joyce follows the same formula applied by all architects of master narratives, but seems aware of his infidelity to the past he has created. To alter the past calls our attention to the past that has been altered; the careful reader of *Ulysses* will take note of what has been left out and what has been added, recognizing that the past cannot adequately correlate to the present without alteration. Such alterations, while seemingly minute and insignificant, are tremendously important when placed in a political context, as we see later in the episode, when Joyce engages more directly with the history of Irish rebellion. While Joyce uses this technique throughout the episode, it is even more expressly political in those passages that recount in warped syntax both Bloom’s flatulence and Emmet’s peroration, emerging first—and incompletely—in the overture. The overture culminates, as does the whole of “Sirens,” with flatulent noises and nationalist discourse. This ending is predicted thus in the overture:

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Then not till then. My eppripftaph. Be pfrwritt.
Done.
Begin! (11.61-63).
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We may question how recognizable these words are to any reader, even one invested in Ireland’s national history. Joyce has altered the syntactic sense of Emmet’s final words (“then not till then,” “my epitaph,” and “be written” are rendered as sentence fragments, rather than phrases comprising a longer sentence; and Joyce omits the both the noun and verb from Emmet’s

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8 Neither the overture nor the narrated sequence at the conclusion of “Sirens” is the first time Joyce connects flatulence to music. In “Scylla and Charybdis,” Joyce quotes from Dante’s *Inferno*: “*Ed egli avea del cul fatto trombetta*” (“And of his arse he made a trumpet”; see Gifford 194).
final sentence), and the words themselves (“epitaph” and “written” have become nonsensical as “eppripfftaph” and “pfrwritt”) so thoroughly that they are virtually unrecognizable. At first glance, these three lines make no more sense than the rest of the overture. And, should we compare them to Joyce’s later passage, we find that, while the connection is evident, the sense of the lines is altered even further:


*Done* (11.1286-94).

We may read the lines from the overture as the amalgamation of Bloom’s reading of Emmet’s final words and his ensuing flatulence; Joyce represents Bloom’s fart as a succession of *p’s* and *f’s*, the same letters added to Emmet’s “epitaph” and “written” in the overture, though Joyce’s alteration of Emmet’s language there does not fit with the temporal order of Bloom’s thoughts in relation to his flatulence: Bloom farts after “*I have*,” which occurs sometime after “epitaph” and “written.” The sense provided by the overture is not so different from that provided by the episode’s final lines, but the substance is hardly identical. Implied again here is the inadequacy of a teleological model offered by master narratives—we may predict the future in reference to the past, but not with complete accuracy.

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9 We may also question why, in this episode so concerned with sound, Joyce chooses to alter the sound of words which are never spoken, since Bloom merely thinks the words of Emmet’s peroration while silently reading them through the window.
The uncertainty with which we must read this episode renders efforts to discern “truth” unsustainable. This owes largely to the formal complexities of “Sirens,” which impede our sense of what happens in the Ormond Bar. According to Marilyn French, one of the seminal theorists of narrative in *Ulysses*, “there are three voices in Sirens: the naturalistic dialogue, Bloom’s interior monologue, and the narrational line. In addition, there is a host of verbal motives that punctuate the piece, ‘distant music’ reminding us of the world outside the Ormond Bar” (2). Accounting for these three voices and the verbal motives is no easy feat. Netrovsky, comparing “Sirens” to preceding episodes, asserts that “up to this point, the question, ‘Who is speaking?’ was occasionally difficult to answer” (21). “Sirens” compounds this difficulty so that, once we enter the Ormond bar, the question “becomes not difficult to answer, but impossible to ask. Once the narrative is punctured, the narrators cannot sustain their breath” (Netrovsky 21).

The relevance of this formal complexity to narratives of Ireland’s past is clear once Ben Dollard, at the suggestion of Tom Kernan and the prodding of Simon Dedalus, takes up “The Croppy Boy” as his song. After settling on the key of F sharp major, Dollard begins to sing to the enraptured attention of the Ormond’s patrons. The ballad itself, written by William B. McBurney in the Nineteenth century, narrates the story of a rebel in the 1798 Rising seeking to confess his sins to a priest sometime between the Siege of Ross and the Battle of Vinegar Hill.

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10 “Our native Doric,” Kernan says of the song, a phrase that Gifford identifies as a colloquialism for one’s dialect (134). While most immediately, Doric refers to a Scots dialect, the implication is Greek as well. Since the Dori ans are mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey*, the phrase also hints towards the very project of *Ulysses*, to translate the Greek antecedent into a fully Irish work.

11 “Croppy” is slang for the republican rebels who, as demonstration of their political beliefs, cut their hair short, in contrast to the prevailing aristocratic style of the late Eighteenth century.
The boy’s confession enumerates both the mundane—uttering three curses since Easter, failing to attend mass—and the extraordinary, indicating the rebel’s participation in the revolution and his intent to join the fighting in Wexford. His role in the Rising is expressed in the most sentimental terms, fitting for a ballad so sentimental in both sound and sense: “I bear no grudge against any living thing;/But I love my country above the king” (Gifford 293). The Croppy Boy, of course, is deceived; the priest is, in fact, an English soldier in disguise, who arrests the young rebel. The song ends with a brief account of the execution and burial of the titular character, and the plea to “Good people who live in peace and joy” to “Breathe a prayer and a tear for the Croppy Boy” (Gifford 293).

Connecting “The Croppy Boy” to 1916 presents a problem, as the song itself was a Nineteenth century product of concert hall sentimentality, one Joyce himself had once performed at a Dublin concert. While the general outline of the song (a naïve Catholic rebel dying for Ireland) seems relevant to the Easter Rising, as do the song’s romanticism and its protestations of loyalty to country above kingship, the song speaks to a brand of nationalism temporally removed from the Ireland of Easter 1916. The patrons of the Ormond, though temporally closer to 1916 than to 1798, respond to the song’s pathos, not its political content. It breeds tears, but not rebellion. As such, we might be tempted to set aside the political implications of the ballad, treating it as an artifact of sentimentalized nationalism, rather than as a rebellious text connecting manifestations of the Separatist tradition across the ages.

Nonetheless, certain details of the song can be linked to 1916. The Croppy Boy’s destination is Wexford, one of the few places outside Dublin to join in the Rising. Irish National Volunteer forces marshaled in Enniscorthy, and though the fighting was less dramatic than in
Dublin, the rebels laid an unsuccessful siege upon the police barracks. As Townshend recounts, “inevitably, as if commemorating Wexford’s epic 1798 history, [rebels] occupied Vinegar Hill, and ‘exchanged shots with the police’ from its slopes” (240). This dual legacy of County Wexford’s participation in both the 1798 Rising and the Easter Rising is jointly commemorated in Enniscorthy every Easter by the laying of a wreath at the foot of a statue of The Croppy Boy himself. Such commemorations reflect the primary supposition of nationalist ideology: that the Separatist tradition connects all rebellions in the same unbroken chain of resistance to English rule. As such, 1798 and 1916 are part of the same narrative and to invoke one can invoke the other. The leaders of 1916 were explicit about how they viewed their rebellion as part of this tradition, so whatever the patrons of the Ormond may make of “The Croppy Boy,” we find the place of 1798 so intricately connected to 1916 in nationalist ideology that drawing the link is almost unavoidable.

Intriguingly, in this episode so concerned with sound, none of Dollard’s singing is transposed into prose, neither in snippets of lyrics or onomatopoetic descriptions of his voice. When the lyrics of the song do emerge, it is difficult to place their context; they are not isolated from other lines of text by being indented or italicized, as in previous instances in the episode. Nor are they attributed as words sung or heard, or thoughts in the mind of a character. Instead, they appear as snippets of inexact quotation and summary in bits of unattributed text. The first

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12 This commemoration, held annually in Enniscorthy, begins with a Mass, “followed by a wrath laying ceremony at the base of the Croppy Boy monument in Market Square honouring the memory of all who died for Ireland, particularly from 1798 onwards” (“Pearse’s 1916 Oration To Be Heard at Easter”). Recent celebrations have included an actor playing the role of Pearse himself.
such instance, when Dollard begins to sing, is a curious partial summary of the song’s opening:

The voice of dark age, of unlove, earth’s fatigue made a grave approach and painful, come from afar, from hoary mountains, called on good men and true. The priest he sought. With him he would speak a word (11.1007-09).  

Does this “voice of dark age” belong to Dollard (who is singing the song), or to the song’s speaker (who narrates the song’s action), or to the Croppy Boy himself (who opens the song by addressing “Good men and true!”)? The last makes sense from the reference to the “dark age,” given the turbulence of the 1798 Rising, though such a general description may easily be applied to more current events, specifically the aftermath of the Easter Rising. As such, Joyce simultaneously presents the song as an artifact from long past times, while reminding us that this “dark age” would be repeated with a difference a few short years after Bloomsday. From this description, Joyce presents a truncated narration of the ballad’s events: “the priest he sought” is a summary of the third and fourth lines of the song. Important details are omitted—the name of the priest, Father Green, for instance—though the sense is fairly clear. The summary of the ballad grows more divorced from the ballad’s text in the ensuing description:


While “the priest’s at home” is a direct quote from the ballad’s fifth line, the summary provides more details than the original by referring to the “false priest’s servant.” At this point

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13 Gifford connects the first twenty-one words to Wagner, specifically scene three of Das Rheingold (294). However, neither Gifford nor Joyce is particularly clear about whose voice is in question.
in the song no indication has yet been given that the “priest” is anything other than what he appears. There is no reason yet to suspect that the “priest” is allied with the English forces, so to describe the priest thus is to rely upon hindsight only accessible with previous knowledge of the song’s lyrics. As such, the summary is not merely a description of the song’s events, but an interpretation of the song from the perspective of one for whom the song’s content is already familiar. The song itself, of course, is already an act of interpretation, an example of Storiella. By transforming an interpreted narrative into a further interpreted narrative, the credibility of the passage is brought into question. As a result, the narrative calls attention to its own artifice, making Joyce’s description an act of metalepsis. The metalepsis grows even more pronounced later in the episode:

All gone. All fallen. At the siege of Ross his father, at Gorey all his brothers fell. To Wexford, we are the boys of Wexford, he would. Last of his name and race.


He bore no hate.

Hate. Love. Those are names. Rudy. Soon I am old (11.1063-69).

Among the approximations of the song’s lyrics, shifted from the first to the third person, we find a passing allusion to another, more militant rebel song, “The Boys of Wexford,” before the lyrics spark Bloom’s melancholy ruminations about the death of his family name. “He bore no hate,” is a clear reference to the Croppy Boy, as it paraphrases, incompletely, lyrics from the
song, though syntactically it may also refer to Bloom. It is unclear to whom the pronoun refers, calling further attention to the text’s artifice. More follows:

Ireland comes now. My country above the king. She listens. Who fears to speak of nineteen four? (1072-73).

The passage begins with a prediction, one at odds with the actual content of the song. While “The Croppy Boy” clearly refers to Ireland, his country is never expressly named in the song’s lyrics. Why, then, does Bloom feel these lines speak more to Ireland than the song’s other lyrics? From there, Bloom’s question rephrases “Who fears to speak of ’98?” to be about the present. The allusion to Ingram’s poem provides a new context to Joyce’s commentary. Like “The Croppy Boy,” “The Memory of the Dead” is a sentimental commemoration of the fallen fighters of the 1798 Rising, even echoing, if only inexactly, some of the phrases found in the earlier ballad. The invocation to “Good men and true” that begins “The Croppy Boy” becomes an invitation to “a true man, like you, man” to join fellow patriots for a drink in memory of their fallen predecessors (Ingram 104). As does “The Croppy Boy,” Ingram’s poem concerns itself with where the patriots’ bodies are buried; the final verse of the ballad tells us where the titular hero is “laid,” while the second, third, and fourth stanzas of Ingram’s poem describe the various resting places of Irish rebels. And, while such connection may seem inconsequential, Joyce seems to link the two works more forcefully, even before Bloom appropriates Ingram’s line. “The voice of dark age” should remind us of the first two lines of Ingram’s fifth stanza: “They rose in dark and evil days./To right their native land” (105). “Dark age,” then, plausibly refers to the “dark and evil days” that surrounded the 1798 Rising, making the Croppy Boy’s voice one from the dark, tragic past of Ireland, a past which refuses to remain
Ingram’s poem, however sentimental it may be, introduces a militant tone foreign to “The Croppy Boy.” The final stanza moves beyond romantic commemoration to enjoin the poem’s audience to follow the example of the patriot dead:

Then here’s their memory! May it be
For us a guiding light,
To cheer our strife for liberty
And teach us to unite.
Through good and ill, be Ireland’s still,
Though sad as theirs your fate,
And true men be you, men,
Like those of Ninety-Eight (106).

While “The Croppy Boy” ends with the simple command to “good people” to “breath a prayer and a tear” for the dead rebel, “The Memory of the Dead” calls upon its audience to follow the actions of the heroic legions, joining them in the fight for Irish liberty, even if their fate be the same as their predecessors. Connected in subject and sentiment, the two works diverge in tone, as “The Memory of the Dead” construes commemoration as first an act of remembering, and second, and more importantly, as a call to arms. The Croppy Boy lies in his grave, commemorated only by tears and prayers, but the dead men toasted by Ingram and other true men are celebrated by our repetition of their actions, by our following of their example. The militancy of Ingram’s poem is certainly foreign to “The Croppy Boy,” but Bloom nonetheless
draws the connection. While the other patrons are deeply affected by Dollard’s singing, their interest rests with the Croppy Boy’s mortal fate, not the fate of their country. Bloom, however, moves beyond this. By alluding to Ingram’s poem, he hints towards the link between 1798 and subsequent events.

In this single phrase, Joyce draws the events of Bloomsday into a context which recognizes past, present, and future as elements of the events. 1798, far from being a relic of the “dark age,” becomes a living memory which shapes present attitudes. By adopting Ingram’s opening line to be about 1904, Joyce alludes to the nationalist tendency to contextualize all events in reference to their grand narrative. Such a trope can bring the present into the past and future. 1904, as the setting of the novel, is linked to Ireland’s tragic past; even if violent revolution will not occur that June day, it is nonetheless a product of those violent revolutions. And 1916, commemorated in “Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week,” the ballad derivative of Ingram’s poem, becomes a part of the narrative as well, hinted towards by the phrasing of Bloom’s question. “Who fears to speak of ‘98,” having been adopted as “Who fears to speak of Easter Week?” calls to mind the past and the present. Bloom draws the free association between 1798, 1904, and, by his ruminations about Emmet, 1803. It remains for us to draw the connection to 1916.

The episode’s crudely subversive ending, which finds Bloom passing gas while recalling Emmet’s peroration, punctuates Joyce’s commentary with a desecration of sacred nationalist discourse. By combining Emmet’s words—words Bloom rather freely associates with the seven final words of Christ, echoing nationalist interpretations of Emmet’s execution— with Bloom’s
flatulence, Joyce takes aim at those for whom both Emmet and his language are sacred.\textsuperscript{14} The meaning of Emmet’s words is transformed; “I have done” here refers no more to Emmet’s peroration than to Bloom’s fart. More significantly, Joyce takes Emmet’s words and renders them dumb. In Joyce’s episode about sound, Emmet has no literal voice; his Speech from the Dock is remembered only in fragments, and even then it is never vocalized, but read silently by Bloom. In its place, we receive a cacophony of street noise and flatulence, the banal replacing the extraordinary.

Joycean metalepsis, by calling attention to the artificiality of the narrative, calls attention to the artificiality of all master narratives, including those espoused by radical nationalists. By highlighting the discursive elements of narrative construction, Joyce forcefully rends the narrative fabric of the episode. History, having been purchased, refurbished, and disseminated in narrative form has become Storiella, the former forever replacing the latter. Of course, Joyce understood that Emmet, like The Croppy Boy and the memory of the dead, cannot be so easily silenced. The voice of the dead rebel continues to speak to those who will listen, and his voice can, for the like-minded patriot, cut through the din of everyday. However, the ghosts of history have yet to be fully exorcised. The attempted exorcism that runs through “Nestor” and “Sirens” is repeated, though with a difference, in \textit{Finnegans Wake}.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Storiella as She is Syung}
\end{center}

\textit{Finnegans Wake} is, to some degree, the natural culmination of Joyce’s formal

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} A matter we will consider in greater detail in Chapter Four.
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experimentation in *Ulysses*. If *Ulysses* concerns itself with the way events are reported, rather than with what those events are, then the *Wake* takes that concern even further. Joyce’s radical style lends itself appropriately to one of the novel’s most potent themes: the development by which actual events are transformed into rumor, legend, and myth; in other words, the transformation of History into Storiella. At its core, the *Wake* is the story of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, whose unspecified transgression in Phoenix Park engenders a series of rumors, none of which we can actually corroborate. These rumors grow to mythic proportions, as the truth of the events, whatever it may be, is reshaped and reimagined in various forms and fashions throughout the curious progression of Joyce’s work. According to Ellmann, Joyce “conceived of his book as the dream of old Finn [Macool], lying in death beside the river Liffey and watching the history of Ireland and the world—past and future—through his mind like flotsam on the river of life” (557). By such a reading, the *Wake*, even more self-consciously than *Ulysses*, is a narrative of History’s transformation into Storiella.

