

**“Ireland sober is Ireland free”: the confluence of nationalism and alcohol in the traumatic, repetitive, and ritualistic response to the famine in James Joyce’s *Ulysses***

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And sure it is yet a most beautiful and sweet country as any is under heaven, seamed throughout with many goodly rivers replenished with all sorts of fish most abundantly, sprinkled with many very sweet islands and goodly lakes like little inland seas, that will carry even ships upon their waters, adorned with goodly woods fit for building of houses and ships so commodiously, as that if some princes in the world had them, they would soon hope to be lords of all the seas, and ere long of all the world also full of very good ports and havens opening upon England and Scotland, as inviting us to come into them... (Spenser, *A View of The Present State of Ireland*, 1633)

*“The day that brings us Freedom’s reign.  
And on that day may Erin well  
Pledge in the cup she lifts to Joy  
One grief – the memory of Parnell.”*  
(“The Death of Parnell” from “Ivy Day in the Committee Room”)

Joyce deftly weaves the fabric of Irish life in *Ulysses*. One can easily picture his characters walking down the most obscure of streets and encountering the most immediate of acquaintances. The lyrical nature of Irish conversation provides the linguistic backdrop for the various challenges of language that Joyce embarks upon throughout the novel. From remembering the dead to requesting a pint amongst friends, a mimetic portrait of Dublin is created through the text. Perhaps the most stereotypical of activities in the Irish social fabric is drinking, which both produces and reproduces a nationalist rhetoric. The scene of a dark pub filled with men scorned by the English inevitably becomes filled with political rhetoric and rebel cries. The confluence of drinking and nationalist fervor occurs in the “Cyclops” episode of *Ulysses*; those imbricated discourses enact a stranglehold on the Irish populace. This drinking is social and not necessarily abusive, a fact noted in Joyce’s breezy language in the “Hades” episode, “Expect we’ll pull up here on the way back to drink his health. Pass round the consolation. Elixir of life”.<sup>1</sup> This particular description embodies many of the elements within this stereotype. In that carriage, the Irish men view alcohol as the natural outlet for mourning and death; Bloom, however, stands far outside the society where, in the

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<sup>1</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Gabler (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) 6.429-431.

original Irish, *usquebeagh* is in fact the “waters of life”, or “elixir of life”. That space of death and misery in the larger historical context is, arguably, the source of a drinking culture.

During the famine years, the cultural and natural landscape of Ireland was ravaged; the previous years of health and prosperity were erased. An almost irrecuperable portion of the population was lost and Ireland was fated for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to be akin to a developing country. *Ulysses*, famously set on June 16, 1904, captures a discourse of Ireland that is interwoven with nationalism, masculinity, and alcohol, a paradigm that is defined by the famine. The famine is mainly to blame for the swirling series of events that devastated the population:

Motives went deeper than a desire not to ‘transfer’ famine from Ireland to England. Moralistic politicians and British public opinion believed that Ireland was teeming with resources that required only entrepreneurship and industry to be released...The horrific consequences of such rigid thinking were either ignored or blamed on the Irish.<sup>2</sup>

Those who survived the famine and chose not to emigrate were left behind in insurmountable poverty, a desolated countryside, and the possibility that their land would be taken away and their family evicted, “Between 1849 and 1854 nearly 50,000 families were permanently evicted from their homes.”<sup>3</sup> Ireland relied almost exclusively on the potato as its cash crop and, because of that exceptional dependence, it became identified with Ireland. The potato became a defining element of Ireland and also the catalyst for innumerable emotions, whether politically, societally, or familially driven. Because of that pervasive presence in Irish life

[t]he potato, to put it briefly, became an icon of the autochthonous body for certain late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century writers...It was

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Gray, *The Irish Famine*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1995) 67.

<sup>3</sup> Gray, 68.

precisely by being only food that the potato became symbolically resonant.<sup>4</sup>

As an “autochthonous body”, the potato became viewed as organically Irish, even though it was not native to the island. It was one of the only crops that could grow in the rocky soil and, for an extended period of time, it allowed many peasants the relative freedom of self-sufficiency. Living on the potato is not an unhealthy practice: it allowed for large families and resilient farmers, “In the late eighteenth century Arthur Young had described them as more ‘cheerful’, robust, and athletic on their diet of potatoes, butter, and milk than their English counterparts who subsisted largely on bread.”<sup>5</sup> The Irish population grew and family life maintained a steady balance during the years before the famine, a balance that would not be thrown off if the father left the home to drink the family’s profits away. Yet despite this prosperity and the general health of the population, a culture living and thriving off of the potato seemed stereotypically barbarian and simian, especially to the English. Their staple was bread, also a starch but one that required cultivation, harvesting, and baking. The potato, however, needed only to be dug out of the ground and could be eaten raw - and many times was.