Crucial to Joyce’s method is the author’s free appropriation of Giambattista Vico’s philosophy as developed in *Scienzia Nuova*. *Finnegans Wake* is partially structured around Vico’s “Four Ages of Man,” a template of arrangement which Joyce freely adapts to suit his own purposes. Within this loose framework, Joyce transforms the relatively mundane narrative of a Chapelizod publican and his family into a novel that vacillates between the banal and the extraordinary. Joyce’s use of Vico, much like his use of Homer in *Ulysses*, is marked by playful subversion rather than slavish fidelity, so that Vico’s sense of teleology is consistently undercut by Joyce’s style. In more local terms, Joyce destabilizes his allusions to the past by not providing straightforward context. The *Wake* is undoubtedly a novel obsessed with the past, in
both global and local incarnations, but Joyce thoroughly ruptures any clear sense of a timeline so that the concept of history-in-development, whether expressed by Vico or the leaders of the Easter Rising, is virtually unsustainable. Responding to this feature of the *Wake*, David Sidorsky terms Joyce’s style the “coincidence of opposites,” in that “virtually each and every reference to a specific historical event or figure is immediately modified by means of a verbal ambiguity or contrary incident that complicates its univocal reality and negates its significance” (303). While Sidorsky’s primary interest is Joyce’s play with historiography in general, applying his reading of the *Wake* to the novel’s expressly Irish elements reveals Joyce in confrontation with the “plot” of Irish history.

While Joyce’s approach to the past in *Ulysses* might be termed “repetition with a difference,” his style in *Finnegans Wake* might be better termed “history as her is harped,” borrowing a line from Chapter XV of the *Wake* (486.6). The language of this phrase continues Stephen’s irresolvable dialectic between History and Storiella, but shifts that interest from the global past to more local concerns, emphasizing the way such a dialectic functions in a specifically Irish context. The telling and re-telling of the past in narrative form develops a myth which, after repetition, garners authority. From this authority Irish nationalists could establish their justifications for insurrection. History, in Joyce’s phrase (and in the *Wake* as a whole), does not simply exist *prima facie*; it exists in its expression, which can be manipulated by bards, poets, rhetoricians, and rebels. The harping of history, of course, makes literal sense, but figuratively refers also to the manipulations of the past practiced by Irish nationalists, for whom the harp was a national symbol. The harp’s association with insurrectionary republicanism dates back to the United Irishmen, who affixed this traditional symbol of Ireland to their flag. Later
nationalists would cling to the harp’s importance, including James Connolly, who orchestrated the publication of a socialist periodical called *The Harp* while living in America.\(^{15}\) By appropriating this symbol, Joyce explores the relationship between the past and the ways nationalists have reshaped that past. This phenomenon entails the shaping of History beyond objectivity and towards an accepted, Irish nationalist vision.

My argument is not that this theme is necessarily the primary narrative thrust of *Finnegans Wake*; the scope of Joyce’s final novel is sufficiently broad so as to confront the past and its narrative in myriad forms, the Irish content being one among many. However, Joyce’s confrontation with Ireland’s past—and the way that past has been recorded—frequently emerges in crucial passages, offering us a sense of Joyce’s response to the Storiella fashioned by radical nationalists. Given the role that the past, particularly the heritage of violent separatism, played in justifying the Easter Rising, Joyce’s confrontation with that past in the Wake offers evidence of a confrontation with the narrative developed by the Rising’s leaders. *Finnegans Wake* may not be a book about politics, but it is a political book, and the question of Ireland’s past, so crucial to Irish politics, emerges again and again throughout Joyce’s surreal dreamscape. Insofar as the Wake assaults the conventions of narrative, it seems likely that narratives of the past are subject to that assault. Joyce’s style can be brought into dialogue with the nationalist narrative, revealing crucial elements of the book’s political implications. This assault upon nationalist narratives occurs not merely in Joyce’s anachronistic use of language, but in his manipulation of the book’s text itself. While most of the novel follows, at least in appearance, the conventions of

\(^{15}\) *The Harp* was later also published in Ireland under the editorship of James Larkin.
printed discourse, certain occasions manipulate that appearance to highlight its artificial nature.

This is where *Finnegans Wake* becomes metaleptic even within the context of the already
metaleptic text. Joyce estranges his reader from the reading process, highlighting the text’s
status as a work-in-progress. This particular fashion of metalepsis is most uninhibited in the
“Nightlessons,” that section once published as “Storiella as she is Syung,” where the text’s
arrangement on the page is most gleefully manipulated, subverting our basic expectations of
form and genre.

In formal terms, “Nightlessons” is arranged in four separate, yet ostensibly
interconnected, pieces of text. The main body of the text, centered on the page but apparently
following all other conventions of printed discourse (separated into paragraphs, and using
indentation and punctuation), is the narrative of Shem, Shaun, and Issy at study. Complicating
this arrangement are three other bodies of text, one on either margin and one below; these offer
the commentary of the children upon the main body of text. The marginal notes on the left are
italicized and seem to belong to Shem, at least for the first half of the episode, after which the
twins trade sides. Shaun’s notes, appearing on the right side, at least until the switch, are
unitalicized and written entirely in capital letters. The footnotes appearing on the bottom belong
to Issy; these are marked in Arabic numerals which reset on each page.

Joyce’s machinations of the page, then, include both footnotes and marginal notes, two
forms of notation used towards similar, if distinct, ends. Of footnotes, Betsy Hilbert has argued
that they act as “a writer’s direct address to the reader, a message slipped under the door, a
whispered aside in counterpoint to the formal discourse of the text,” serving to “elucidate,
castigate, praise, blame, and crow” (400). Shari Benstock finds, in her study of the footnote in fiction, that the technique “highlights the interplay between author and subject, text and reader, that is always at work in fiction, giving us occasion to speculate upon self-reflective narration as an aspect of textual authority” (205). When the footnote appears in fiction, “the text calls attention to itself as text, to its existence as printed matter, to its writerly quality, and to its scripted authority” (Benstock 208). Benstock, then, highlights the footnote’s role in fashioning a peculiarly self-aware text, one which flaunts its own textuality. We may well take this analysis even further, since, by calling attention to itself as text, the text consequently calls attention to itself as artifice. The footnote serves to highlight a text’s artificiality, demarking its formal properties, and in the more subversive occasions, its tenuousness. As Keith Hopper argues, the use of footnotes in fiction is “an historically well-established convention” (179). Part of the convention is the footnote’s formal function: intended to explicate and contextualize, the footnote can be used to subvert both the text upon which it comments and our expectations of form. This “mischievously disruptive technique…stretches the convention beyond the usual parameters, and in the process questions the arbitrary borders between ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction’” (Hopper 179). Footnotes, in such an estimation, become the “perfect ready-made form

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16 Hilbert’s “Elegy for Excursus: The Descent of the Footnote,” written in response to the Modern Language Association’s decision in 1984 to excise the footnote from their style guide, argues that fiction, rather than academic prose, may be the footnote’s best chance of continued survival. Obviously, reports of the footnote’s death have been greatly exaggerated.

17 Hopper’s analysis is of Flann O’Brien’s The Third Policeman, rather than Finnegans Wake. O’Brien, arguably Ireland’s greatest comic novelist after Joyce, was thoroughly conflicted about his relationship with the latter author, who, ironically enough, admired O’Brien’s first novel (At Swim-Two-Birds). While a great admirer of Joyce’s work, up to and including Ulysses, O’Brien detested Finnegans Wake. Nonetheless, the influence of the Wake upon The Third Policeman is evident if nowhere else in O’Brien’s deployment of useless footnotes throughout the text.
of metalepsis: textually common yet still intrusive; conventional yet still capable of estranging the reading process by their very nature” (Hopper 179).

As for marginal notation, Lawrence Lipking divides these notes into two separate sorts: marginalia and the marginal gloss. The former, Lipking argues, “are wayward in their very nature; they spring up spontaneously around a text unaware of their presence” (612). The latter, on the other hand, “responds to another frame of mind: the need to spell everything out” (Lipking 612). By explicating select passages, “the marginal gloss serves to affirm the relation of the part to the whole” (Lipking 612). “Nightlessons” makes use of both marginalia and the marginal gloss: Shem’s notations typically offer questions and commentary in response to the text, serving less to explicate than to subvert, while Shaun, by contrast, offers apparently direct addresses to the reader in an effort to contextualize the main text’s meaning. This division is at times fluid, most notably when Shem and Shaun switch sides, but is nonetheless generally consistent with the twin brothers’ respective personalities. Shem, as the artist, seeks to subvert, while Shaun, as the patriot, seeks to contextualize.

What these three types of notation have in common is their essentially metaleptic function. Any interruption of the main body of the narrative provides a new level of discourse, one which immediately spotlights the narrative’s artificial nature. While Joyce was hardly the first or the last to play with the metaleptic implications of ironic notation, his use of footnotes, marginalia, and marginal glosses all at once ranks among the most violent applications of metalepsis found in Western Literature. With every notation, Joyce breaks the division between author and character, and that between character and narrative; the characters speak through the
text about the text, addressing the reader directly. This direct address, however, offers little in the way of assistance. Whatever else notation might do, all notation provokes the reader’s expectation that what follows will, in some way, provide something useful towards interpreting what we are reading. *Finnegans Wake* plays upon that expectation, prompting it and frustrating it. As we read “Nightlessons,” we find that none of Joyce’s notes is particularly helpful. No assistance is offered; it its place, we find a multilayered text which only estranges us further from the meaning we seek. As such, Joyce’s technique, even if it is familiar through precedent, remains disruptive, in that the reader’s expectations are called into question as the text flouts convention.

As consequence, “Nightlessons,” perhaps more than any other section, destabilizes all notions of teleology. As a form, the novel—and a reader’s experience of a novel—mimics a teleological process. This expectation, drilled into us through years of experience with the printed word, collides against the structure of “Nightlessons,” where it is impossible to know in which order we should read the text of any given page. While this is an inversion of our expectations of form, it is consequently an inversion of conventional notions of History. Attempts to read History as a progressive narrative falter if, as we find in *Finnegans Wake*, narrative itself refuses to conform to our expectations of what narrative should be. In its very structure, the *Wake*, particularly in “Nightlessons,” denies the possibility of teleological progression, offering repeated interruptions and obfuscations to our sense of what a novel, what a narrative, and, consequently, what History itself is.

“Nightlessons” may be no more concerned with Ireland’s past than are other sections of
the novel, but the chapter is of great interest to our project since it engages directly with the Easter Rising, through pointed allusions to crucial figures from the rebellion. The first enigmatic passage of interest occurs a mere three pages into the chapter, where the narrative describes the approach of someone to an unidentified castle:

This bridge is upper.

Cross.

Thus come to castle.

Knock.

A password, thanks.

Yes, pearse.

Well, all be dummed!

O really? (262).

This passage, already obscure in meaning, is complicated by three notations—one from Shaun and two from Issy. Shaun’s notation, spanning the right margin, tells us that this passage is a “PROBA-POSSIBLE PROLEGOMENA TO IDEAREAL HISTORY” (262). Issy offers two footnotes: one coming in response to the word “Knock” (“yusive smirte and ye mermon answered from his beelyingplace below the tightmark, Gotahelv!”), and one in response to the passage’s final question (“O Evol, kool in the salg an ees how Dozi pits what a drowser”) (262). The primary text is riddled with uncertainties; as Nicholas Miller notes, “the passage fails to deliver on any promise of connection the reader may have inferred, instead emphasizing the tenuousness of the relation itself: it is entirely unclear which interlocutor is asking for the password and which is providing it, which is crossing the bridge and which prohibited from
crossing, which ‘yes, please’-ing and which ‘thank you’-ing” (162). In other words, we have no sense of what, if anything, is happening here. If we follow our long-established reading habits and look for explanation in the notations, we will find them of little assistance. Shaun’s notation might provide us some vague sense of the passage’s theme, but none as to its meaning; and Issy’s notations are, on the surface, unrelated and virtually nonsensical. These notations, then, subvert their conventional function by being virtually functionless.

Joycean metalespsis here destabilizes the already unstable meaning of the passage. The reader, left to draw from the implications raised by Joyce’s diction, may glean certain resonances, but these can only offer incomplete comprehension. The apparent reference to Castleknock, a suburb of Dublin city, can be combined with Shaun’s previous notation: “Constitution of the Constituionable as Constitutional” (261). This notation suggests Ireland’s Constitution of 1937, the document which led towards the eventual establishment of the Republic of Ireland and the consequent end to any and all political connection with Great Britain in twenty-six of Ireland’s thirty-two counties. As Shaun’s notation points us towards political autonomy, we may plausibly interpret the Castle to be Dublin Castle, once the seat of British administration in Ireland. Such notions are furthered by Issy’s footnote, which puns upon the names Joseph Smith (“yussive smirte and ye mermon,” pointing towards the establishment of the Mormon religion) and Ysuf (the Arabic name for the Biblical and Koranic Joseph) (McHugh 262). In broad terms, these allusions are to men who rose from relative obscurity to great political and social prominence. These puns, therefore, reinforce the passage’s apparent political implications: symbolically, entrance to the castle suggests the reclamation of Irish political autonomy. Yet Miller’s point remains well-taken; we do not know who—if anyone—is allowed
access and who—if anyone—is denied.

However, when prompted to supply a password, we do not get “Yes, please,” as Miller translates it, but “Yes, pearse.” The allusion to Padraic Pearse is obvious, and the following sentence (“Well, all be dumbed!”) should remind us of Yeats’ “Sixteen Dead Men”:

You say that we should still the land
Till Germany’s overcome.
But who is there to argue that
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb? (Poems 153-54).

For Yeats, Pearse has, by death, been rendered dumb, but his dumbness has ironically managed to silence the opposing viewpoint. British logic and conciliatory politics have, by the fact of the Rising, been rendered unsustainable. Joyce, like Yeats, recognizes this shift; all opposition is muted by Pearse’s deeds. Yet, unlike Yeats, Joyce ironizes the sentiment. First, he forms a pun on the word “dumbed,” suggesting that silence is somehow akin to damnation. Second, he uses Shaun’s notation to subvert the apparent meaning of the passage. We are not dealing with history, or real history, but “IDEAREAL HISTORY.” The pun here is tripartite: we have the idea, we have the ideal, and we have the reality. The Easter Rising, by silencing debate about Ireland’s national future, turned the leaders’ version of “real history,” the narrative of development from conquered state to conquering independence, into an accepted reality. Any other vision of Ireland’s future, including that dreamed by constitutional nationalists, had been rendered moot. What would ensue would be the vision Pearse held, of violent revolution sparking further revolution, until the eschatological moment when Ireland would claim its long
awaited freedom. However, unlike Yeats, Joyce is not willing to defer to the idea of the past or future as set forth by Pearse, or that idea of the more recent past propagated by Pearse’s disciples. While Pearse himself has been transformed into a shibboleth, a password by which access to the Castle may be granted, his is less the truth, less the fact, than a pervasive vision of Irish Storiella filtered through a set of ideals and ideas, none of which can be fully trusted.

Issy’s second footnote, at first virtually impenetrable, becomes more recognizable if we follow McHugh’s cue and read the words backwards: “O love, look in the glass [and] see who Izod tips with a sword” (262). While still obscure, the passage is less intimidating, and becomes even clearer in Michael Kaufman’s slightly different rendering of the phrase: “O love, look in the glass and see how Izod spits [kisses] with a sworder [a sword-carrying knight, Sir Tristram]” (75). Kaufman, by connecting Issy’s note to Tristan and Iseult, furthers our sense that the passage to which Issy responds is somehow about Ireland’s relationship with Great Britain. The name Izod, conjuring Iseult, Chapelizod (the Dublin suburb named for her and the setting for most of *Finnegans Wake*), and Issy herself has further political implications through the figure of Kevin Izod O’Doherty, a member of the Young Irelanders convicted of treason and banished from Ireland in the Nineteenth century. Since the Young Irelanders were among the revolutionary role models taken by the leaders of the Easter Rising, the possible allusion is all the more intriguing. At the least, Joyce points us to matters of Irish political autonomy which are explicitly linked to Pearse and his rebellion.

18 According to James S. Atherton, O’Doherty appears numerous times throughout the *Wake*, though Atherton does not include Issy’s footnote in his list (104-05).
However, as we must remember, Issy’s footnote does not actually say “Izod” at all; it reads “Dozi,” which is meaningless. We can arrive at the above interpretation only if we reverse direction when reading. By requiring us to read backwards, Joyce not only calls the reading process into question, but reverses the process itself. Insofar as narrative points towards an inevitable conclusion, reading backwards violates that inevitability. A linear progression becomes impossible, since the direction of that line is now unstable. As such, Issy’s notation travesties the teleology of the printed page, and consequently the teleology of Pearse’s grand narrative. In a passage obsessed with matters of political autonomy, Joyce provides nonsensical discourse, interpretable only if the reader rejects the set course and reverses direction. If the process from province to nation is ineluctable, as the leaders of the Rising believed, Joyce frustrates that supposed ineluctability by transgressing conventions of literature’s flow from start to finish. It is impossible to know how to read “Nightlessons” in the appropriate, or even intended, order.

Even if we ignore this incident of backwards writing, we must still decide which notes to read first, whether to begin with the notes or begin with the primary text, and when to remove our eyes from the primary text to turn to the notations. Any way we approach the episode, we find linearity impossible. We are bound by our expectations of prose, but unable to use these expectations as anything more than an ideal which inevitably contrasts with the reality of experience. Joyce again engages with the past a few pages later:

Dark ages clasp the daisy roots, Stop, if you are a sally of the allies, hot off Minnowaurs and naval actiums, picked engagements and banks of rowers. Please stop if you’re a B.C.
minding missy, please do. But should you prefer A.D. stepplease. And if you miss with a venture it serves you girly well glad (272).

John Gordon finds the first sentence a “striking metaphor for original sin,” appropriate given the allusions to Eve a page earlier. From here, Gordon argues that this part “[traces] the consequences of Issy’s Eve-like interference of things,” making this a clear allusion to both the Book of Genesis and Paradise Lost (186). Issy’s interference, according to Gordon, prompts Shem and Shaun “to act out the cyclical struggles of civilisation in a panorama” (186). As Gordon notes, this reflects the final two books of Milton’s epic, in which the Archangel Michael offers Adam a vision of “the effects which thy original crime hath wrought,” predicting the future of mankind from the Fall through the eschatological Second Coming of Christ (272; 12.424). Gordon’s interpretation is supported by Shaun’s notation: “PANOPTICAL PURVIEW OF POLITICAL PROGRESS AND THE FUTURE PRESENTATION OF THE PAST” (272). Like Milton, Joyce here attempts to present a comprehensive vision of mankind’s development, from the seminal moment to the distant future, when later generations will commemorate past events.

However, Gordon’s sense of the literary context must be placed into a political one: Shaun, as the novel’s most explicitly nationalist character, finds the glance at the past explicable in that it shows man’s political progress, understandable only in the relationship between that past and its future commemoration. The allusion to Milton, while seemingly divorced from Irish

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19 “Eat early earthapples. Coax Cobra to chatters. Hail, Heva, we hear!” (271).
Nationalism, returns us to the divide between History and Storiella. Milton rather famously opens *Paradise Lost* with his lofty goal: to “assert Eternal Providence/And justify the ways of God to men” (1.24-25). Like Pearse and Connolly, Milton subscribes to the notion that one can render the past in narrative form so as to capture the logic and sequence of events, thereby explaining not only the past but allowing access to the future. Milton’s method differs from those practiced by Pearse and Connolly, but the implication remains the same: that mankind can, through application of the appropriate interpretive mechanism, grasp the past and provide a clear sense of meaning to the present while predicting the future. This manner of thought, as expressed by Shaun, is understandable in political and representational terms. Like Pearse and Connolly, Shaun is able to understand the future only in relationship to what has happened and, as Joyce notes ironically, how we commemorate what has happened. Shaun, like Milton, takes a teleological approach to history, one which interprets the past in reference to what will eventually occur.

However, Shaun’s belief is complicated by Shem’s notation, which for the first time in the chapter breaks with all linguistic sense by not using words. Instead of language, Shem turns to music, providing a single measure of notation with four quarter-notes (B, C, A, D). Since the passage upon which Shem comments is concerned with history, we might assume that Shem’s marginalia refers to “Before Christ” and “Anno Domini.” Taken thusly, we may assume that Shem, like his brother, believes in linear historical progression, moving from the past (the notes B and C) to the present/future (the notes A and D). However, such an assumption presumes too much about what musical notation actually means. The application of letters to individual tones is, of course, an artifice. B-C-A-D as a series of tones is not at all the same as B.C. and A.D. as a
series of letters. Moreover, even if we disregard the inherent artificiality of assigning letters to tones, we should nonetheless recognize that music, as notated on a score, only mimics linear time. It exists independently of our experience of it, emerging as a temporal phenomenon only when performed. And, if the progression of time is important, Shem has omitted the most important indicator of time in music: the time signature. Without it we cannot be sure if we are looking at a complete measure of 4/4 time, or an incomplete measure of some other signature. As such, the very nature of time’s flow is called into question. To interpret the passage politically, we might, like Shaun, assume ineluctability, but that assumption is severely undercut by Shem’s notation.

Such instability continues when “Nightlessons” returns to the matter of the Easter Rising. Since Pearse appears in the episode, it seems appropriate that the Rising’s other most prominent leader should emerge later in “Nightlessons.” When Dolph and Kev appear towards the end, after Shem and Shaun have abruptly traded sides for their notations, the narrative provides a list of figures, beginning with Anglo and Anglo-Irish writers (Steele, Burke, Sterne, Swift, Wilde, Shaw, and Yeats), before shifting his attention to nationalist figures from Ireland’s troubled past:

This is brave Danny weeping his spache for the popers. This is cool Connolly wiping his hearth with brave Danny. And this, regard! How Chawleses Skewered parparaparnelligoes between brave Danny boy and the Connolly. Upanishadem! Top. Spaken hath L’arty Magory. Eregobragh. Prouf (303).

The references here are to three populist leaders, icons to Ireland’s poor: Danny is Daniel
O’Connell, the Great Liberator, who led the movement for Catholic Emancipation and ended his life campaigning for the Repeal of the Act of Union; Connolly is James Connolly, the socialist labor leader and rebel; and Chawless Skewered parparparnelligoes is Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and chief advocate for Home Rule in the late Nineteenth century. Making sense of Joyce’s use of these figures demands that we account both for Joyce’s rhetoric and for each figure’s historical context. We have “brave Danny weeping his spache for the popers,” which McHugh takes to mean “reading his speech for the papers” (*sprache* meaning “speech” in German), though we should recognize that “popers” obviously implies Roman Catholics (303). As a devout Catholic himself, having died while on route to Rome for a final pilgrimage, O’Connell allied his movement with the Church, garnering great support from the clergy. O’Connell’s popularity with Ireland’s poor Catholic population is virtually unequalled in Irish history, but he was hardly a political radical. His nationalism was of a parliamentary nature, and he never allied himself with violent groups or methods.

O’Connell is contrasted with James Connolly, whom we find “wiping his hearth with brave Danny.” McHugh renders “hearth” as arse, providing us with a rather crude image of the more radical Connolly dismissing O’Connell’s politics (303). While Connolly’s work tends to

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20 Also of interest, in this passage, Daniel O’Connell is rendered “brave Danny boy,” an apparent allusion to the popular song “Danny Boy.” To include such an allusion in this passage surrounded by references to Ireland’s great political leaders invites further discussion, since “Danny Boy,” while commonly associated with sentimental visions of Ireland, is based upon “The Londonderry Aire,” a melody which comes from Limavady in County Londonderry. Today, Limavady has proclaimed itself “the birthplace of Danny Boy.” Of interest is the simple fact that, though commonly associated with Ireland, the melody of the ballad itself comes from Northern Ireland. Given the efforts of O’Connell (and Connolly and Parnell) to break the political connection with Great Britain, it is of note that Joyce associates him with a Northern Irish melody.
take a somewhat ambivalent stance towards “The Great Liberator,” his politics and methods stand in stark opposition to those preached and practiced by O’Connell, who was expressly non-violent. Whatever Connolly’s ambivalence, his colleagues in the Military Council were more direct, expressly rejecting O’Connell and his political methods. Pearse, roughly a year before the Easter Rising, warned that conciliatory politicians, should they accept Home Rule, rather than complete liberation, as a solution to the Irish Question, “will be repudiated by the new generation as surely as O’Connell was repudiated by the generation that came after him” (231). As such, the leaders of the Easter Rising allied their insurrection with the Young Irelanders, the revolutionary group of Mitchel, Meagher, Doherty and others which, at the height of the famine, orchestrated a failed rebellion against English rule, and against the conciliatory, parliamentary politics practiced by O’Connell. Connolly’s action, wiping his arse with O’Connell’s speech, is consequently that repudiation promised by Pearse.

Parnell “goes between” these two figures, true in both temporal and ideological terms. Ireland’s “Uncrowned King” stands between O’Connell’s Catholic populism and Connolly’s revolutionary socialism. That Joyce admired Parnell is readily evident from his biography and his work, suggesting that Parnell is offered as an appropriate middle ground between the disparate political ideologies of nonviolent parliamentarianism and physical force nationalism. Compared to O’Connell, Parnell was a radical, willing to traffic with violent organizations if it suited his cause. Compared to Connolly, Parnell was a moderate, unwilling to openly support rebellion, and certainly no socialist. This reading makes more sense when we look at Shaun’s notation to the brief discussion: “Conceptions of the Compromise and Finding of a Formula” (303). Perhaps, contrary to our previous experience of the episode, this notation actually offers a
substantive explanation: Parnell acts as the appropriate middle ground between Connolly and O’Connell.

However, while we might well read this as a conception of a compromise, we can hardly assume that it is the finding of a formula; at least the formula that is found does not work. Parnell, O’Connell, and Connolly all sought, through different means and towards different functional ends, to liberate Ireland, though none of them actually achieved this goal. Parnell arguably came closest, as the Easter Rising itself had no immediate chance of victory, and O’Connell’s bid to repeal the Act of Union was undertaken late in the politician’s career, at a time when his influence was waning. However, even Parnell’s political maneuvering came to naught once he was named in the divorce proceedings of Captain O’Shea, a fellow member of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Parnell’s fall from grace was rapid and calamitous, the trauma of which deeply affected Joyce, whose earliest literary endeavor was a poem about Parnell entitled “E Tu Healey,” written when the author was just nine years old. The full poem does not survive, though the final lines, as recorded by Stanislaus Joyce in My Brother’s Keeper, do:

His quaint-perched aerie on the crags of Time
Where the rude din of this . . . century
Can trouble him no more (46).

In subject, these lines resemble the final stanza of Yeats’ “To A Shade:

Go, unquiet wanderer,
And gather the Glasnevin coverlet
About your head till the dust stops your ear,
The time for you to taste of that salt breath
And listen at the corners has not come;
You had enough of sorrow before death—
Away, away! You are safer in the tomb (88).

Both of these poems stress Parnell’s suffering, rendering him a martyr to be pitied, rather than a leader of great vitality to be revered. Obscured by both the young Joyce and the mature Yeats is Parnell’s political prowess, which has been thoroughly eclipsed by his tragic downfall. We see this elsewhere in Joyce’s fiction, most notably in the Christmas dinner scene in *Portrait*, where Parnell is mourned as the “poor dead king” of Ireland, and in “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” where Parnell has been transformed by memory into little more than a victim, a martyr celebrated more for his martyrdom than for his own accomplishments. The practice of Ivy Day, which Bloom notes is dying out, emphasizes this—it commemorates, through use of a Christian and pre-Christian symbol for resurrection, the death of Parnell, rather than his life or achievements.

In the *Wake*, Joyce’s pun on Parnell’s name speaks to the man’s downfall. Speaking the name prompts a stutter so severe that the name is almost unrecognizable. The puns engendered by this stutter all point towards Parnell’s impotence, rather than the man’s power. He is “chawless” (toothless) and “skewered,” a powerless martyr violently sacrificed to the whims of those whom he had served. As consequence, to anoint Parnell an adequate compromise to the politics of O’Connell or Connolly is possible only if we set aside the extreme irony with which the man is presented. As a compromise, Parnell is impotent. Wherever blame for this rests, and
Joyce is less direct here than he is elsewhere, the compromise is one which fails.

Nonetheless, from this, Joyce pronounces “Eregobragh,” a pun upon the Gaelic phrase “Erin go bragh” (“Ireland forever,” the slogan of the United Irishmen), the Latin “ergo” (therefore), and, according to McHugh, erege (meaning heretic) (303). The conclusion, then, is somehow heretical: taken in total, we find Irish History translated into a sort of logical formula, but one which is evidently flawed, or at least ironized. This, Joyce declares, is both proof and a proof, yet he hardly seems to resolve the matter. The martyred Parnell is, like Connolly and O’Connell, dead and gone. The “poor dead king” will not return, regardless of the legends to the contrary. These men, all of whom strove to break, in varying degrees, the political connection with Great Britain, failed in their endeavors, going to their graves with their political desires unfulfilled. Joined only in death, these men provide no viable answer to Ireland’s political conundrum, having been transformed only into figures of empty, fruitless commemoration. Thus, Joyce’s proof is no proof at all. The historian, the politician, may make what they will of a man’s legacy, but the compromise, such as it is, means nothing.

“Nightlessons,” while not merely concerned with the past, is designed to trouble our conception both of the past’s progress and the movement of narrative towards its end.

Appropriately, given Joyce’s consistent rupture of the linear flow of narrative throughout this

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21 In “Hades,” when the mourners visit Parnell’s grave, Mr. Power repeats the legend “that one day he will come again,” like Arthur or Christ, while Hynes replies definitively that “Parnell will never come again…He’s there, all that was mortal of him. Peace to his ashes” (6.923-27). The sharp finality of Hynes’ words seemingly contrasts with the poem he had written thirteen years earlier, recited at the end of “Ivy Day in the Committee Room,” which predicted that Parnell’s spirit would rise, “like the Phoenix from the ashes” (111). Poetic language and political idealism, perhaps worn down by the intervening years, can no longer account for death’s grim finality.
episode, the chapter ends with one of Joyce’s more extreme acts of metalepsis. The “Nightletter” that closes the episode, a Christmas card sent by the three children to HCE and ALP, occurs before the bottom of the final page. The reader is also confronted by two footnotes and two drawings. The drawings are difficult to make out, though the uppermost seems to be that of a person thumbing her nose—towards whom and in response to what remains obscure—and the bottommost seems to be a set of cutlery positioned in an “X.” The footnotes are similarly troubling. Both come in response to a series of lines, each one word long, approximating the spelling and pronunciation of the numbers one through ten in the Irish language. The first comes at “Cush” (cuig, the Irish for “five”), though the footnotes claims that “Kish is for anticheirst, and the free of my hand to him!” (308). While the puns here, according to McHugh, are on “antichrist” and the German word anticheir (thumb), as well as the number five (made by the position of the hand’s fingers in the drawing), the act of thumbing her nose (the drawing appears on Shaun’s side, but Issy is the one writing the notations,) plausibly seems directed towards the reader (303). Moreover, the positions of the fingers in the drawing make two V’s (the Roman numeral for five, which, when added together, of course makes ten). This makes more sense when we look at the second footnote, coming in response to “Geg” (deisch, the Irish for ten). Here the footnote reads, “and gags for skool and crossbuns and whopes he’ll enjoyimsolff over our drawings on the line!” (308). The punning on food seems appropriate given the affixed drawing (extending lower than any other line of text): unevenly crossed figures that appear to be forks on the topside and spoons on the bottom. In form, the drawing approximates the letter X, the Roman numeral for ten.

While the episode’s final page might seem divorced from questions of History and
Storiella, we should recognize the context of the drawings and the footnotes. Both seem to come in response to the children’s counting, a process which mimics teleology, but subverts its assumed telos by pointing always in the direction of the incalculable infinity. Like narrative, counting presumes to move in a linear flow towards a pre-ordained, inevitable conclusion, though such assumptions are fundamentally artificial. The page suggests a linear flow, but subverts it by the appearance of the page itself, which renders the act of linear reading impossible. One must choose to skip down to the bottom of the page and read the footnote, or read the page in textual order at the expense of coherence and context. Perhaps more importantly, one cannot avoid seeing the drawings first; the eye is immediately drawn to them, as they are such a powerful metaleptic device that we cannot help but notice their presence and wonder at their meaning. To contextualize them, however, still offers little clarity. Joyce, here, quite literally thumbs his nose at his readers.

The relevance of this to 1916 emerges once we recognize the implications of Issy’s notation. Her reference to “gags for skool and crossbuns” points us towards Holy Week. Crossbuns, an apparent pun on the “crossbones” of the archetypal pirate flag, also alludes to hot cross buns, a traditional delicacy from the British Isles baked around Easter time. The buns, marked with an icing cross, are conventionally baked on Good Friday and typically eaten throughout the Easter holiday. Though the Easter Rising began on Easter Monday and not Good Friday, Joyce’s reference to Holy Week traditions within the context of a Christmas letter is anachronistic enough that we must take note. Here, in the chapter that most directly assaults conventions of linearity and teleology, Joyce reminds us of Holy Week, recalling both Christ’s sufferings and the rebellion which, three days after Good Friday, would seize Dublin City.
Missing from Joyce’s invocation of Easter Week is the presumed teleology clung to by Rising’s leaders. In the chapter where Pearse and Connolly make significant cameos, Joyce presents us a text which violently disrupts notions of ineluctable progression. There is no interpretive apparatus which can render “Nightlessons” linear; “Storiella as she is Syung” cannot be transformed into History. By subverting the promise of teleology, Joyce makes an undeniably political statement about the way past, present, and future interact. As such, “Nightlessons,” an episode so clearly concerned with epistemology, is also an episode concerned with politics. The very structure of radical ideology is rendered unsustainable, while Joyce thumbs his nose at us all.

To exorcise the past and its ghosts in such broad historiographical and philosophical terms is an essential component of Joyce’s response to the Easter Rising. However, while history is powerful in general terms, its greatest source of inspiration to the leaders of 1916 and radical Irish nationalists everywhere is with its particulars. The memory of the dead may be powerful, but the highest source of republican propaganda emanates from the graves of martyrs.
Chapter Four:
Ruling Passion Strong in Death

Joyce most directly engages with matters of patriotic self-sacrifice in “Circe,” where an inebriated Stephen Dedalus finds himself confronted by the Privates Carr and Compton, members of the British army visiting the red light district of Nighttown. Convinced that Stephen has insulted Cissy Caffrey, the army privates threaten him with violence. Interrupting this dialogue, the figure of Alfred, Lord Tennyson emerges as a “gentleman poet in Union Jack blazer and cricket flannels, bareheaded, flowingbearded” to recite, albeit in corrupted form, part of the most famous couplet from “The Charge of the Light Brigade”: “Theirs not to reason why” (15.4396-97). The second line, though left unquoted by Joyce’s Tennyson, reminds us of the soldiers’ solemn duty to give their lives unquestioningly in the service of the Empire. The hallucinated Tennyson may not be explicit about the cost of patriotism, but Stephen most certainly is: “You would die for your country,” he says to Private Carr, “but I say: let my country die for me” (15.4471-73).