Despite relative prosperity before the famine began, there was still a fair amount of poverty in the countryside and other activities were introduced in order to achieve some economic stability:

Indeed, the growing popularity of tobacco and whiskey among the poor may point to their increasing use as substitutes for the milk, butter, eggs, and pork which small farmers and laborers could no longer afford to consume at home. Other means of earning cash also emerged. Many small farmers distilled grain into poitin (whiskey) for local markets – a

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, “The Potato in the Materialist Imagination”, in *Practicing New Historicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200) 111- 112.

<sup>5</sup> Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 53.

potentially profitable activity, but both illegal and conducive to 'intoxication and intemperate habits.'<sup>6</sup>

Though this personal gain was not widespread, it led to later behavior that eventually ruined families already ravaged by the effects of famine and starvation. In the eyes of the English, life in Ireland was seen as savage and unruly; the peasants were considered completely ignorant. The collective peasantry (encompassing tenant farmers, itinerant workers, and small landowners) was viewed en masse and societal distinctions were of no importance. Even though their living conditions were abysmal because of their poverty, their drinking became a stereotypical crutch by which the English and any other individuals with a penchant for anthropology used to blame the Irish for their insolence and stupidity. Ironically, this *poitin* was distilled from grain, an English staple, and not potatoes. The British "civilized" grain was thus being used for unruly pursuits, while the "savage" potato resided tenuously between generative and fatal for Irish life. The loss of the potato, however, was a direct cause of the return to the unruly behavior that Ireland faced before Father Matthew introduced temperance in the years preceding the peak of the famine:

Before the crisis the Irish poor had been remarkable for their abhorrence of the workhouse and their adherence to Father Matthew's temperance pledge: however, the Famine destroyed the peasantry's resistance to the former and fidelity to the latter, and by 1848 Richard Webb could lament, 'The good old custom of being drunk on the way home from fair and market is reviving...During my stay in Connaught I saw more whiskey punch made and swallowed than I had seen...for the last twenty years.'<sup>7</sup>

Alcoholism was pervasive; moreover it served as a liberating agent for the masses; Paul Lin cites Thomas Davis, an early nineteenth century Irish nationalist and a principle

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, 290.

member of the Young Ireland movement, in “Standing the Empire” where he speaks of the Irish peasant:

During his intoxication he had flung off his chains, and his duties too. He lost sight of his own miseries and the comfort of his wife and children also...Still the very greatness of his suffering was his excuse – his national excuse for making it greater, in order to achieve liberty and luxury for an hour by the magic of intoxication.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, as Miller deftly notes, alcoholism was conceived as part of the Irish character, not a result of their economic situation, and thus, their behavior was inexcusable:

Ironically, having created or at least allowed such squalid conditions, many upper- and middle-class contemporaries concluded they were due solely to the laziness and indifference of the poor themselves. Certainly, apathy both reinforced and resulted from poverty, malnutrition, and disease, but the really destitute could do little to improve their material condition. The cultivation of their potato patches took less than three months each year, and paid employment was increasingly infrequent. In these circumstances it was understandable that the Irish poor passed much time drinking poitin, loitering at fairs, and fighting.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, in this Irish colonial space, drinking was a result of poverty, poverty a result of the famine, and the multitudinous deaths in wake of the famine a symptom of English indifference and oppression pressed upon an uneducated and agrarian society; the cry for a free and independent Ireland grew louder. The demand for Home Rule or the Free State relied on this progression and, seemingly, the alcohol that fueled it.

Yet the importance of the famine is inevitably tied to the potato as a signifier in a greater cultural narrative in which representation supercedes fact and thus Irish antipathy to the British reaction to the famine greatly overshadows reality. *Ulysses* implements the Citizen in this cultural narrative where he represents a greater populace that is driven by and mournful of the famine but without answers to the problems that the blight presents;

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<sup>8</sup>Thomas Davis, article of unknown title in *Nation*, 1843, as cited by, Paul Lin, *Standing the Empire: Drinking Masculinity, and Modernity in “Counterparts”*, *European Joyce Studies* 2001, 53.

<sup>9</sup> Miller, 53.

ironically, he is not ridiculous when discussing the famine, he is often correct in his musings. John Mitchell, an Anglo-Irish nationalist who championed Catholic Ireland, was one of the most vehement believers in English apathy and his sentiments supported the Irish in unrelenting disgust for the British:

The English, indeed, call that famine a 'dispensation of Providence' and ascribe it entirely to the blight of the potatoes. But potatoes failed in like manner all over Europe; yet there was no famine save in Ireland. The British account of the matter, then, is first, a fraud – second, a blasphemy. The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the famine.<sup>10</sup>

Because of that hatred for the English and their lack of response to the overwhelming social trauma in the wake of the famine, the Irish turned to alcohol as an assuaging force in their wholly disrupted lives. Those dark years of invasion and colonization were the source of great frustration and pain for many nationalists, a word whose grammatical plurality reflects the multiplicity of opinion in Ireland and extends to another plural word, nationalisms. The British indifference that allowed the vast portion of the Irish people to die at the hands of starvation and related illnesses proved to be the catalyst for further liberation causes. There had always been negative sentiment against the British as colonizers, especially considering the disparate theological and moralistic natures of Catholicism and Protestantism. The enormous death toll that resulted from the famine was inexcusable in the eyes of many and the only response to it violence and political upheaval.