For Carr and Compton, the risk of death for country is a real one, even in 1904. The Boer War had ended a mere two years earlier, British forces were currently invading Tibet, and assuming the privates would retain their commission in the Empire’s army, the First World War was only a decade away. Whatever course their careers might take, it is hardly implausible to imagine the privates fighting in Flanders or, tantalizingly enough, returning to Dublin in April of 1916 to quell the Irish insurrection. Their willingness to sacrifice for Crown and Country can be assumed by virtue of their positions in the British army. Stephen, however, has no such
immediate threat. While there is a long tradition of Irish service in the British military—one represented throughout *Ulysses* by Molly’s father, who served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers—Stephen’s diction, specifically his use of possessive pronouns, indicates that his country is distinct from that of the army privates.¹

If the country to which Stephen refers is Ireland, one might well question why he would broach the subject of patriotic self-sacrifice in 1904. Apart from those participating in British military maneuvers, the Irish had no wars to prepare for on Bloomsday. Stephen’s words do not reflect current events, since there had been no revolution in Ireland in 1904, or even in Stephen’s lifetime. While the revolutions of the past, as we have seen, remained influential, the immediacy of Stephen’s comments should make us wonder why, exactly, he feels the need to reject the prospects of a death for his country. A plausible answer is that Joyce uses this apparently anachronistic conversation to invoke events beyond the immediate purview of his temporal setting, including the Easter Rising. Stephen, of course, is unaware of coming events, but Joyce, having written this episode after the first shots were fired on Easter Monday, knew all too well what awaited the city of Dublin. The renewed emphasis upon patriotic self-sacrifice stemming from the Easter Rising would change modern Irish politics forever, yet Stephen, confronted by the Empire’s representatives, refuses to engage in the coming patriotic fervor. “Damn death,” he

¹ Bloom correctly points to valiant military service of Irishmen in the Boer War, but he neglects to mention that some Irishmen joined forces with the Boers to fight against the British military, including Major John MacBride, later executed for his role in the Easter Rising. And, while thousands of Irish nationalists joined the British military upon the outbreak of the First World War, the more radical members of the Irish Volunteers stayed behind, many of whom would march in rebellion in 1916. Sinn Fein’s campaign against conscription helped propel the party to its decisive victory in the 1918 election, and a general antipathy towards England’s wars, interpreted as the imperialist actions of an oppressive imperial state, pervaded nationalist ideology in the early Twentieth century.
Stephen’s words run counter to the zeitgeist of early Twentieth century Europe, where patriotic sentiment would reach its zenith with the outbreak of the First World War, just as Joyce began writing *Ulysses*. Horace’s “*dulce et decorum est,*” later referred to as “the old lie” in Wilfred Owen’s poem of that name, had become the dominant dictum in nationalist rhetoric in England, France, Germany, and other European powers. However, given both Stephen’s use of possessive pronouns (which suggest that his subject is Ireland, not Britain) and the context of the scene (the Irishman facing representatives of the imperial military authority), Stephen’s words seem particularly relevant to the Ireland’s own tradition of patriotic self-sacrifice.

A common trope in Irish nationalism is the sense that those who die for Ireland’s freedom are martyrs. The rhetorical appeal of martyrdom, particularly to a predominately Catholic population, likely needs little elaboration. Catholics are taught, early in their catechismal training, that those who endure martyrdom for Christ are welcomed immediately into heaven, and that the Church itself is built upon the blood of the early Christian martyrs. It takes little imagination to apply such a principle to nation-building: nationalist reverence for Ireland’s patriot dead extends beyond sweetness and propriety, rendering martyrdom to the cause of Ireland’s liberation an act of self-sacrifice akin to the gruesome torments endured by the saints and even Christ himself. While *Ulysses* is bereft of literal battlefields, it nonetheless includes two portraits of dying patriots, both of whom are Irish rebels publicly executed for treason by imperial authorities. From these two accounts, both of which occur in metaleptic passages removed from the reality of Bloomsday, Joyce builds a satiric portrait of Irish nationalism’s obsession for self-immolation.
This obsession can be located within a wide variety of nationalist texts designed to commemorate the sacrifice of the patriot dead. Such commemorations are varied in tone, ranging from the sentimentality of ballads like “The Croppy Boy” to the gruesome, pseudo-Christian aestheticism of Pearse’s essay about Robert Emmet, but there is a shared tendency in most nationalist accounts of martyrdom—the sense that dying for Ireland provides the patriot dead with a transformation from the ordinary to the extraordinary. A rebel who gives his life in service of Ireland, in Yeats’ phrase, “[resigns] his part in the casual comedy” to be “changed utterly” into something other, something greater (Poems 152). “They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake,” says Yeats’ poor old woman, “and for all that, they will think themselves well paid” (Plays 92). The payment, as the poor old woman explains in song, seems well worth the sacrifice:

They shall be remembered forever,
They shall be alive forever,
They shall be speaking forever,
The people shall hear them forever (Plays 92).

While such appeals are familiar in the rhetoric of warfare, the particulars of Ireland’s rebellious past provides a unique tradition established by a unique set of iconic role models. The lineage of failed insurrections established the precedent for 1916, and the willingness of those earlier rebels to die for their country helped establish the pantheon of Irish martyrs. This lineage extends beyond the battlefield to the scaffold, so that the executed rebel is accorded profound reverence in this pantheon. Given the leaders’ self-conscious efforts to join that pantheon, one could easily use 1798 and 1803 as the foundation for a response to 1916. As such, the two
executed rebels in *Ulysses* are representatives of those two great rebellions: a figure modeled, at least in part, on Robert Emmet, and the Croppy Boy himself. Through such figures, Joyce establishes his critique of the Rising’s primary ideological imperative.

When confronting the specifically Irish nationalist reverence for brutally martyred rebels, Joyce tends towards satire and irony, employing the subversive tools of narrative to destabilize the sanctity with which such figures are treated. *Ulysses* approaches nationalism’s devotion to martyrdom much as it approaches nationalist essentialism and nationalist interpretations of the past: as an elaborately conceived artifice, the ideology is best subverted through metalepsis. Joyce’s depiction of rebel executions borrows from the same tropes found in nationalist rhetoric—the death and suffering of the rebel is sentimentalized, aestheticized, and eroticized—but Joyce’s own rhetoric satirizes these tropes through perverse and grotesque hyperbole. The scope of Joyce’s exaggeration makes the sacred farcical, emphasizing the grotesque and carnal rather than the glorious and transcendent. Where the leaders of the Rising conceived of their sacrifice as a transformative act which could rejuvenate the Irish nation, Joyce ironically deflates such high-minded ideals. The transformation Joyce emphasizes is a bodily one, the macabre sight of rebel bodies twisted in agony, bereft of terrible beauty and without the promise of apotheosis or regeneration. The prospect of rejuvenation for Joyce is always heavily sexualized but never actually reproductive, leaving the dying rebel and his suffering infertile. And, beyond simply satirizing nationalist rhetoric, Joyce’s narrative technique calls the narrative itself into question by destabilizing both the ideology and the text.

Fundamentally speaking, these two rebel deaths in *Ulysses* are metaleptic in that they never actually occur. Even within the fictitious world of Joyce’s creation, these incidents exist
apart from the action of the novel and the careers of its characters. While *Ulysses*, like any historically situated novel, frequently provides interplay between fictional characters and historically “real” figures and contextualizes its setting in reference to actual events, certain incidents are fictional even in relation to the novel’s base narrative. Such incidents, as clear examples of metalepsis, separate the events of *Ulysses* from the events of Bloomsday—things which are narrated need not be things which, strictly speaking, happen on June 16, 1904. In other words, *Ulysses* narrates occasions that are fictional even within the fictional world of Joyce’s creation. By breaking the boundaries of his own creation, most notably through the digressions of “Cyclops” and the hallucinations of “Circe,” Joyce forces us to confront the artificiality of his novel. While most metaleptic events in the narrative are explicitly political, the dramatized deaths of these fictional rebels surely are. While we might read these incidents as commentaries about Ireland’s past, I argue that, given both the circumstances against which Joyce wrote these accounts and certain narrative clues pointing us towards the Easter Rising, these rebels are intended, at least in part, to stand in for rebel figures whose deaths will occur years after 1904.

The unnamed rebel executed in one of the digressive passages of “Cyclops” is an anachronism both to the Irish national past and the Ireland of *Ulysses*; he exists only in the digression, which itself emanates from an indeterminate source. As with all digressions in “Cyclops,” the account of the rebel’s execution interrupts the primary narrative of the episode, belonging to a narrative voice apart from that which relates the incidents occurring in Barney Kiernan’s. The Croppy Boy, executed during one of the most intense hallucinations found in “Circe,” is already a fictional creation born of nationalist sentimentality, and his appearance is
the product of an unspecified consciousness. The imagined deaths of these rebels belong to the metaleptic design of the narrative, one which reminds the reader of *Ulysses*’ artifice while suggesting the inherent limitations of both narrative structure and the specific narrative structure of radical nationalism. Since the Croppy Boy’s execution in “Circe” draws heavily from material already introduced in earlier episodes, including “Cyclops,” it is advisable that we begin with “Cyclops,” as its account of the rebel’s death provides essential context to the later scene.

The immediate context of this digression is not political; rather, it is sparked by a conversation about the moral and pragmatic value of capital punishment. This conversation begins with Alf producing a collection of letters written by hangmen, one of which, written by a certain Master Barber named H. Rumbold, is read aloud by Joe. The names mentioned in the letters are an amalgamation of a few fictitious figures from Joyce’s imagination and real names borrowed from administrators in the British consulate in Zurich with whom Joyce was annoyed (Gifford 331). While Joyce has transformed these figures into common criminals, they are not rebels, so there is little immediate reason for the discussion to drift into the political arena. Politics nonetheless intrude, following Alf’s crude observation that the threat of execution has no “deterrent effect” upon “the poor bugger’s tool that’s being hanged” (12.455-57). As evidence, Alf refers to the execution of Joe Brady, an Irish revolutionary executed more than two decades before Bloomsday:

I heard it from the head warder that was in Kilmainham when they hanged Joe Brady, the invincible. He told me when they cut him down after the drop it was standing up in their faces like a poker (12.459-61).

Alf’s comment, meant only as a bit of crude, if anatomically accurate humor, brings the
discussion to politics by referring to a martyr for Ireland’s freedom. Brady, a member of the Invincibles, a small revolutionary organization of the late Nineteenth century, became infamous for his alleged role in the Phoenix Park murders, the crime for which he was executed in Dublin’s Kilmainham Gaol in 1883. This prison also saw the executions of dozens of Irish patriots, including those of 1916. As such, the coarse observation resonates as an oblique reminder of the Easter Rising, since Kilmainham’s association with 1916 is altogether unavoidable. In the most directly political episode in the novel, Joyce calls our attention to the prison yard of Kilmainham, the very site where Pearse, Connolly, and their comrades were shot. While the execution of patriots may seem remote to the novel’s characters, recent events bring a new immediacy to the reader’s interpretation of the scene.

Bloom’s response ignores the political ramifications altogether, focusing instead upon the scientific and medical reasons for a hanged man’s erection, but the mere mention of Joe Brady garners a rant from the Citizen, who is “only waiting for the wink of the word and he starts gassing out of him about the invincibles and the old guard and the men of sixtyseven and who fears to speak of ninetyeight” (12.479-81). For the Citizen, Joe Brady belongs to that same family, a participant in Pearse’s unbroken chain of the separatist tradition whose execution, complete with its “ruling passion strong in death,” rendered him a martyr to the Irish cause (12.463). While Bloom and the Citizen are obviously talking at cross purposes here, the Citizen demands that the conversation move to “the memory of the dead,” including another former resident of Kilmainham Gaol, Robert Emmet (12.519). This discussion leads us to the digression, an account of an unnamed rebel’s execution “[parodying] a newspaper’s feature-story coverage of a large-scale public and social event” (Gifford 333).
The rebel in question seems a figure derived in large part from Emmet, whose failed rebellion and subsequent execution would become the standard for future generations of Irish rebels. Pearse, in particular, was moved by Emmet’s example, claiming that Emmet’s death offered Ireland “the memory of a sacrifice Christ-like in its perfection” (69). While Joyce may not have been familiar with Pearse’s essay, his own version of the execution draws from the same content to satirize the sort of sentimentality and aestheticized suffering celebrated in nationalist commemorations of Emmet’s execution. However, Joyce pointedly refuses to name the digression’s central figure, leaving considerable doubt as to the rebel’s identity. He is referred to only as “the hero martyr” (12.609) and “the most precious victim” (12.624). Of those few figures mentioned by name, none is recognizable, many being jokes made in multilingual puns. Also present in the scene are the rebel’s lover, a figure loosely based upon Sarah Curran, Emmet’s fiancée, and the executioner himself. The last is Rumbold, transformed into the “world-renowned headsman” and “grim figure of the executioner,” intruding upon the evidently Nineteenth century scene to bring the past into relation with the present (12.591; 12.612). Rumbold, the hangman who authored the letters read aloud earlier in the episode, becomes an integral part of the action, though his appearance is surely anachronistic to the digression’s setting. The martyr’s lover appears in similarly anachronistic form:

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2 Joyce also seems to have been inspired by Washington Irving’s “A Broken Heart,” a particularly maudlin account of Sara Curran, Emmet’s lover, after the rebel’s execution. Though Irving ignores the details of Emmet’s execution—his subject is the broken heart of Emmet’s lover—the sentimentality with which he treats the rebel provides a partial template for Joyce’s later, more ironic version.

3 Irving’s account also leaves Emmet’s name unspecified.
The nec and non plus ultra of emotion were reached when the blushing bride elect burst her way through the serried ranks of the bystanders and flung herself upon the muscular bosom of him who was about to be launched into eternity for her sake. The hero folded her willowy form in a loving embrace murmuring fondly Sheila, my own. Encouraged by this use of her christian name she kissed passionately all the various suitable areas of his person which the decencies of prison garb permitted her ardour to reach. She swore to him as they mingled the salt streams of their tears that she would ever cherish his memory, that she would never forget her hero boy who went to his death with a song on his lips as if he were but going to a hurling match in Clonturk park (12.635-39).

Emmet’s lover was named Sara, not Sheila, so Gifford identifies this figure as a version of Sheila-ni-Gara, “another of the many allegorical names for Ireland” (336). This brings the curious matter of the hero dying for his beloved into focus: like Emmet, the unnamed hero dies for love of Ireland. Sheila, though young and beautiful, is similar to Yeats’s Poor Old Woman, serving as the physical representation of Ireland for whom the rebel will die. While Yeats’s play suggests that such sacrifice is transcendent of eroticism—for all the lovers the poor old woman has had, she “never set the bed out for any”—the latent eroticism of the play is evident once Michael, the Gillane’s oldest son, chooses to follow the Poor Old Woman on the eve of his own wedding (138). In choosing to follow the poor old woman, Michael forfeits not only the banality of middle-class comforts, but also the experience of married conjugality. Patriotic self-sacrifice, then, provides a superior alternative to both love and sex. Joyce here draws from the latent eroticism of Yeats’s version to emphasize the carnality of the martyr’s death, since Sheila’s ardour, hampered by her lover’s prison attire, is clearly sexualized. Assuming Sheila is a
representation of Ireland, Joyce has rendered the eroticism between the patriot and Ireland mutual, though the sexual longing is entirely unconsummated. Sheila and her lover are unable to fulfill their erotic desires due precisely to the trappings of the rebel’s sacrifice. As such, Joyce frustrates the eroticism of nationalist sacrifice by leaving the rebel and the personified nation sexually unsatisfied.

Moreover, Joyce is honest about the nature of patriotic death. While Yeats clearly notes that followers of the sean bhean bhocht will ultimately meet their deaths, the nature of those deaths is left unexplored. Here, amidst the sentimentality and romanticism, we are told in no uncertain terms that the hero’s death will be anything but gentle:

On a handsome mahogany table near him were neatly arranged the quartering knife, the various finely tempered disemboweling appliances (specially supplied by the worldfamous firm of cutlers, Mssrs John Round and Sons, Sheffield) a terra cotta saucepan for the reception of the duodenum, colon, blind intestine and appendix etc when successfully extracted and two commodious milk jugs destined to receive the most precious blood of the most precious victim (12.612-624).

Again, the account differs from Emmet’s actual execution, as the torture and mutilation implied here never occurred. Though Emmet was beheaded after he had died—a symbolic, if impractical gesture—neither he nor his corpse was subject to further indignity. Despite the gruesome torment awaiting him, Joyce’s rebel remains in surprisingly good spirits, going “to his death with a song on his lips as if he were but going to a hurling match in Clonturk park” (U12.644-46). Such a description is surely romanticized, especially since, as Rodstein notes, Emmet delayed the event of his execution as long as possible, dropping to his death only after
“the hangman lost patience and hanged him between the ‘not’ and the never uttered ‘yet’” (166-67). Joyce’s account, then, provides a sentimentalized vision of rebel sacrifice, marked by what Rodstein calls “unseemly levity” (167). Seemly or not, this levity is hardly unprecedented in depictions of Irish martyrdom, finding expression in what Pearse believed was the “joy of the new service” to Irish nationhood, culminating in patriotic sacrifice, would lead, ultimately to Irish freedom (73).