Although there is a logical series of historical events leading to the pervasiveness of alcohol consumption, the progression is better understood through trauma theory and subsequently, the concept of social memory. *Ulysses* is not a novel solely concerned with

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<sup>10</sup> John Mitchell, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)*, 1860, as cited by Gray, 178.

alcohol or nationalism but those two concerns weighed heavily on the collective Irish political conscious. Joyce uses the template of Dublin, 1904, as the background for the text and although Dublin did not face the same destruction as the western counties, its population was not unaffected by the famine. A greater question is why so many of these men are sitting in a pub during the middle of a day, with seemingly little else to do but drain free drinks while anxiously awaiting the next pint. An easy interpretation is that the men began leaving the home to avoid the utter desolation of their families and land; the public house was their only outlet for fleeting happiness, an emotion that drink can easily provide. Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, cites such events like famine as a locale of the directly traumatic event, a period that leads to wide-scale depression and an entirely changed society. Her apt definition is as follows:

trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena<sup>11</sup>

The “intrusive phenomena” in this case is drinking, which is often abusive and detrimental not only to the individual, but to the collective Irish consciousness; thus in Irish culture alcohol becomes the vehicle of traumatic memory and its “uncontrolled repetitive occurrence” a disruptive and disabling agent. Appropriately, “-History, Stephen states, is a nightmare from which I am trying awake”(2.377), and Caruth seemingly mirrors his thoughts, “the traumatized carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history they cannot entirely possess.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Paul Connerton in *How Societies Remember*, when a society cannot possess

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<sup>11</sup> Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) 5, as quoted in Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 38.

<sup>12</sup> Edkins, 39.



its own history because of said trauma, their social memory and their conception of the present is entirely altered: “Concerning social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order.”<sup>13</sup> The “present social order” in question is the consumption of alcohol in that space of social memory, and as Connerton notes, the presence of alcohol becomes legitimated. With that legitimacy, a present social order becomes a cultural rite, and

[r]ites have the capacity to give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them. All rites are repetitive, and repetition automatically implies continuity with the past.<sup>14</sup>

The Irish do not legitimately possess their own history and thus their social memory is inherently flawed. Their rites are vacuous and illegitimate, acting as a surrogate for the memory of those lost and the culture lost along with them, and the passing of such rituals across generations assures a flawed society, one without a full grasp of its social order since its past is damaged.<sup>15</sup> The Irish do have social memory, despite its impairments, because the pitfalls of alcohol and nationalism follow the model that Connerton outlines:

The different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation....If there is such a thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit, and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatism. In this way I shall seek to show that there is an inertia in social structures that is not adequately explained by any of the current orthodoxies of what a social structure is.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 3.

<sup>14</sup> Connerton, 45.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that many of those who died and emigrated came from the western counties of Ireland where they spoke their native tongue. A small portion of literature still exists from the Irish-speaking western counties. Yet the importance lies in the silencing of their memory and language, thereby leaving the population unable to possess their history.

<sup>16</sup> Connerton, 3-5.

Every facet of drinking follows this pattern, which is best defined as inertia; there is no stopping its uniform and unimpeded pull on Irish life. The traumatic condition of life after the famine cannot exist without social rites that become so habitual that they distinctly define the social structure of the country; these rites mark a traumatic rupture and help the populace simultaneously remember and forget the pain, symptomatic of repression. Thus men can enter a pub in the middle of the day without consequence and speak boldly, without criticism; their entire social structure is unsound, especially considering that generational succession was interrupted by the famine through death and emigration.<sup>17</sup> The daring speech in the pub is starkly contrasted to the general Irish silence concerning traumatic events. Only through ritual drinking can that pain be confronted, discussed, and (nearly accurately) blamed on the English.

In a most reductive sense, Joyce fits this profile of the traumatized individual; his family was not native to Dublin but moved there from Cork in 1874 or 1875, thereby placing him in the famine's grasp.<sup>18</sup> His life, no matter how hard he tried to avert it, follows a stereotypical Irish profile. Richard Ellmann, in his comprehensive biography of Joyce, notes in the introduction:

It is not easy, either, to enter into his life with the abandon of comradeship. 'A man of small virtue, inclined to alcoholism,' he described himself to a doctor, and to Louis Gillet, the French Academician who wished to exalt him, he said, 'Don't make a hero out of me. I'm only a simple middle-class man.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "From the summer of 1845 through the early 1850s, every harvest of potatoes – practically the only food for most of the island's inhabitants – failed totally or partially, resulting in perhaps a million deaths and precipitating the exodus of another 1.8 million people to North America"(Miller, 280).

<sup>18</sup> Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959) 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ellmann, 5.

Yet his self-proclaimed hero and near double, Stephen Dedalus, cannot get far enough away from Ireland, Catholicism, and family. Inevitably, Joyce is a product of his father, John, a character in his own right:

This reckless, talented man, convinced that he was the victim of circumstances, never at a loss for a retort, fearfully sentimental and acid by turns, drinking, spending, talking, singing, became identified in his son James's mind with something like the life-force itself.<sup>20</sup>

John Joyce's direct literary equivalent is obviously Simon Dedalus, but his influence goes beyond Stephen's father. Touches of John reside in Leopold Bloom and Joyce's own life, a life never substantially separated from his writing. The conversation in Barney Kiernan's Public House is thus parodic but also, in that vein, realistic.

Joyce avoided alcohol for the majority of his younger years but began drinking after his mother's death, a series of events almost too psychologically neat:

Under Gogarty's able tutelage, which he decided not to refuse, Joyce began to drink heavily. At first, to assert a fancied resemblance between himself and the buoyant Elizabethans, he called for sack. The news of his 'fall' got round... Gradually he shifted from sack to Guinness's unpretentious and less expensive stout, 'the wine of the country.' His capacity for alcohol was small, and he was prone to drunken collapses.<sup>21</sup>

As his drinking progressed, Joyce let it become a driving force in his life. He found himself repeating his father's spendthrift ways and, in the full throws of masculine apprehension, "The thought of being the sole support of a woman and child drove him to new bouts of drinking".<sup>22</sup> This behavior mimics the drinking that followed the famine's most deadly years; Joyce found himself caught in the Irish curse that afflicted many of his friends, relatives, and countrymen.

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<sup>20</sup> Ellmann, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Ellmann, 137.

<sup>22</sup> Ellmann, 219.

Alcoholism was never outwardly to blame, however, because there were always the recent misdeeds of the English and reminiscences of past glory to occupy the general Irish consciousness. Perhaps a mixture of these negative influences was the basis for intellectual flight, a symptom that Joyce sees as a direct cause of the stalled Irish recovery:

if Ireland has been able to give all this practical talent to the service of others, its means that there must be something inimical, unpropitious, and despotic in its own present conditions, since her sons cannot give their efforts to their own native land.<sup>23</sup>

That unidentifiable element of Irish life that was detrimental and caused the most talented members of its population to leave or render themselves useless can be repeatedly identified as the overwhelming presence of alcohol, a presence exacerbated by trauma and the confines of social memory that were forever altered after the famine.<sup>24</sup> The squalor and stifling aspects of life that drove so many of its talented minds away seems to have never left them; Joyce went as far as Trieste, only to continue drinking and piling up debt. And even though he frequently noted its effect on his race, there was never a complete confrontation of its disarming force on the populace.

Despite its pull on his life, Joyce was fully aware of the dangers of the drink: “He never drank before sundown.”<sup>25</sup> Once sundown occurred, however, few doubted Joyce’s commitment to light conversation and revelry. The midday crowd at Barney Keirnan’s Public House is thus not strange to Joyce. Though he never imbibed during the afternoon, he knew many men who did and knew thereby the intensely negative effects

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<sup>23</sup> Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, eds. *The Critical Writing of James Joyce*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1959) 172.

<sup>24</sup> Two such notorious alcoholics were Brendan Behan and Flann O’Brien, whose lives were cut significantly short because of alcoholism

<sup>25</sup> J.B. Lyons, *The Drinking Days of Joyce and Lowry*. The Malcolm Lowry Review 1992, pp.112-121.

drinking had on their lives; this ritualized drinking appears earlier in his literary career in “Ivy Day at the Committee Room”, a short story which melds politicking and drinking. In a similar fashion, men sit in a home during midday, avoiding the rain and cold outside. They had been canvassing neighborhoods for votes, but eventually wait anxiously for a boy from the closest pub to deliver their booze. The commemorative action of drinking acts as a surrogate for their pervasive pain and disconnect from their history. The men fill their vacuous lives with alcohol, an agent that has desensitized them to the point where they see no ill in corrupting a young boy, going to the lengths of offering him a drink for his trouble:

The boy came back with the corkscrew. The old man opened three bottles and was handing back the corkscrew when Mr Henchy said to the boy:  
-Would you like a drink boy?  
-If you please, sir, said the boy.  
-The old man opened another bottle grudgingly, and handed it to the boy.  
-What age are you? he asked.  
-Seventeen, said the boy.  
As the old man said nothing further the boy took the bottle, said: *Here's my best respects, sir.* To Mr Henchy, drank the contents, put the bottle back on the table and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. Then he took up the corkscrew and went out of the door sideways, muttering some form of salutation.<sup>26</sup>

This depressed scene of men whose national fervor dissipates into drunken self-pity, and where a later scene of conflict is resolved through the recitation of a song about Parnell (a verse of which precedes this essay) echoes the empty nature of their conversation, conviction, and repetitive ritual drinking. This short story leads to *Ulysses*, a longer text that confronts this issue again.