As such, it is plausible to consider Joyce’s rebel an amalgamation of nationalist martyrs across the centuries, whose imaginations forged a romanticized, eroticized devotion to Ireland at the expense of their own lives. Rodstein, noting the passage’s implied connection to 1916, suggests that Joyce’s rebel is essentially a “composite figure modeled largely on Robert Emmet, who, having followed Wolfe Tone, was in turn taken as a personal model by Padraic Pearse” (150). Employing flowery prose to establish a sentimental tone, Joyce parodies nationalist self-sacrifice from across the eras, rendering these deaths farcically tragic. The very blood of the martyr becomes the object of comedy, “as two commodious milkjugs destined to receive the most precious blood of the most precious victim” sit idly by in wait for the martyr’s execution, to transport the blood to “the amalgamated cats’ and dogs’ home” (12.623-25). Meanwhile, commemorative tokens are distributed to the ladies present, “a tasteful souvenir of the occasion in the shape of a skull and crossbones brooch, a timely and generous act which evoked a fresh outburst of emotion” (U12.662-64). Joyce’s perverse depiction subjects to ridicule the incidents

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4 Such levity can be found in numerous ballads commemorating the deaths of Irish patriots, including “Bold Robert Emmet” and “Roddy McCorley,” ballads about 1803 and 1798, respectively.
attendant upon Emmet’s hanging and decapitation which Pearse found pathetically moving. The 
blood of the martyr, according to Pearse’s account, “flowed down upon the pavement” as “the 
dogs of the street [lapped] up that noble blood,” prompting eyewitnesses to be “sickened with 
horror” (71). Meanwhile, the actual souvenirs of Emmet’s hanging were, if anything, more 
grisly than the macabre and ironically “tasteful” brooches offered the ladies present, “as 
spectators at Emmet’s execution made relics of handkerchiefs dipped in his blood” (Pearse 71). 

According to Cheng, “the parody is both hilariously and poignantly effective precisely 
because it exposes the sort of rose-tinted nationalistic sentimentality that can (on the Irish side) 
canonize a pointless and farcical martyrdom into the pantheon of sacred national symbols” (203). 
While such pointed parody may well be worthwhile when dealing merely with the abstractions of 
romantic and patriotic sacrifice, the passage is poignant because people actually died for these 
abstractions. The death of Emmet, while present in nationalist minds, is a century apart from the 
Ireland of _Ulysses_. As a mere symbol it is essentially harmless, until the abstract symbol 
prompts men to actual self-sacrifice. That Pearse embraced Emmet’s myth is evident. That the 
Easter Rising sought to emulate Emmet’s legacy is abundantly clear. The abstraction ceased to 
be harmless the moment the first shots of Easter Week were fired. The immediacy of Emmet’s 
legacy, still an abstraction in the minds of Bloom and the Citizen both, was rendered concrete in 
the minds of both the author and the reader of _Ulysses_ five years before the novel had been 
completed. In this sense, Joyce’s efforts to “demythologize the sentimentalizing, mythmaking 
process” that informed both Pearse and his heirs in the IRA, gains a measure of immediacy of 
which the characters are unaware (Cheng 203).

Joyce’s metaleptic technique in “Cyclops,” identified as “Gigantism” in Gilbert’s
scheme, is found primarily in these digressions, as the repeated interruptions of the main narrative occur on a different plane of fictionality from the rest of the episode’s action (226). As discussed in the second chapter, this style disrupts the reading process by drawing our attention to the instability of the narrative voice. In this particular incident, the parodic digression is indeed a case of gigantism—everything is so exaggerated and so grotesque as to make the narrative preposterous. Even the weather, in a self-conscious instance of the pathetic fallacy, cooperates through “deafening claps of thunder and the dazzling flashes of lightning which lit up the ghastly scene,” suggesting “that the artillery of heaven had lent its supernatural pomp to the already gruesome spectacle” (12.528-31). The pathos of the scene, however, is severely undercut by the digression’s rather undignified conclusion: the cockney babbling of a certain “provostmarshal, lieutenantcolonel Tomkin-Maxwell ffrechmullan Tomlinson,” Sheila’s imminent marriage to “the gallant young Oxonian,” and the hero’s impending torture, mutilation, and death (12.669-70; 12.665). One must sift through both the ironic sentimentality and the absurd hyperbole to arrive at the scene’s actual content: a man faces gruesome death for sake of his lover (allegorically, Ireland), only to be replaced by another (ironically, by an Englishman), remembered only through macabre relics. And, once the digression dissipates, as all digressions eventually do in “Cyclops,” we return to the banality of the Citizen’s speech “about the Irish language and the corporation meeting and all to that and the shoneens that can’t speak their own language” (12.679-81).

The nuances of this narrative event are rich. Joyce draws upon the names of real people whom he resented and renders them murderers and executioners in his fictional world; their executions spark a discussion about the eroticism of death by execution; this discussion sparks a
digression about execution itself, re-imagining a specific event from Ireland’s past in parodic fashion, thereby travestying the ostensibly serious nature of both patriotic self-sacrifice and its commemoration; this parody dissipates back into banality and vulgarity with little warning. From these levels—Joyce’s personal experience, the primary narrative of the novel, and the metaleptic digression—Joyce introduces themes crucial to the ideology of the Easter Rising: the supposed transcendence of patriotic self-sacrifice and the eroticism attendant upon dying for Ireland.

As always, the question Joyce prompts in readers of “Cyclops” is, from whose perspective does this digression originate? Any answer is, of course, entirely speculative, given the dearth of clues requisite to identify the source. This is surely part of the metaleptic technique of the episode, but the dilemma grows more pointed when we consider the role this particular digression plays later in the novel. Specifically, Joyce here introduces thematic and technical elements which are furthered in the novel’s chaotic climax in “Circe,” where our inability to assign the digression to a singular source is echoed, and where Joyce’s metaleptic design reaches its apex.

“Dublin’s Burning! Dublin’s Burning!”

The strangeness of “Circe” has long posed a problem for critics of *Ulysses*. While early responses generally sought to identify what actually happens in Nighttown by sifting through the hallucinations to provide attribution, the advent of poststructuralist approaches to the novel found complications undreamt of by the first generation of *Ulysses*’ critics. Andrew Gibson summarizes “the primary features of current thinking about ‘Circe’” as “a certain scepticism with
regard to totalizing accounts of the chapter (including those that would assume a homogeneity to its referential domain); increasing attention to its aesthetic and discursive aspects (including the political implications of its discursive practices); more concentrated reflection about the way in which it recycles material from other chapters in the novel; and a growing emphasis on the importance of trying to think about the episode in more plural terms” (26).5

Significantly, the shift in critical approaches to “Circe” prioritizes formal inquiries over ontological ones. Forging divisions between what is “real” and what is “hallucinated” no longer interests most critics. Arnold Goldman, one of the first critics to rebel against the early conventions by which the episode was read, argues that “the only way to accommodate into one conception, into a single ontological level, the entire chapter is not to make such divisions (which won’t work), but to assume that the whole is the surrealist fantasy of a man who knows what went on in Nighttown on June 16th, 1904, and who has read (or written) the fourteen previous chapters of Ulysses” (96). Such an approach postulates that, rather than Bloom and Stephen operating as the dual hallucinators in the episode, a single consciousness, one intimately familiar with and deeply invested in the content of the rest of the novel, operates within “Circe,” rendering it “The Dream of James Joyce” (Goldman 96).

By declaring the ontological dilemma of “Circe” a moot issue, Goldman provides a reasonable answer to the formal dilemma posed by the episode. If we take “Circe” to be the product of a singular consciousness, we can understand the episode as both a part of and apart

5 Gibson’s introduction to Reading Joyce’s ‘Circe’ offers an excellent summary of the competing trends found in studies of “Circe.”
from the rest of *Ulysses*. Considering “Circe” from within the wider context of *Ulysses*, we find that one of the episode’s hallmarks is its self-reflexivity: “Circe” draws heavily from content found in previous chapters, including content to which Stephen and Bloom are not privy. By rejecting the once prevalent notion that “Circe” merely stages the protagonists’ fantasies and nightmares, Goldman provides a plausible explanation for the inclusion of such content.

“Circe,” then, is a dramatization of the creator’s (or the book’s) consciousness, which means that all material from previous chapters can be fodder for the hallucinatory nightmare. This makes “Circe” a meta-commentary on the rest of the novel, one reflective of the novel’s concerns, set off from everything which comes before and after by virtue of its design. Joyce’s closet drama is both an isolated set-piece (formally distinct from the rest of the book) and a part of the whole (its content derived largely from material drawn from the rest of the novel, and foreign content applied with the rest of the novel in mind).

As the longest single episode in the novel, “Circe” responds to a wide variety of themes introduced in earlier chapters, including matters intimately private and subjects inherently public. While we should be wary of unduly stressing the political ramifications of “Circe,” the specter of Irish nationalism nonetheless looms over the episode. The physical confrontation between Stephen and the British military explicitly engages with the subject of Irish rebellion against English rule. Put succinctly, “Circe” is where *Ulysses* most directly confronts the Easter Rising.

This confrontation begins long before Stephen and Bloom exit Bella Cohen’s brothel. Two details early in the episode, each accompanying the entrance of one of the novel’s principal characters into Nighttown, are suggestive of the Easter Rising. When Stephen appears, passing by the Privates Carr and Compton, the stage directions inform us that he “chants with joy the
introit for paschal time” (15.73). Paschal time, of course, marks the point of the liturgical calendar running from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. However, as Gifford notes, what Stephen actually recites is the antiphon of Paschal time, rather than the introit (453). Whether or not this error is intentional on Joyce’s part, the clear reference to Eastertide hints towards the Easter Rising, which began the day after Easter, lasted for a single week, and culminated in the executions of its leaders, all of which took place during Paschal time. While this may seem coincidental, we should note that there is little clear reason for Stephen to be reciting a prayer appropriate for calendar days that had, by June 16, been over for a considerable time. Stephen’s recitation, then, is anachronistic enough to the setting to draw our attention. While this anachronism is not necessarily a reference to the Easter Rising, the context of the scene makes such a reading plausible: Stephen recites an Easter prayer while passing the representatives of the imperial military presence in Ireland. And once Bloom enters, the suggestion of Easter 1916 becomes clearer.

Bloom, having arrived at Nighttown, is accosted by “a sinister figure” wearing a sombrero (15.212). Addressing the figure in Spanish, Bloom asks him to identify the street. The Figure’s response demands a password for admittance, then answers Bloom’s question in Irish (15.218). Bloom responds in French, Spanish, and Irish, before muttering that the Figure is a “Gaelic league spy, sent by that fireeater” (15.220-21). The identity of the fireeater is unspecified, but as Willard Potts notes, Bloom’s assumption that he has encountered a spy stems from a misconception about the Gaelic League, “that it is some underground movement like the

6 Easter Sunday fell upon April 3 in 1904, so Eastertide ended with Pentecost on May 22.
Fenians with a complement of spies” (185). While Bloom’s general ignorance of Cultural Nationalism may well be the root cause, his tacit assumption that the Gaelic League has a shadowy, underground presence is not altogether unfounded. While expressly nonpolitical, the League attracted many for whom preserving the Irish language was a project inextricably connected with liberating Ireland. Among its most prominent members was Padraic Pearse, who was editor of An Claidheamh Soluis, the League’s periodical, when Ulysses takes place. Joyce, of course, had toyed with the idea of joining the League himself while a student at University College Dublin, even taking classes under the tutelage of Pearse himself. If Joyce, perhaps drawing from personal experience, equates the League with revolution, the equation is not entirely unreasonable. The Gaelic League may have had no direct involvement in the Easter Rising, but many of the Rising’s most prominent participants had been members, including Pearse, MacDonough, Mac Diarmada, Ceannt, and Plunkett. Bloom’s misconception may be an anachronism in the Ireland of 1904, but it is an understandable assumption in the post-Rising era.

These two incidents, Stephen’s recitation of a Paschal prayer and Bloom’s assumption that he has encountered a Gaelic League spy, prepare the reader for subsequent political content relevant to 1916. By introducing anachronistic material into his narrative, Joyce points us towards the progress of the text, forcing us to read “Circe” though a political lens, even if subsequent incidents seem completely divorced from politics. Once the confrontation between Stephen and the soldiers begins, political content becomes primary to the narrative, culminating in the novel’s most direct response to the Easter Rising.

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7 As Potts notes, Bloom seems unaware of the Revival and has only a basic understanding of GAA (185).

8 Pearse would break with the Gaelic League by 1913, finding its methods insufficient to solve Ireland’s dilemma.
Of particular interest here are three hallucinatory figures—The Croppy Boy, Rumbold, and Old Gummy Granny—who emerge in grotesquely altered form to enact a perverse parody of patriotic self-sacrifice. Insofar as “Circe” is a meta-commentary on the whole of the book, we should note that all three of these figures are traceable to earlier contexts in the novel. The Croppy Boy, of course, made his appearance in “Sirens,” when his ballad was sung by Ben Dollard. Rumbold is yet another version of the hangman mentioned in “Cyclops,” now further transformed from a Master Barber to a Demon Barber. Old Gummy Granny, while not explicitly mentioned elsewhere in the novel, seems to be at once a grotesque version of Yeats’ sean bhean bhocht and the milkwoman who visited the Martello tower in “Telemachus.”

The Croppy Boy appears in response to the words of another hallucination, the Citizen, whose Fenian prayer explicitly introduces the theme of martyrdom (15.4525-30). The violence of this prayer draws in the image of a hanged Irish rebel, as the Croppy Boy emerges with “the ropenoose round his neck” reciting lines from the ballad (15.4532). His lofty, sentimental ideals are severely undercut by the grotesque action of “[griping] in his issuing bowels with both hands” (15.4532-33). Joyce here plays the sacred against the profane, balancing romantic sentiment against scatological realism. Rumbold appears in response, bearing evidence taken from domestic murder trials in Ireland and England, before proceeding to strangle the Croppy Boy, who struggles to make his confession as his “tongue protrudes violently” (15.4544-45).

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9 Martin Pops, in “The Metamorphosis of Shit,” offers the intriguing possibility that “shitting is the bodily archetype of spiritual rebirth insofar as it liberates the body from itself” (29). Such a notion invites the tenuous prospect of at least an ironic apotheosis occurring here. Unfortunately, Pops ignores “Circe” in his essay, only addressing Bloom’s defecation in “Calypso.”
death, though left unnarrated in the song itself, is enacted in positively voyeuristic fashion, subverting both the sentimentality of the ballad and the aestheticism of nationalistic “terrible beauty.” There is nothing beautiful about the rebel’s sacrifice here—his agony is grotesque and scatologically vile. And when the rebel dies, the prospect of apotheosis is rendered moot.

Once “he gives up the ghost,” the Croppy Boy’s execution culminates in the gruesome spectacle of nationalistic orgasm: “A violent erection of the hanged sends gouts of sperm spouting through his deathclothes on to the cobblestones” (15.4548-49). The ghastly imagery grows even more perversely satirical in the subsequent lines, as the ladies present “rush forward with their handkerchiefs to sop [the semen] up,” in a clear parody of the aftermath of Emmet’s execution (15.4551-52). The sexual savagery does not end there, as Rumbold, overcome with excitement, “plunges his head into the gaping belly of the hanged and draws out his head again clotted with coiled and smoking entrails” (15.4555-57). The political content is hardly subtle.

With a death that seems to parody Pearse’s pseudo-biblical retelling of Emmet’s execution, Joyce, like Pearse, illustrates the connection between Irish martyrdom and the Passion of the Gospels, wherein the scaffold has replaced the cross. Where Pearse is wholly sincere, Joyce’s own approach is ironic, as indicated by the grisly and macabre search for relics of the executed. By alluding to the collection of both Christ’s blood and Emmet’s blood, Joyce mocks the nationalist and Catholic obsession with death, though the perversity of the practice is heightened by Joyce’s choice of bodily fluid. The Croppy Boy himself has found erotic satisfaction through his self-sacrifice, but that sacrifice is fruitless. The orgasm is wasted, spilling the Croppy Boy’s seed across the cobblestones where it cannot hope to fructify.

The death, fantasy though it might be, offers a clear parody of ideals held by the leaders
of the Rising. The passage, of course, is anything but an endorsement. While Joyce is clearly conscious of the brutality of British rule, manifested by Rumbold’s reaction to the ejaculation of the corpse (“I’m near it myself”), the romantic nationalism is stripped to its essence, and the essence is vile (15.4553). High ideals, whatever the rhetorical flourish of expression, mean little when seen through to the end, rendering sacrificial martyrdom repulsive, violent, and fruitless. Instead of a glorious entrance into that heavenly family of martyrs that MacDonagh predicts, or the rejuvenation of the Irish nation foreseen by Pearse, Joyce presents us an account of execution which, while grotesquely hyperbolic, still manages to be oddly mimetic. The grotesqueness of the Croppy Boy’s execution is, at least in part, anatomically accurate. Rather than offering a sanitized death, or hearsay about a death occurring safely beyond the audience’s view, Joyce dramatizes the death in gruesome realism. And, once mimeticism gives way to subversive satire, the Croppy Boy’s orgasm does nothing to revive the land. Where Yeats imagined Pearse and Connolly watering the rose tree with their blood, Joyce imagines the Croppy Boy spraying semen over the cobblestones of Dublin’s red light district. The Croppy Boy’s sacrifice, and nationalism in all its violent forms, is exposed as infertile self-satisfaction. If apotheosis is not on offer, then the primary appeal of nationalist self-sacrifice consequently withers away.

The narrative complexity of the episode’s climax, however, does not end with the death of the Croppy Boy. The confrontation is not resolved, as the army privates, feeling the need to defend their patriotic honor in the face of Stephen’s rhetoric, continue to threaten Stephen with violence. Shortly thereafter, Old Gummy Granny appears, quoting the clichés of Irish nationalism, to which Stephen responds with disdain. Though she is a coarser, more grotesque version of the sean bhean bhocht, the allusion to Yeats’ play is readily evident, providing yet
another parody of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. What Joyce adds, and Yeats omits, is the actual rebellion. In Yeats’ play, the French land at Killala and Michael goes out to join the rebellion, which alone is sufficient to transform Ireland from a poor old woman into the beautiful, regal, young girl. Michael’s death is predicted, but nothing is said about the actual violence. Joyce, however, includes this violence shortly after Old Gummy Granny appears, as the Easter Rising occurs, albeit in metaleptic fashion, across the streets of Dublin.

The onset of fighting, punctuated by disembodied calls for the police, leads to the exclamation of Distant Voices that “Dublin’s burning! Dublin’s burning! On fire, on fire!” (15.4660). The ensuing description is the closest that Joyce comes to direct allusion to the Rising, though it occurs in heavily hyperbolic language. Heralded by “brimstone fires” and “dense clouds,” violence erupts across Dublin (15.4661). Most of Joyce’s description, of course, is comically exaggerated: the violence is marked by earthquakes, the resurrection of the dead, the appearance of witches, and the raining of dragons’ teeth. Nonetheless, Enda Duffy finds this description an example of “realistically portrayed violence,” employed by Joyce “to show what life was like on Dublin’s streets when the book was written, rather than when it was set” (143). For Duffy, this instance “[shows] incidents in a terrorist war much as they have been shown in countless newspaper photographs, reports, and histories” (143). Specifically, Duffy finds that the fire erupting resembles those fires on Sackville street during the Rising, since Sackville

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10 Duffy points to three such instances in “Circe” where realism intrudes upon the hallucinated scene: Bloom being questioned by police officers who assume his parcel is a bomb (15.1197-1203); the fire raging across Dublin (15.4660), and Stephen being struck unconscious by Private Carr (15.4747-50). All of these incidents, Duffy claims, suggest events beyond the purview of Joyce’s temporal setting (143-44).
Street marked the boundary between City Centre (including the General Post Office) and Nighttown (143). To this list we might add the deployment of troops and the firing of guns, both of which really occurred during the Rising, providing a sense of realism to the chaotic hyperbole of the description.

This realism is balanced by Joyce’s ludicrous exaggeration, so as to make the description an evocation of the Rising, rather than a mimetic description. Joyce’s re-imagined rebellion includes the ghosts of the past, when “pikes clash on cuirasses,” and the figures from Irish nationalism appear to fight against each other (15.4665). In the presence of nationalism’s teleological narrative, Joyce includes allusions to the Second Coming, Christianity’s own telos, though these are subversively rendered sinister, culminating in the celebration of a black mass, complete with black candles and a “blooddripping host” (15.4703). Adonai, appearing in response as both divine and satanic, may seem removed from the hyperbolic Easter Rising, but Joyce brings this incident back into dialogue with nationalist violence after his final exclamation: “in strident discord peasants and townspeople of Orange and Green factions sing Kick the Pope and Daily, daily sing to Mary” (15.4717-18). Here, as we reach the “one great goal, the manifestation of God” (2.381), we find that neither the appearance of the Divine, nor the eruption of the Easter Rising provide closure to the problems of Ireland. The continuing discord between Catholics and Protestants, though not elaborated upon, reminds us once again of the divisions left unresolved even after the fact of the Easter Rising.\footnote{Also of note, the clear suggestion of sectarian conflict reminds us that even the most liberal of nationalist movements could degenerate into sectarianism. Specifically, we can look to 1798, when the progressive ideals of the United Irishmen were, in some corners, largely ignored once the fighting broke out.}
Once the absurdly hyperbolic battle commences, the old woman offers Stephen both a dagger and the promise of immortality: “At 8.35 a.m. you will be in heaven and Ireland will be free” (15.4736-37). Old Gummy Granny’s exhortation echoes the ideology of the Easter Rising by connecting martyrdom to both transcendence (“you will be in heaven”) and teleology (“Ireland will be free”). The use of the simple future tense here makes the supposed inevitability clear: Stephen, should he engage in violence, will earn both apotheosis for himself and liberation for Ireland. Rather than submit to the violence raging through the streets of Dublin, Stephen denies the ghosts of Ireland’s past and the cajoling of the poor old woman, refusing to engage. For Stephen, the old abstractions and the weight of patriotic reverence are meaningless. By inverting the credo of the romantic nationalist, demanding that his country die for him, Joyce, through Stephen, negates the viability of death-centered patriotism by affirming the viability of the individual artist over the morbidity of the separatist tradition. As a result, Stephen is struck and knocked unconscious.

Given the dramatic tension of Stephen’s confrontation with England’s military authority, the end result seems relatively mundane. The cataclysmic nature of the chapter culminates in a single act of violence, perpetrated by an English soldier, one which, when the anxiety of “Circe” dissipates in “Eumaeus,” seems almost mild. Within the context of the chapter, however, Stephen becomes a victim of both English imperialism and Irish nationalist ideology. Caught up in the struggle, identified as “a proBoer,” Stephen becomes a living casualty in a war he neither

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12 As Gifford notes, “executions in the British Isles were traditionally scheduled for 8:00 A.M.,” though neither he nor Joyce explains the thirty-five minute lag time (528).
started nor joined (15.4602). The consequence of Irish martyrdom is further violence, and the resultant violence takes its toll on the innocent Irishmen along with the rebels.

Writing about 1916 within the prism of 1904 presents Joyce with certain limitations; unable to comment directly upon the events of Easter Week, he employs composite figures, hallucinations, and the grotesqueness of hyperbole. *Finnegans Wake*, by contrast, is able to engage with the events of 1916 much more directly.

“Array! Surrection”

Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, in one of the earliest critical studies of *Finnegans Wake*, describe Joyce’s final novel as “a mighty allegory of the fall and resurrection of man” (3). For Campbell and Robinson, writing almost as much to defend Joyce from charges of incomprehensibility as to analyze the content of the novel, recognizing the author’s appropriation of mythic patterns offers baffled readers a point of entrance into the world of the *Wake*. In broad terms, they argued, this repeated pattern is both the *Wake*’s primary theme and controlling structural principle: “Phall if you but will, rise you must” (4.15-16). Mythopoetic approaches to Joyce’s fiction were, of course, nothing new. From T.S. Eliot’s “Ulysses, Order and Myth” onwards, scholars have long approached Joyce’s conscious appropriation of

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13 Nationalism and support of the Boers were considered synonymous at the time; not, as it turned out, entirely without justification, given MacBride’s service on in the Boer army.

14 That Joyce was personally familiar with an innocent casualty of the Easter Rising (his university friend Francis Sheehy-Skeffington having been executed by British soldiers “while attempting to persuade the soldiers to stop looting”) renders Joyce’s depiction of Stephen’s injury all the more poignant (Ellmann 411).

15 *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* was published in 1944, a mere five years after the publication of the *Wake* itself.
archetypal patterns as a sort of “skeleton key” to understanding the complexities of the author’s creation. Such an approach is not without justification; a persistent trope in Joyce’s fiction is the (often ironic) conflation of the banal with the extraordinary, of common characters and parochial settings with heroic figures and universal patterns. Thus, the boy from “Araby” becomes the knight-errant of Grail lore, the spinster from “Clay” becomes the grotesque Madonna, the burgeoning intellectual artist from Portrait becomes the great artificer of Greek mythology, and the cuckolded advertising salesman from Ulysses becomes the wily Odysseus.

The content and design of Finnegans Wake follows this same pattern, though the mythos is wider, deeper, and richer than in any of Joyce’s previous works; and the parallels with mythology, while tantalizingly suggestive, are more difficult to categorically assign. Should we take the presumed pattern of fall and resurrection suggested by Campbell and Morton as the primary structural principle operative in the Wake, we may turn to the archetypal pattern of the dying god, a notion most famously proposed by Sir James Frazer in The Golden Bough, his monumental study of pagan myths and rituals. Frazer’s influence upon modernist writers, including Joyce, has long been noted, at times by the modernists themselves. John B. Vickery argues that Finnegans Wake borrows heavily from The Golden Bough, citing Joyce’s recurrent

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16 As early as 1923, a mere year after the publication of Ulysses, T.S. Eliot argued that Joyce had broken new literary ground, “in using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” as “a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (167).

17 Eliot is explicit about Frazer’s influence upon “The Waste Land”: “To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean The Golden Bough; I have used especially the two volumes Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognise in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies” (50). Eliot’s most explicit invocation of Frazer comes in the “Unreal City” section of “The Waste Land”: “That corpse you planted last year in your garden,/Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?” (71-72).
use of Frazer’s “central image of the dying and reviving god as a symbol of vegetative fertility” (214). The general outline of the *Wake’s* structure—the fall and (assumed) resurrection of its protagonist—supports this, as do the work’s innumerable puns connecting HCE, ALP, and their children to nature in erotic ways: “the revival of HCE, as with Frazer’s dying gods, is heralded by and indeed equated with signs of vegetative growth and flourishing, with the movements of the sun in its solstitial course and the actions of the moon, with the seasonal movement out of winter and into spring and summer, and with the exercise of vigorous, protracted, and unabashed sexual intercourse” (Vickery 216).

While a comprehensive survey of the dying god’s various appearances throughout the course of *Finnegans Wake* is beyond the purview of this study, we should note that Joyce’s puns point to everyone from Tammuz to Osiris to Dionysus to Baldr to Adonis. Even the novel’s title, an appropriation of the Irish-American ballad “Finnegan’s Wake,” suggests a modern, ironic version of the trope. Finnegan is, of course, Tim Finnegan, the drunken bricklayer presumed dead until his “corpse” is splashed with whiskey. He is also Finn MacCool, the great Irish hero of the Fenian Cycle. Campbell and Robinson assert that “Finn typifies all heroes—Thor, Prometheus, Osiris, Christ, the Buddha—in whose life and through whose inspiration the race

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18 For a more detailed study of Frazer’s influence on modernist writers, including Joyce, see Vickery’s *The Literary Impact of the Golden Bough*.

19 The word “whiskey” derives from the Irish *uisce beatha*, literally meaning “water of life.” The irony, of course, is that the water of life is the cause of both Finnegan’s “death” and his subsequent “resurrection.”

20 While Finn is not necessarily an example of the “dying god,” Lady Gregory, in *Gods and Fighting Men*, suggests that Finn himself did not die, but is sleeping in a cave, and that “some say the day will come” when Finn and his warriors will awake and “rise up as strong and as well as ever they were” (436). To this, Gregory adds the legend that “Finn, son of Cumhal, has been on the earth now and again since the old times, in the shape of one of the heroes of Ireland” (436).
lives” (41). As such, Finn offers Joyce a version of the dying and reviving god ascribable to universal archetypes, but nonetheless explicitly relevant to his native land.

This latter part has received comparatively little attention in archetypal readings of *Finnegans Wake*. A mythopoetic approach typically emphasizes a text’s universality—a worthwhile endeavor, but one which risks obscuring more local content. In the case of *Finnegans Wake*, it is necessary to place the universal, archetypal patterns in dialogue with the novel’s explicitly Irish context. In so doing, we find that these patterns are sometimes relevant to the *Wake*’s engagement with radical Irish nationalism. Vickery’s insights, then, are useful, but his study focuses only upon the aesthetic and structural implications of such resonances within the *Wake*. Without discounting the significance of *The Golden Bough* to Joyce’s design, we should recognize that Frazer’s tropes could be found as easily in modern ideology as in ancient ritual or modern poetry. Specifically, Vickery, like Campbell and Robinson before him, fails to recognize that the violent eroticism of fertility rituals, and the suggested patterns of death and revival, could, with a little imagination, be found in Dublin twenty-three years before the *Wake* was published.

Such a claim may seem hyperbolic, but the discourse surrounding the Easter Rising clearly indicates a belief—if only a rhetorical, propagandistic one—that the Easter Rising was a performed sacrifice to heal the land of Ireland. The leaders were likely ignorant of Frazer and his fellow Cambridge Ritualists, but their rhetoric frequently drifts towards notions of eroticized sacrifice undertaken with the intention of fertilizing the land.\(^{21}\) The metaleptic style of

\(^{21}\) We find such notions repeated throughout the speeches of Pearse, for whom messianism seems to have been at the heart of his political ideology. Plunkett’s poetry also plays with this trope: “I See His Blood Upon the Rose” and
Finnegans Wake allows such eroticized violence into the world of Joyce’s dream. In a novel which freely and deliberately confuses the literal and the figurative, the metaphorical language employed by the leaders can be subversively rendered literally. By placing Christian concepts of sacrifice and redemption in dialogue with poetic tropes of vegetative fertility and eroticism, the leaders of the Rising sought the transcendence of martyrdom. As alluded to in the first chapter, later commentators have found the Rising a conscious attempt to enact mythic patterns in real life. While this may well overstate the case, the conscious decision to rebel at Easter inevitably invites such interpretations. Christ’s place among the dying gods, expressed surreptitiously by Frazer and explicitly by Robert Graves decades later, is surely a controversial subject, but the central mystery of Christianity can, with a little imagination, be placed within the wider mythopoeisis of the dying and reviving god. Surely, in a novel as unstable as Finnegans Wake, it is no great surprise to find Joyce amalgamating Christ with Finn, Finnegan, and, at last, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker. This is not to say that the primary structural principle of the Wake, that of the dying and reviving god, is wholly political in its bent. Rather, my argument is merely that Joyce’s version of the dying god confronts political matters in crucial sections of the novel.

This confrontation is most readily found in the single chapter of Book IV, which closes the novel with ALP’s soliloquy before returning us to the novel’s first page. Book IV, as Tindall notes, is “a chapter of resurrection and waking up” (306). It is also the end of night and the

“The Stars Sang in God’s Garden” both connect Christ to nature, while “1847-1891” connects the deaths of O’Connell and Parnell (and the resultant frustrations of Irish nationalism) to winter.

22 Richard Kearney and Sean Farrell Moran, both quoted in Chapter One, have claimed as much.
breaking of dawn, the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The action of the novel, while always difficult, even impossible, to place in time, seems to draw to its close at Easter. Joyce may not provide a literal Easter, since the *Wake* is no slave to calendar or clock, but the final chapter draws heavily upon Easter symbolism, culminating in ALP’s soliloquy, and her command to her husband—and all other Finnegans—to wake. John Gordon, noting the significance of Easter to the final chapter, maintains that the holy day itself “looks both backward to death and forward to birth,” making it both an end and a beginning (263). The same might be said for the more literal temporal setting of Book IV: the breaking of dawn which marks the end of the night and the beginning of the day. As McHugh argues in *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake*, “resurrection and sunrise are conceptual equivalents” (106). Such a reading fits well with pre-Christian archetypes and the symbolic (and homophonic) connection between the Son of God and the sun. And, as should be readily obvious, Easter, as the most sacred occasion on both the Christian and the Irish nationalist calendar, provides the risen Christ and the risen Ireland.

Such resonances commence at the chapter’s opening. The refrain of “Sandhyas! Sandhyas! Sandhyas!” which begins the final chapter, beyond parodying the final lines of Eliot’s “The Wasteland,” also suggests the Latin phrase “Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus” (593.1; McHugh 593). This prayer, taken from the Liturgy of the Eucharist, precedes the transubstantiation of the wine and the host into the blood and body of Christ. While performed at every mass, regardless of the date on the liturgical calendar, the ritual draws from the events of Holy Week, serving as a potent reminder of Christ’s sacrifice, death, and resurrection. Transubstantiation, itself the transformation of the banal into the transcendent, is the repetition of
Christ’s Passover seder at the Last Supper, which, as the Eucharistic Prayer states, Catholics are meant to repeat in memory of Him. The opening of the final chapter, then, links the ensuing chapter to Holy Week and, by extension, to Easter itself.

Joyce furthers this connection in the next paragraph: “Array! Surrection! Eireweeker to the wohld bludyn world. O rally, O rally, O rally! Phlenxty, O rally!” (593.2-4). Among the familiar references to Persse O’Reilly and Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker are allusions to Easter and, by extension, the Easter Rising. The exclamation of “Array! Surrection!” can be read as “Resurrection,” though Joyce’s pun grammatically separates the “re” from the “surrection”; left on its own, “surrection” means rebellion or rising. Such a reading is furthered by the word “array,” which carries martial connotations, calling to mind the sight of soldiers on the march. Joyce’s pun, then, combines rebellion with resurrection; given the timing of the Easter Rising, it seems fairly evident that the pun refers to the events of Easter Week. This is furthered by the next word, “Eirewecker,” a pun upon Humphrey Chimpden’s last name. Joyce’s spelling here can also be read as a pun on “Eire,” the Irish word for Ireland and the official name of the Republic of Ireland itself, and “Week.” “Ireland Week,” within the context of Eucharist, resurrection, and insurrection clearly refers to Easter Week, which means the Easter Rising itself.\(^\text{23}\)

While none of the Rising’s leaders expected a literal resurrection for themselves, at least not in any style beyond conventional Christian belief in life after death, the notion of resurrection colors the figurative language surrounding the Rising, which drew much of its moral authority from Christ’s paschal sacrifice. Choosing to rise at Easter, whatever the strategic pragmatism,
allowed the rebels a symbolic platform by which their rebellion, with its self-conscious efforts towards martyrdom, could be contextualized by Christ’s own martyrdom on Calvary. The Rising’s leaders may not have sought their own bodily resurrection, but they undoubtedly believed that their sacrifice would provide a spiritual reawakening for the Irish nation, reviving the nationalist ethos by re-baptizing the populace into the separatist tradition with their own blood.

Joyce treats such notions with levity rather than with solemnity. His irreverence plays against the belief in apotheosis, which renders the banal extraordinary, by rendering the extraordinary banal. The style of Joyce’s subversion is a recognizable one—the author borrows from familiar patterns, freely conflating diverse subject matter in reference to a pervasive trope, while simultaneously destabilizing the subject and its form through the deployment of metaleptic techniques. Insofar as *Finnegans Wake* “is a mighty allegory of the fall and resurrection of man,” Joyce’s novel is structured around death and resurrection, combining Christian and pre-Christian notions of sacrifice, martyrdom, fertility, regeneration, and revival (Campbell 3). Though often apolitical, this structure frequently interrogates radical nationalism’s adoption of the same patterns, offering, in the *Wake*’s final chapter, Joyce’s most concerted repudiation of 1916’s most potent ideological imperative.