Throughout the “Hades” episode the men intimate that Dignam wasted much of his life drinking:

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<sup>26</sup> James Joyce, *Dubliners*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1976) 129.

-How did he lose it? Ned Lambert asked. Liquor, what?  
-Many a good man's fault, Mr Dedalus said with a sigh(6.572-573).

Of all the drinking scenes in Joyce, however, the "Cyclops" episode in *Ulysses* is the most telling and referential to the famine because of the centrality of the argument about nationalism that abounds. Though deeply parodic, the scene in Barney Kiernan's pub speaks frankly about the Irish condition, the constant presence of alcohol, and its assuaging qualities on a colonized race. The episode is set in a pub where the discussion intensifies with every drink, and where Bloom is the "rank outsider" in any Irish space. For every round bought Bloom sits unresponsive and the Citizen's anger swells. It is an ugly scene because it exploits the racist undertones of the nationalist discourse of that time, a discourse that Joyce views as a dividing factor in the quest for freedom. Repeatedly, the ordering of drinks and their consumption, both elements of a normative Irish social gesture, disrupts the hyperbolized literary narrative.

The center of this parody is the utter uselessness of these characters. They fill the pub in the middle of the day and cadge free drinks from men who are, at best, acquaintances. All of the talk in the world, albeit talk fueled by whiskey and stout as in "Ivy Day at the Committee Room", is futile without action. The Citizen's calls for outlawing English games and reviving the Irish language are ironized because he cannot foresee these issues solving any problems. These men are caricatures of masculinity, individuals who only become cruel when drunk. Joyce answers his question about the failure of Irish intellect and talent in a very simple statement in the middle of this episode, "Ireland sober is Ireland free"(12.692).<sup>27</sup> This statement comes amidst a

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<sup>27</sup> Also worth noting is the refiguring of this quote in *Finnegans Wake*, "Ireland sober is Ireland stiff"(1.7).

satirical rant about the Citizen by a narrator that, from the Greek model, apparently is the meanest man in Dublin:

So then the citizen begins talking about the Irish language and the corporation meeting and all to that and the shoneens that can't speak their own language and Joe chipping in because he stuck someone for a quid and Bloom putting in his old goo with his twopenny stump that he cadged off of Joe and talking about the Gaelic league and the antitreating league and drink, the curse of Ireland. Antitreating is about the size of it. Gob, he'd let you pour all manner of drink down his throat till the Lord would call him before you'd ever see the froth of his pint(12.679-686).

As the day wanes on the sixteenth of June so does the sobriety of the Dublin populace.

In an overt nod to the *Odyssey*, the center of this chapter is a man with one eye, an individual who simultaneously manipulates the prevailing British stereotypes while engaging them in an unabated monologue. He is seen in a variety of ways. He could conceivably be a caricature of Michael Cusack, the founder of the Gaelic League and a strong promoter of the renaissance of the Irish language.<sup>28</sup> He is also an exaggeration of the Irish barbarian, the simian peasant that dominated British popular thought.<sup>29</sup> Enda Duffy postulates that he may be Joyce's version of a terrorist, a harbinger of the violence to come, "The citizen is the Irish terrorist in *Ulysses*, and certainly 'Cyclops' is the episode of the book that confronts Irish nationalist terrorism".<sup>30</sup> The most credible theory comes from Duffy, as well, who sees Bloom and the Citizen as polarized paradigms. Bloom stands on one end of the spectrum as "the would-be Victorian gentleman",<sup>31</sup> and the Citizen is aptly described as a synthesis of the aforementioned

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<sup>28</sup> Victor Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 51.

<sup>29</sup> L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971)

<sup>30</sup> Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 109.

<sup>31</sup> Duffy, 98.

qualities: “The citizen is the culmination of every degraded stereotype of Irish savagery. He is a lazy insolent drunkard, yet a great talker”.<sup>32</sup>

Joyce was most certainly an Irish nationalist but not in the exaggerated vein of the Citizen. But neither is Bloom the correct outlet for Joyce. Aside from some of the support shown for Sinn Fein from the “rank outsider”, these men are quite different. Bloom must be the face of temperance in the pub to show the great disparity between him and the men he must socialize with daily. The Citizen will never accept Bloom, even if Bloom stands him a drink and indulges in their incendiary dialogue:

Elizabeth Malcolm observes, ‘Throughout most of the nineteenth century Irish nationalism and the temperance movement were at odds’...Malcolm continues, ‘Temperance began as, and for long remained, the exclusive preserve of middle-class, pro-British protestants, who used it to better their own position while at the same time denigrating the customs and habits of their catholic social inferiors’<sup>33</sup>

Even though there was merit to temperance, its tenure was short and just as many things were equated with the famine, so did temperance become associated with the British Protestants who were viewed as the aggressors against the lowly peasants; thus the Citizen’s dislike for the Jewish Bloom is ironically heightened by his association with Protestantism. Bloom is thereby doubly foreign; he is a stranger in Catholic Ireland as a temperance-abiding Protestant and further alienated in that culture as a Jew.

That racist discourse, however, does not begin without the stylized manner of buying a drink, a communicative moment where the Irish gift of language is evident. The movement towards the pub follows from initial paragraphs introducing our new narrator, a debt collector who is feared on the streets of Dublin:

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<sup>32</sup> Duffy, 112.

<sup>33</sup>Elizabeth Malcom, “Temperance and Irish Nationalism”, in *Ireland under the Union: Varieties of Tension: Essays in Honour of T.W. Moody*, ed. F.S. L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 112, as cited by Lin, 36.



-Are you a strict t.t.? says Joe.  
 -Not taking anything between drinks, says I.  
 -What about paying our respects to our friend? Says Joe.  
 -Who? says I. Sure, he's out in John of God's off his head, poor man.  
 -Drinking his own stuff? says Joe.  
 -Ay, says I. Whiskey and water on the brain.  
 -Come around to Barney Kiernan's, says Joe. I want to see the citizen(12.52-57).<sup>34</sup>

This casual discourse continues in the pub, where there is a playful manner that the men exude when buying each other drinks. The narrator and Joe did not attend Paddy Dignam's funeral but still associate drinking as a memorial tribute; this act displays both their alcoholism and the commemoration of the dead through the social ritual of drinking.<sup>35</sup> In that anticipatory moment, little else matters to the men. Their insults and nationalism disappear during this moment of exchange. They become easy and free, void of any hatred or fiery language that may have preceded the offer. The first exchange follows a quick jab from the Citizen upon their entrance, "What's your opinion of the times?"(12.133) But after a curt response, the prospect of a drink curtails any new comment:

-Arrah, give over your bloody coddling, Joe, says I. I've a thirst on me I wouldn't sell for half a crown.  
 -Give it a name, citizen, says Joe.  
 -Wine of the country, says he.  
 -What's yours? says Joe.  
 -Ditto MacAnaspey, says I.  
 -Three pints, Terry, says Joe. And how's the old heart, citizen? says he(12.141-147).

The phrase "Wine of the country" is symptomatic of the colloquial descriptions of drinking and a phrase used by Joyce once he began drinking. Thus there is constant

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<sup>34</sup> Within the above quotation, Joe mocks the temperance movement by using "t.t.", asking the narrator if he is a teetotaler.

<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that Irish wakes are notoriously drowned in alcohol. The festive atmosphere in these spaces connotes the ease with which death is confronted; it is considered the final and ultimate goal for humanity in Catholic doctrine.

language that describes alcohol as organically Irish, **similar to the autochthonous qualities of the potato**. The suggestive nature of the English translation of the Irish word *usquebeagh* as the “waters of life” is also telling; it not only embodies the aforementioned qualities of alcohol, and whiskey in particular, as representative of the Irish landscape but also as a thriving part of daily life. Such a colloquial translation from an ancient language reveals the engrained role of alcohol in the Irish quotidian. These men need only a tangential suggestion to enter the pub where there are endless excuses for their imbibing, a model which is amplified considering these men enter the pub knowing the Citizen is present and that they can embark on nationalist discussion that is emboldened by their intoxication.

After the first drink is ordered, Joyce specifically locates the parodic character of the Citizen by describing him as, “The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested ...redhaired freelyfreckled...hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero”(12.151-155). He is now the stereotypical Irish peasant but a romanticized version: the Citizen would never want to think of himself as simian and base. The narration goes on these long, fantastical stretches where his imagination wanders and we are transplanted into the Ireland that these men yearn for; these meanderings are characterized by the taxonomies and the constant influx of Irish words, a ploy that only exaggerates the vast distance between an authentic Irish culture in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the present. The futility of the Irish language as it leaves the Citizen’s tongue is obvious but starkly contrasted with Joyce’s unadulterated grasp of the language (he never learned Irish but rather chose to use certain words and its grammatical elements in English).