For evidence, we need only recognize the prominence given to the theme of resurrection in the first few pages of Joyce’s Easter chapter. God Himself, as “a hand from the cloud…holding a chart” (593.19) appears briefly, prefacing the potential for a transcendence of death:

The eversower of the seeds of light to the cowld owld sowls that are in the domnatory of
the Defmut after the night of the carrying of the word of Nuahs and the night of Making Mehls to cuddle up in a coddlpot, Pu Nuseht, lord of risings in the yonderworld of Ntamplin, tohp triumphant, speaketh (593.20-24).

Opening with a reference to the parable of the seeds of love, the passage points to both fertility and the Paschal sacrifice of Christ. Where Frazer postulated the spilling of human blood upon the earth so that crops might grow, Joyce’s simple reference draws these speculated rituals of pre-Christian Europe into dialogue with Christ’s martyrdom. From this, we are brought to those souls in the “domnatory” of Defmut, as Joyce uses the Christian mythos in conjunction with Egyptian and Eastern deities to suggest the prospect of a coming resurrection. McHugh connects “domnatory” to the Irish Saint Domnat, the “tutelary saint of lunatics,” making this dormitory a sort of insane asylum, presided over by “Defmut,” a deaf and mute version of the Egyptian Tefnut, the goddess of rain (593). Joyce also includes Nuah, whom McHugh identifies as both Noah and Nu, an “Egyptian sky-god,” and Pu Nuseht, a combination of Pu, “a solar deity in Vedas,” and Nuseht, a playful Joycean invention (593). Phonetically, Nuseht reads “New Set,” an apparent reference to the Egyptian god Set, murderer of Osiris and enemy of the sky god Horus, Osiris’s son conceived after the murdered god had died. As the god of storms and chaos, Set represents disorder and tumult, yet Nuseht is also simply “the sun” spelled backwards, suggesting both Horus, connected in Egyptian mythology to the sun, and the prospect of a new dawn.

Any meaning one can gather from this passage is markedly unstable: while the suggested presence of solar deities (Nu, Pu, possibly Horus) and a rain goddess (Tefnut) in proximity to the sowing of seeds may entail fructification, that meaning is destabilized by the chaos and
destruction implied by Noah, whose mention necessarily entails the Flood which drowned the world, and Set, whose position as god of chaos and murderer of Osiris sets him against life and order. It is unclear if these figures bring with them fertility or destruction, if their presence suggests vegetative growth or natural disaster. Nonetheless, the passage’s oblique references to Horus and Osiris, symbols of death and resurrection (and potency after death) seem appropriate subjects for both Easter and, more importantly, the Easter Rising. While explicitly Irish material is largely missing from the passage, Joyce closes by describing this Pu Nuseht as the “lord of risings in the yonderworld of Ntamplin” (593.23-24). McHugh connects this phrase to the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, particularly its common introduction: “The overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant, saith” (593). While this is a plausible reading, since Joyce surely draws heavily upon *Book of the Dead* throughout *Finnegans Wake*, the author makes numerous significant alterations to the diction and syntax of the common introduction. Perhaps most notably, Joyce inserts the word “risings” into the Egyptian preface, a word completely foreign to the source material. Coupled with earlier suggestions of Easter, resurrections, and insurrections, the word draws the reader to consider the Easter Rising. Here, surrounded by the prospect of growth and renewal (the seeds sown under the auspices of the deities of sun and rain) the prospect of death and resurrection, the lord of risings speaks. Yet, lest we forget, the lord of risings is accompanied by Set, by chaos and disorder, by destroying

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24 For a detailed discussion of Joyce’s use of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, see John Gordon’s *Joyce’s Book of the Dark*. 
rain, and by murder and tumult, all of which occurs within the dormitories of an insane asylum. The beliefs of the rebels, the hope for spiritual resurrection, and the prospects of renewal, regeneration, and apotheosis are severely undercut by this implied insanity.

Resurrection, however, remains the fervent hope of the chapter. HCE, still dead to the world, whether in sleep or the sleep of death, shows no impulse towards revival until we approach the end, when ALP’s letter comes to a close and her final soliloquy begins. ALP, as Anna Livia Plurabelle, the river Liffey which runs through Dublin, begins to speak (“I am leafy speaking”) when a “soft morning” begins to break through the long night (619.20). As she begins, we are reminded of both the coming Easter and the dying year:

“Folty and folty all the nights have falled on to long my hair. Not a sound falling. Lispn! No wind no word. Only a leaf, just a leaf and then leaves” (619.20-22).

“Folty and folty” suggests the forty days and nights Christ spent in the desert, the foundation for Lent in the liturgical calendar, itself the season of preparation for the Resurrection on Easter. If these nights have reached their end (“all the nights have” suggests the termination of the Lenten season), we should be on the brink of Easter as ALP speaks. As such, this phrase seemingly places us at the coming of spring, though the language of the passage is characteristically ambiguous. ALP’s comment about the leaves is particularly curious: we might read it as the sudden blooming of spring, marked by the reemergence of life on the trees. We begin with a solitary leaf, which is then joined by more as the spring approaches and nature revives. However, we might also find the precise opposite: ALP says that there is “not a sound

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25 As an alternative, we may be inclined to read the allusion to Noah and the Flood as one more bent towards cleansing. Such a reading would fit well with the Easter symbolism of the passage, though the violence certainly remains.
falling,” before speaking of the leaves. Syntactically, this might indicate that the leaves, rather than sound, are falling, which places us instead in autumn or perhaps even at the approach of winter.26

Such ambiguity is only compounded by the passage’s amalgamation of English and Irish words, prompting Bernard McKenna to claim that, ALP here “articulates not one referent but many to arrive at truth” (154). As such, “the multiple puns represent a marriage of meanings, a hybrid tradition invulnerable to ‘gaps’ between sign and signifier because…they have no single, true meaning” (McKenna 154). No single meaning, perhaps, but the dual resonances of this particular sentence might be parsed without resolving the tension between them. On the one hand, we have the suggestion of nature coming to life suddenly after a long winter, blooming with vitality in the trope of resurrection and revival. On the other, we have the death of the land which accompanies the coming of winter, and the sudden descent of dead leaves. In nine words, Joyce manages to refer to both death and resurrection.

As ALP grows more impatient for the resurrection, she commands her husband to awake: “Rise up, man of the hooths, you have slept so long!” (619.25-26). Such rhetoric, calling upon the sleeping land to awake, is familiar to Irish nationalism, which frequently equates the rising of rebels with the rising of the land itself.27 HCE, as “man of the hooths,” is the man of Howth asleep, though the matter may not be that simple. Sheldon Brivic claims that the sentence

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26 Arthur T. Broes argues for the latter, asserting that this line, like so many others about leaves in *Finnegans Wake*, derives from Swift’s melancholy response to the falling of leaves at the change of the seasons, though Stephen D. Moore, in his deconstructive reading of the Gospel of Mark connects these lines to the crucifixion, putting us at Good Friday (and the coming of Easter) (132; 263).

27 See Thomas Davis’ “The West’s Asleep.”
subsequent to ALP’s command (“Or is it only so mesleems?”) suggests “ambiguity as to whether HCE is alive” and asleep or simply dead. (619.26; 89). 28 Sleep, then, may be figurative, rather than literal, making her injunction to HCE one which demands resurrection. The connection to 1916 comes later:

One chap googling the holyboy’s thingabib and this lad wetting his widdle. You were pleased as Punch, reciting war exploits and pearse orations to them jackeen gapers. But that night after, all you were wanton! Bidding me do this and that and the other (620.16-24).

The allusion here is fairly obvious: “war exploits” means the Easter Rising, while “pearse orations,” is not only another version of Perrse O’Reilly, but a reference to both Padraic Pearse and his Graveside Oration at the Funeral of the Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa. As the most famous and remarkable of Pearse’s many speeches, the Graveside Oration is also the most relevant to a chapter dominated by the prospects of resurrection and regeneration. “Life springs from death,” claimed Pearse at Rossa’s grave, “and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations” (136). More than any other speech in Pearse’s career, and perhaps in the long history of Irish nationalism, this oration spotlights the erotic nature of nationalist martyrdom. Sexual satisfaction and the reproductive urge are, in Pearse’s language, sublimated into resistance to English rule:

Our foes are strong and wise and wary, but strong wise and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the

28 Brivic argues that this sentence suggests ALP’s apprehension “that somehow her perception is responsible for his death,” and that “her recognition of his death is ‘only Muslim’ or impious illusion” (89).
young men of a former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of ‘65 and ‘67 are coming to their miraculous ripening today (137).

Such rhetoric merges theological language with both vegetative growth and the reproductive process. The sacrifices of the previous generation are miraculous manifestations of the divine, as is the ripening of that seed planted by their actions. This figurative sowing of seeds is also a familiar erotic metaphor for conception, which Pearse, conscious of the eroticism or not, uses to describe the development of the nationalist ethos. Pearse’s phrasing in the final sentence of the above—specifically “are coming”—places us, figuratively, in the spring season, when the crops have begun to bloom and await the harvest. However, the grandeur of Pearse’s rhetoric is severely undercut by the cynical way ALP refers to the war exploits. The grandeur of nationalist rhetoric fades away from memory, replaced only by imperiousness and silence: “Bidding me do this” not only expresses a vague order, but gives one phonetically, as “bi i dho husht” is Irish for “be quiet.”29 This is consistent with Pearse’s previous appearance in “Nightlessons,” when the evocation of his name, spoken as a password, prompts the response of “Well, all be dumbed” (262.8). Once again, Pearse’s presence silences, or attempts to silence, resistance to his ideology. ALP’s refusal to acquiesce to this demand—she is, after all, the Wake’s final voice—suggests that Irish resistance to Pearse’s vision continues. Joyce, by giving voice to that resistance, subverts the certainty upon which the Easter Rising depended.

This point is crucial: Joyce, like all Irish writers to confront the Rising, must confront the rebellion’s extensive influence upon the development of modern Ireland. If silence is akin to

29 This phrase appears in Ulysses, when the Citizen addresses his growling dog (12.265). Gifford notes that the phrase is “figuratively a somewhat impolite way of saying, ‘Shut up’” (328).
damnation, then some response is required. For Joyce, the Easter Rising merited neither the high seriousness of Yeats’ commemorative poems, nor the outraged polemic of O’Casey’s Dublin Trilogy. Instead, he offers a voice which refuses to acquiesce to the Rising’s demands, refusing to be silent, dismissing the Rising and the narrative of its leadership as wanton, imperious orations recited to his fellow Dubliners. ALP indicts her husband, and the rebels, in particularly harsh terms—the word “wanton” might be Joyce’s most pointed critique of the Rising, since it draws a contrast between Pearse’s idealism and the way such idealism had been put into practice. In the aftermath of the supposedly glorious Rising, HCE has slipped into maliciousness, unable to balance high-minded rhetoric with the practice of rebellion.

ALP’s frustration with her husband’s nationalist pretensions finds expression in her tone, which is irritated and impatient. She is caustic, ironic, and frustrated—adjectives seemingly out of place with the Easter imagery which infects her discourse. Her sentences are short and choppy, as if she can barely manage to catch her breath. When directly referencing some of the most sacred words in Irish nationalist discourse, ALP dismisses them as a recitation made to jackeen gapers, one which, even in its supposed grandeur, lasts only for a moment. HCE’s wantonness hints towards something “wanting” in his behavior, something lacking in both the implementation of revolution, and the way he has embodied that revolution’s legacy. Where Pearse evidently saw his speech as the living testament to the coming nation and the inevitability of the Irish Republic, ALP finds the continued recitation of these words tiresome and dull.

30 Terence Patrick Dolan, in his A Dictionary of Hiberno-English defines “jackeen” as pejorative slang for “a self-assertive Dubliner with pro-British leanings” (129). Curiously enough, the HCE we meet in Chapter One would almost certainly fit the definition of a jackeen.
A page later, ALP brings the eroticism of Pearse’s sacrifice once again to the forefront:
Draw back your glave. Hot and hairy, hugon, is your hand! Here’s where the falskin begins. Smoos as an infams. One time you told you’d been burnt in ice. And one time it was chemicalled after you taking a lifeness. Maybe that’s why you hold your hodd as if. And people thinks you missed the scaffold. Of fell design. I’ll close me eyes. So not to see. Or see only a youth in his florizel, a boy in innocence, peeling a twig, a child beside a weenywhite steed (621.24-31).

The first sentence above introduces the passage’s eroticism: as Brivic notes, “‘glave’ combines glove with Middle English glaive, ‘spear or sword,’ which suggests the male organ, as does “hot and hairy” (91). Brivic misses the possibility that, in addition to implying weaponry and phalli, the word “glave” may also imply “grave,” making this yet another command to HCE to arise, this time from the dead. If so, Joyce has mixed sexuality with violence and resurrection. This reading is furthered by the reference to the “youth in his florizel,” suggesting both the flora which blooms at Easter and Shakespeare’s Florizel, a character in A Winter’s Tale, a work which, like the Wake, ends at the dawning of spring with the prospect of miraculous resurrection from seeming death. The passage’s eroticism is rendered clearer when ALP points to “where the falskin begins”: the falskin is both the foreskin and a false skin, making it a condom. The implication, then, is that the sexuality is ultimately sterile. Like the Croppy Boy in “Circe,” HCE seeks sexual satisfaction, but his satisfaction cannot fructify. Amidst the potent suggestions of erotic revival, Joyce renders the eroticism infertile. The connection to 1916 comes into play when we consider the darker resonances of the passage.

HCE’s phallus, though smooth, seems to bear scars, having been “chemicalled after you
taking a lifeness,” an apparent allusion to some kind of killing or murder.\textsuperscript{31} This is supported by ALP’s subsequent two sentences, which draw the current conversation back to Tim Finnegan, the hod carrier who drunkenly fell from a ladder. The implication is that HCE, like Finnegan, will arise from death, though more sinister resonances remain. To miss the scaffold is both to slip on a ladder and to eschew the platform upon which common criminals and Ireland’s national heroes were executed.\textsuperscript{32} Since HCE, here accused of having taken a life, has, at least according to popular opinion, missed the scaffold, the sentence might suggest that HCE has been spared execution for his unspecified rebel activities. Only sixteen of the ninety rebels originally sentenced to death for their role in the Rising were actually executed, and among those spared were some of the movement’s most prominent leaders, including Constance Markievicz and Eamon de Valera. If HCE is supposed to be among that number, it may explain why he is at liberty to recite war exploits and pearse orations after the Rising. However, the scaffold was also the venue for more common executions, and HCE is guilty of committing some deviant act in Phoenix Park. Perhaps he has simply avoided execution for this crime, rather than for any remarkable patriotic activity. Still, within the context of violent eroticism and the implied resurrection of springtime and Easter, the connection to 1916 must be noted. Joyce’s indeterminate diction, however, makes the meaning difficult to discern. Unsure whether the subject is transcendent self-sacrifice or banal deviancy, we may well assume that both are true.

\textsuperscript{31} This may, of course, also be a reference to photography, rendering “lifeness” as “likeness.” In such a reading, the chemicals likely refer to those used in developing photographs (McHugh 621). As usual, either meaning is unstable.

\textsuperscript{32} While only Casement actually mounted the scaffold in 1916, the others having been executed by firing squad in the prison yard of Kilmainham, the word nonetheless reminds us of the deaths Irish nationalists endured in their quest for patriotic apotheosis.
Perhaps Joyce has conflated the two in the figure of HCE, the sexually deviant Irish rebel.

ALP nonetheless waits in hope, imagining the dawning of a new day, which might also be a new era. As the literal dawn begins to break across the world of the *Wake*, ALP plans a pleasant morning to spend with her still dormant husband:

The rollicky road adondering. We can sit us down on the heathery benn, me on you, in quolm unconsciounce. To scand the arising. Out of Drumleek. It was there Evora told me I had best. If I ever. When the moon of mourning is set and gone. Over Glinaduna. Lona nula. Ourselves, our souls alone (623.24-29).

Like Molly Bloom, whose memories of time spent with her husband at Howth begin with thoughts about the sunrise, ALP’s fantasies about a morning on Howth (“heathery benn” being a play on Binn Eadair, the Irish for Howth) are sparked by the rising of the sun. She and her husband, she imagines, will watch the sun rising from Howth head. Her fantasy is clearly eroticized (“me on you”), and this eroticism is contextualized by the coming of a new era, marked by the dawning of the sun. The pleasant sexuality of ALP’s desires, however, becomes curious when we consider her description of the imagined scene. For one thing, the sun is rising from the wrong direction, coming “out from Drumleek,” a reference to a townland in Monaghan to the northwest of Howth. Such contradictions preclude the notion of a literal sunrise, since ALP and HCE are, simply put, facing the wrong direction to see it.

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33 “they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head” (18.1571-73).

34 The other cities referenced here are Dublin and Glinaduna, both of which are also to the west of Howth.
Another possibility emerges if we consider the view from Howth Head, from which the couple can also look westward, towards Dublin City itself. A rising in Dublin, then, plausibly refers to the Easter Rising, an implication made even more likely by ALP’s invocation of the slogan, “Sinn Fein, Sinn Fein Amhain” (here translated into English as “ourselves, our souls alone”). As previously mentioned, Griffith’s Sinn Fein party had no immediate connection to the Easter Rising—Griffith was actually vocally opposed to it, rejecting both the methods and aims of its leaders—though popular consensus credited Sinn Fein as the Rising’s architects. ALP, perhaps drawing from this misconception, intends to witness this new era by watching the insurrection occur in Dublin. From her vantage point, at least, it is possible, since Howth offers a view of Dublin city. Indeed, what other rising could HCE and ALP watch occurring in the west? The Easter Rising offered the promise of a new era in the form of a new nation. For the moment, at least, it seems that ALP has accepted this prospect, awaiting it with great anticipation. However, as the novel’s conclusion makes clear, her expectations are misplaced.