From the previous locating description of the Citizen as a savage, the narrator describes the talismans that adorn the Citizen's girdle, "Brian of Kincora, the ardrí Malachi, Art MacMurragh, Shane O'Neill...the Man for Galway, The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo, The Man in the Gap, the Woman Who Didn't"(12.180-200). The Citizen is not a singularly faceted man with one set of characteristics. Thus Joyce legitimates this parodic character by engaging in the Irish linguistic act of listing or taxonomy. This linguistic nod - which can be traced to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and thereby Joyce's ideal of a "true" Ireland, a country untouched by foreign invaders and the English language - helps sustain the parody by giving some weight to the Citizen's bombasts. The consistent drinking, however, interrupts these moments of hyperbolic gigantism typical of 12<sup>th</sup> century Irish literature; thus as the parody escalates, it collapses and returns to the debasing scene of the pub.

A frequent topic of discussion at Barney Kiernan's is the inevitable purchase of drinks. If these men had their druthers society would have no such convention as money, especially when it came to alcohol, but someone must pay eventually. In a typically male fashion, Joe decides to use his income for drink, a decision too often made in Ireland after the famine. An honest man would save his earnings and provide for his family; Joyce displays the vulgarity of this scene by showing the joy that it evokes from the men:

So anyhow Terry brought the three pints Joe was standing and begob the sight nearly left my eyes when I saw him land out a quid. O, as true as I'm telling you. A goodlooking sovereign.  
-And there's more where that came from, says he.  
-Were you robbing the poorbox, Joe? says I.  
-Sweat of my brow, says Joe. 'Twas the prudent member gave me the wheeze.  
-I saw him before I met you, says I, sloping around by Pill lane and Greek street with his cod's eye counting up all the guts of the fish(12.206-214).

These idle men experience no guilt in spending their money, which is presumably scarce considering they have the time to enter a pub on a weekday during the afternoon, suggestive of their unemployment. This moment is also telling because it embodies the notions of masculinity in the pub space; when a man enters a pub he buys drinks for his friends and joins in the act of drinking. As Joe mentions “the prudent” member one is immediately reminded of the hero in the narrative, Leopold Bloom and his association with temperance and the subsequent connection with pro-British Protestants: he may be in the pub and there may not be an overt reason to dislike him, but his behavior immediately reminds the men why they should detest him.

Before Bloom enters the pub the men encounter what should be a seemingly offensive scene, in that the utterly wasted Bob Doran is passed out on the table next to them. Yet his drunkenness is barely noticed, “And who was sitting up there in the corner that I hadn’t seen snoring drunk blind to the world only Bob Doran”(12.250-251). Alf Bergan, meanwhile, enters the pub and begins a discussion about Paddy Dignam but not without Joyce grandiosely describing the style in which Alf is met with upon entering their conversation, “Then did you chivalrous Terence, hand forth, as to the manner born, that nectarous beverage and you offered the crystal cup to him that thirsted, the soul of chivalry, in beauty akin to the immortals”(12.287-289). There is a noticeable difference in these voices; it is difficult to imagine the narrator, a feared debt collector, speaking in such lyrical language. Yet this quick shift in voice, a constant ploy by Joyce in this episode, is not unsettling but acts as a locating tool. The rhetoric of the romantic, legendary Ireland typical of Spenser is initially unsettling coming from this narrator, but it is not outrageous to hear his imagination working in such a complex and layered

manner. The unnamed narrator would not bestow such honors on Bergan if he did not, “but gave therefore with gracious gesture a testoon of costliest bronze”(12.291-292). He can now participate in their dialogue; the next visitor will not receive the accolades of his peers.

The linguistic ebullience that Alf Bergan provokes upon entering the pub is an honor only bestowed on an Irishman, not a Jew like Bloom. The Citizen sits and stews as he sees Bloom standing outside; his mere movement is enough to anger the men in the pub:

-There he is again, says the citizen, staring out.

-Who? says I.

-Bloom, says he. He’s on point duty up and down there for the last ten minutes.

And, begob, I saw his physog do a peep in and then slidder off again(12.377-381).

That nearly innocuous moment cannot compare to the wrath that Bloom is about to endure. The anger does not begin in earnest, however, until Bloom refuses to drink with the men, despite the offer of a free drink: “So they started arguing about the point, Bloom saying he wouldn’t and he couldn’t and excuse him no offence and all to that and then he said well he’d just take a cigar”(12.436-438). From this moment forward, there is no chance of acceptance or respect for Bloom. The reality of this scene, a scene that Bloom knows all too well from living in Dublin for his entire life, is that without drinking with these men and without not buying them a drink in turn, he is opening himself to endless ridicule:

As Rosenzweig explains, the social custom of ‘standing’ – that is, treating – ‘Provided the nineteenth century Irishman with a crucial means of

declaring his solidarity and equality with his kin and neighbors'; to refuse a drink was tantamount to insult.<sup>36</sup>

It is enough that Bloom is a Jew, an easy target in a country struggling to find an identity, and where this identity is defined as "Irish Ireland", i.e. a "pure" Irish race for the man who rules this particular space, the Citizen, a Catholic, working-class man drunk in the middle of the day.