As ALP’s soliloquy brings the novel to a close, the prospect of resurrection, of the final revival of HCE, is balanced against the ending of both ALP’s life (who, if not literally dying, is conscious that her stream is at last concluding) and the life of the book itself. As such, ALP’s words begin their concluding crescendo on the bottom of the second to last page of the novel:

“I am passing out. O bitter ending! I’ll slip away before they’re up. They’ll never see. Nor know. Nor miss me. And it’s old and old it’s sad and old it’s sad and weary I go back to you, my cold father, my cold mad father, my cold mad deary father, till the near

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35 Chrissy Osborne, in her biography of Michael Collins, describes Collins’ cousin “[watching] with horror from Howth Head as the fires spread across Dublin during that fateful week” (46). Howth was also the site of the Howth Gunrunning, by which the majority of arms used in the Easter Rising came into rebel hands.
sight of the mere size of him, the moyles and moyles of it, moananoading makes me seasilt saltsick and I rush, my only, into your arms” (627.34-36-628.1-4).

Aware that the ending is coming, ALP bemoans her impending fate. Like all rivers, she must pass out into the ocean, identified here as the cold arms of her massive father. Confronted by her inevitable end, sure that she will be forgotten, ALP quakes in fear against what is to come. Here, as we approach the novel’s ending, the assumed certainty of resurrection, of a life beyond death, ceases to offer any comfort. HCE, still dead or asleep, is no longer ALP’s primary concern. Facing her own ending, ALP is unable to assume a future beyond the present, consumed as she is with death and the nothingness which surely follows. With the novel’s conclusion so close, the prospects for resurrection, rejuvenation, rebirth, and renewal are nowhere to be found. Nor do we find the prospect of an inevitable future beyond death, the one certainty to which all are bound. ALP will, at some coming moment, be brought into the ocean, losing her identity altogether in the great expanse of the world’s sea.

This passage, so concerned with the inevitability of the end (the end of ALP, the end of the Liffey, the end of life, the end of the night, and the end of *Finnegans Wake*), leads to ALP’s sudden, and curious, exclamation: “I see them rising! Save me from those therrible prongs!” (628.4). No indication is given as to who is rising, but the suggestion of a rising occurring in sight of ALP brings us back to 1916. Given her terrified exclamation, it is difficult to imagine this the “newera’s day” hinted towards earlier in the chapter; at the least, the new era brings no comfort (623.7). ALP’s immediate reaction speaks more to horror than to hope, suggesting that the rebirth and resurrection of the Irish national spirit is not dawning on the horizon. But of what, precisely, is ALP afraid? Juxtaposed with those whom ALP sees rising, these prongs—
both terrible and treble—may well refer to the three distinct paramilitary organizations to rise in rebellion that Easter Monday: the Irish National Volunteers, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the Irish Citizen Army. While an admittedly speculative conclusion, such an interpretation is possible by virtue of the aggregated references to the Easter Rising throughout the course of Joyce’s Easter chapter and ALP’s soliloquy. This may explain ALP’s fear: the Rising was surely threatening to the general populace of Dublin, and innocent bystanders were killed alongside the rebellion’s willing participants. Moreover, as the River Liffey, ALP will necessarily be drawn into the conflict, as the British military sent a gunboat, the Helga, down the river towards city centre in an effort to quell the rebellion. If ALP is afraid, she has every reason to be.

Moreover, the word “prong” carries erotic suggestions, as it means “penis” in American slang of the early Twentieth century.\(^{36}\) The sexual implication, then, renders this rising both an act of revolution and a phallus, an appropriate context for an insurrection so invested in eroticized martyrdom.\(^{37}\) Given her evident fear of the Rising, and her call for help, ALP is not a willing participant in this Rising. The eroticized connection to the land is, at least here, not consensual. The insurrection, by this logic, becomes an act of rape, inflicting sexual violence upon the helpless Liffey. The Rising becomes something to be feared, not celebrated.

This fear, of course, contrasts with both the novel’s Eastertide setting and its apparent

\(^{36}\) Whether or not Joyce was aware of this is, of course, a matter of speculation, but this vulgar meaning was in usage by the early part of the Twentieth century. The OED entry cites Henry N. Cary’s *The Slang of Venery* (coincidentally published in 1916) as evidence.

\(^{37}\) As an alternative, this passage might also be referring to the course of the Helga, which sailed against ALP’s current; while ALP is passing eastward into the Irish Sea, the Helga sailed west towards city centre. As such, we might see this all as an elaborate metaphor for rape (the Helga entering against her will), thereby implicating the British military response as well.
hope for resurrection. The joyful solemnity of Easter is missing here; in its place we have only
the ironized longing for a genuine resurrection, one inevitably frustrated by the novel’s design.
ALP has now become a part of the ocean, a moment marked by the calling of sea gulls and the
rushing of water:

“Far calls. Coming, far! End here. Us then. Finn, again! Take. Bussofthlee,
mememormee! Till thousandsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a
loved a long the” (628.13-16).

The novel, the night, and ALP herself have ended here. It is, we are told, not the first
time for the ending (“Finn, again,” more than just the name of the book, combines the French for
end, “fin,” with the English “again”), nor will it be the last. ALP calls for us to remember her,
before at last drifting into the ocean, yet the ocean will once again return to the river. This, so far
as the Wake offers the promise of new life, is all there is; the new life will simply be a replication
of the old. The assumptions of teleology are evidently misplaced; there is inevitability, but not
towards a preordained end; rather, the only inevitability is the very lack of an end. The
presumptive conclusion of the novel has no semblance of finality. We find ourselves in the
middle of one sentence, left with the provocatively unassigned “the,” which can only be finished
if we turn our copies back to the novel’s first page. Gordon claims that “this resurrection is also
an internment, this waking a wake” (275). In other words, the return “by a commodius vicus of
recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs” means that we cannot ever reach an ending
(3.2-3). We are trapped in the Wake; to read it is to re-read it again and again. The ending marks
only another beginning, though hardly a new beginning, since everything we encounter will be
familiar.
The prospect of inevitability is severely repudiated when a novel can conclude with neither conclusion nor hope for conclusion. Instead, we must read and reread the novel in hopes of finding all that has been missed. The patterns of fall and resurrection are repeated again and again, but the final resurrection and the dawning of the new day never come. ALP never reaches the ocean; she either ends somewhere before the cusp of the waves (since her soliloquy ends mid-sentence) or she simply reverses course, returning us to the river, now running inland, rather than towards the sea. ALP herself is lost, as her first-person narration dissipates to be replaced by another voice, this one referring to the Liffey simply as the “riverrun.”

There is, then, no final resurrection. HCE never actually arises; instead returning to the fall of Finnegan. Everything plays out again, without the slightest hope of resolution. We begin where we ended, looking only towards the same story. As such, the prospects of resurrection are severely dismissed. We cannot hope to arise in any meaningful sense, since the resurrection is merely a replay of the life already lived. As consequence, the structure of the *Wake* destabilizes the longed for new era by denying its dawn. The day returns suddenly to night, as the cyclical structure of the *Wake* rejects the teleology espoused by everyone from Vico to Deasy to Pearse. Significantly, there is no genuine Rising, no meaningful Easter. Neither HCE nor Ireland rises at the end; we only return to the fall. Battles will be fought, wars will be waged, peace will be made and the whole circus will continue interminably.

This is, perhaps, where Joyce breaks most forcefully with the ideology of Easter Week. Where the rebels envisioned a distinct, inevitable end to their actions, Joyce’s imagination furnishes a series of recurrent patterns, all of which ultimately conclude only with their own continuation. Teleology of any sort fails: this applies as much to the longed for dawn of a new
Irish era and to the presumptive resurrections of HCE and the Irish nation. The very structure of *Finnegans Wake*, by rejecting all *teloi*, renders resurrection meaningless. What matter is a resurrection or a rising (or a Rising) which occurs repeatedly? It is only, as Joyce’s penchant for conflating the extraordinary and the banal suggests, an ordinary recurrence.

If apotheosis is unavailable, if sacrifice cannot yield the miraculous ripening predicted by Pearse, if nationalist eroticism is ultimately sterile, then beliefs of the Rising’s leaders slip into incoherence. The fault rests with an overtly idealistic ideology, one which seeks immortality when immortality is unavailable. The grand rhetoric of the insurrection’s primary architects, by conflating figurative language with political realities, fails. Again, we find that the fault rests with any ideology which assumes certainty in reference to uncertain notions. To bring this certainty into doubt, through the use of metalepsis, Joyce renders the teleology of the rebels’ narrative unstable. If the narrative fails, so does the justification for revolution. While Joyce is no apologist for British imperialism, he refuses to acquiesce to the authority claimed by violent nationalism. Violence produces nothing more than further violence, and rendering efforts towards transcendence fruitless.
Conclusion:

“Our National Epic”

As complex and nuanced as Joyce’s literary response to the Easter Rising may have been, his public comments on the matter were far more direct. In the aftermath of 1916, as Ireland continued its violent march towards truce, treaty, civil war, independence, and partition, Joyce expressed suspicion and antipathy towards the Modern Ireland which emerged from the ashes of the General Post Office and the prison yard of Kilmainham. According to Ellmann, Joyce “showed some grand resentment at the possibility of Irish independence on the grounds that it would change the relationship he had so carefully established between him and his country” (113-14). This resentment apparently stemmed largely from personal objections: “‘tell me,’ he said to a friend, ‘why you think I ought to wish to change the conditions that gave Ireland and me a shape and a destiny’” (Ellmann 114). As I have endeavored to show, however much Joyce himself may be a product of those conditions extant during his formative years, his later work is, in some significant part, a product of the conditions which followed. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are works which exist in the shadow of the Easter Rising, novels inconceivable apart from the context of modern Irish rebellion. However geographically removed Joyce may have been from the events of 1916, he surely felt the reverberations from the GPO, even while living in the security of neutral Switzerland. The proof, as I have endeavored to demonstrate, is in the texts. Leaving the problems of his race to the characters and scenes of his poor art, Joyce wrote two novels which, like Modern Ireland itself, exist in the shadow of the Rising.
We might well return here to Joyce’s surreptitiously stated goal for his fiction as voiced in *Ulysses*. “Our national epic has yet to be written,” thinks Stephen in “Scylla and Charybdis,” a notion he attributes to George Sigerson (9.309). As Gifford notes, Stephen has misinterpreted Sigerson’s position in “Ireland’s Influence on European Literature,” which “argues not that Ireland has never produced an epic but that Irish influences have produced” some of Europe’s most important epic works (214). In other words, Sigerson challenges Irish authors not to fill a void, but to continue a tradition “because the epic traditions of Ireland are so rich” (Gifford 214). Assuming such inaccuracy to be deliberate on Joyce’s part, we are forced to question what, precisely, he means by the phrase “national epic,” and why Joyce, unlike Sigerson, believes Ireland to be wholly without one.

Andras Ungar has argued that *Ulysses* adheres to “the epic’s traditional concern with the establishment of legitimacy” (2). By placing Joyce’s work in dialogue with literary tradition, Ungar offers a context by which to judge Joyce’s conception of the national epic. The preeminent national epic in the Western Tradition, of course, is Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a work written under the patronage of Emperor Augustus himself. Should we take that masterpiece as our primary example, we might use its most crucial themes—those of origin, history, decorum, and legitimacy—as a foundation to define the genre. Simply put, a national epic is a work which uses narrative to establish a nation’s legitimacy by exploring its people’s origins, charting its development, and celebrating those values deemed crucial to the nation’s survival and prosperity. Such a definition prioritizes thematic concerns over formal properties, expanding the genre to include works beyond the pale of traditional epic poetry. This seems to be Joyce’s aim as well;
Stephen’s musings about the national epic point towards the project of *Ulysses* itself—a novel of epic scale built, albeit flexibly, around Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Having defined the genre in reference to Virgil, we should note that Rome’s great imperial poet hardly seems an appropriate voice for a nation emerging from the gradual sunset of the British Empire. Legitimizing an empire may be ideologically incompatible with legitimizing a nation built under an empire’s thumb, yet legitimacy is always the fundamental concern of nationalist discourse. The leaders of the Rising were men of letters—educators, essayists, poets, and scholars—whose reading must have taught them the means by which nations are established in language. We find throughout their work themes markedly similar to those employed by Virgil to justify the Empire and the Julio-Claudian dynasty: the essential identity of the Irish people (origins), the authority of the separatist tradition (history), and the imperative of patriotic self-sacrifice (decorum). From these foundations, the leaders of the Easter Rising sought to establish the Irish Nation.

Should we revisit Rebecca Graff-McRae’s notion that nationalist discourse “seeks to write the nation itself,” we find a sharp distinction between Joyce’s novels and the works of rebel leaders (5).¹ Nationalist discourse aims to write the nation into existence; its rhetorical purpose is to mobilize citizens to action, to spark resistance and rebellion with the clear intention of establishing nationhood. As such, it tends towards definition, to write the limits of the desired nation and its people in contrast to the colonial center by drawing borders in language and

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¹ As noted in Chapter One, Graff-McRae’s primary subject here is the Proclamation of 1916. However, we might well argue that all nationalist discourse fits this description.
symbols, rendering it a sort of rhetorical cartography. Its concern is, in Pearse’s phrase, with what is “fixed and determined” (230).

Establishing a nation’s legitimacy demands certainty; the claim to nationhood must be absolute and inviolable, and the means taken to achieve nationhood must be morally justified beyond doubt. By assaulting those principles from which the leaders of the Rising fashioned their rebellion, Joyce rends their convictions apart. Where nationalist discourse, from Pearse’s essays to Virgil’s epic, seeks that which is defined, fixed, and determined, Joyce seeks to interrogate that definition, to destabilize this fixity and determination, using narrative to emphasize the contingency and the artifice of any such presumed certainty. In this sense, Joyce’s version of the national epic, while concerned with the usual questions of origin, history, decorum, and legitimacy, eschews the genre’s traditional celebratory ethos, providing questions in place of answers. It is the sort of epic necessary for a nation emerging from the auspices of imperialism and the ravages of rebellion; a literature which recognizes the scars wrought by colonialism and nationalism, interrogating both while endorsing neither. In place of a teleological narrative, it employs metalepsis, a technique which, by calling attention to the work’s artifice, calls attention to the work’s progress.

Metalepsis, as the primary means by which Joyce addresses political concerns in Ulysses, might plausibly be termed the primary narrative technique of the Joycean national epic. The development of the modern nation after the dissolution of the modern empire requires such a technique to account for the trauma wrought by both imperialism and nationalism. As the outposts of European empires demanded liberation, often in bloody fashion, the political and
moral conundrums forged in this crucible demanded a new literary approach, one which could account for nuance and possibility in the face of imperialist and nationalist platitudes. The painful process by which a colony becomes a nation, evident across the globe, refutes the simplicity inherent to teleological grand narratives. We might well call this process *Work-in-Progress*, borrowing not only the working title of what would become *Finnegans Wake*, but Joyce’s sense that the emerging nation is always an unfinished product. Where nationalism assumes a definitive ending, the Joycean national epic does not. In structural, rhetorical, and ontological terms, the written nation remains unstable, as open to possibility as are the novels themselves. This openness, possible through metalepsis, is the defining characteristic of Joyce’s version of the national epic.

This project has, out of necessity, taken a narrow approach to a much wider subject. Focusing upon Ireland, Joyce, and 1916 has allowed for a concerted investigation of the relationship between violent nationalism and the postcolonial novel in microcosm. The complexities of both Joyce’s fiction and Irish nationalism demand such a concerted focus; applying a wider scope in so concise a space would risk oversimplification and distortion. Still, this project has admittedly provided only an incomplete look at complex matters which merit further consideration in both Irish and global contexts. A fuller study of the political implications of metalepsis in Irish literature after Joyce might shed new light upon the relationship between imperialism, nationalism, and the continued development of a national literature. Tracing politically-minded metalepsis in Irish literature, of course, only begs the question of how such techniques function in other cultural and geographical contexts. Since Joyce’s style would shape stylistic innovations across the globe, we should consider the way that
metalepsis has been employed by Joyce’s far-flung disciples, particularly those writing from postcolonial states. Tracing their experiments in reference to political circumstances could yield a definition of the “national epic” more complete than any available to a strictly Joycean, strictly Irish study. As the empires of the world dissolved, often in bloody fashion, the literature of former colonies would seek its own voice to speak for the new nation. Some of these writers would face that same dilemma which Stephen voices in *Ulysses*: the sense that their national epic has yet to be written. A more concerted study of the postcolonial national epic—those works written against the background of crumbling empire and emergent nationalism, imbued with Joycean metalepsis—could surely prove profitable.

This may well be Joyce’s greatest contribution to global literature: the sense that the emerging nation demands a new kind of work to account for the traumatic, bloody birth of the modern state. To engage with the problems of the modern, postcolonial nation is to recognize the scars wrought by both nationalism and imperialism. While the circumstances by which this new type of epic emerged are unique to every nation of the postcolonial era, the roots of this fiction are traceable to 1916, to those first shots fired from the General Post Office, to the moment when Padraic Pearse publicly pledged his life and the lives of his comrades to the cause of Ireland’s freedom and its “exaltation among the nations,” and to the moment when James Joyce, far away in Zurich, set out to address the problems of his race with his elastic art.
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