The conversational banter propels this episode; once Bloom enters the scene it is obvious that he is not only foreign in his religion and heritage but also linguistically. The narrator speaks with the standard Irish lilt and constantly uses the colloquial "begob" and "says I". As the drinks - notably free drinks - take effect for the Citizen, he warms up to a discussion of nationalism, "So of course the citizen was 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"(12.479-481). Yet in this charged atmosphere Bloom does not hesitate to enter into the discussion despite his predetermined role in the pub:

Joyce's Bloom, by contrast, is in the unenviable position of being unable to choose (or even to wish) to become Irish, since he was born in Ireland and already *is* Irish; yet he is, nonetheless, unceasingly typed as a foreigner always belonging somewhere else, essentialized within another static, reified 'natural' state (Jewish heritage) that he didn't choose either.<sup>37</sup>

With the alcohol flowing and the inevitable topic of nationalism near at hand, his "otherness" is a constant reminder of these men's conception of oppression; Bloom is an easy target for a group of defeated men who rarely feel empowered and whose resentment towards their own humiliation seems to mimetically produce the very

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<sup>36</sup> Roy Rosenzweig, "The Rise of the Saloon," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) 147, as cited by Lin, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Cheng, 197.

behavior they resent. In the wake of the explicitly Irish traumatic event of the famine and in the presumably safe, male space of the pub, these men want anything but to speak to a Jew, even an Irish Jew, who they perceive to never truly understand their plight.

Interestingly, these men are not physically violent unless directly prompted or in a large group. D.P. Moran, another possible model for the Citizen, intelligently noted in 1899:

On all sides one sees only too much evidence that the people are secretly content to be a conquered race, though they have not the honesty to admit it... There is nothing masculine in the character; and when the men do fall into line with green banners and shout themselves hoarse, it is not rather a feminine screech, a delirious burst of defiance on a background of sluggishness and despair.<sup>38</sup>

For these men, and especially the Citizen, there is no practical force to their language.

Bloom may enter into this dialogue because he does not fear for his physical safety; to underestimate the Irish hold on language, however, is a dangerous assumption.

As the following passage suggests, the Citizen and his band deftly utilize their “pyrronhism” or as Hugh Kenner translates it, the Irish art of the put-down; a linguistic act that proves to be equally as terroristic in social and political terms.<sup>39</sup> The widening distance between Bloom and the rest of the men in the pub is caused by a conflation of topics - his refusal to drink, in turn to buy drinks, his Judaism and inherent role outside of the Irish dialectic – as their nationalism and their drinking become one. Inexorably, this text is ruled by language and the way in which the Irish manipulate it to establish some sort of power in their lives. Kenner sees this power disparity:

It proceeds, this habit of Barney Kiernan’s customers, from a coherent philosophical position, nowhere articulated because skepticism cannot acknowledge its dogmas: *that when statement can have no substance they can have only style*. The style, moreover, is the man. To destroy the one

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<sup>38</sup> D.P. Moran, 1905 as cited in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, “An Essentially Feminine Race”, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988) 49.

<sup>39</sup> Duffy, 112.

is the way to destroy the other. So you do not argue with people, as though there were any meaning to proving them 'wrong' (Bloom never seems more ridiculous than when he argues). You may hold a rhetorical contest, but that is Indian Wrestling and not the same thing as an argument. To make a really effective political point you blow something up, it scarcely matters what so long as it exists in some symbolic association with the object of your critique.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, because of the drinking and the atmosphere of the pub, there is little chance this discussion will deviate from nationalism except to disparage Bloom as foreign and unwelcome on their island. Moreover, Bloom's use of language will no doubt be their main tool of argument, "That can be explained by science, says Bloom. It's only a natural phenomenon, don't you see, because on account of the..."(12.464-465) The narrator will not allow this sentence to be finished; he does not see the merit in allowing Bloom a complete thought. A few lines later, the narrator utilizes Kenner's "art of the put-down" in his comment by disparaging the usual description of Molly Bloom as desirable, "And Bloom, of course, with his knockmedown cigar putting on swank with his lardy face. Phenomenon! The fat heap he married is a nice old phenomenon with a back on her like a ballalley"(12.501-504). Bloom is a constant reminder of temperance, which deeply angers the men because they cannot conceive giving up drink. Bloom's hubris in arguing that it could save their island and lead to freedom is an outlandish claim. Victor Cheng sums this moment up perfectly, "At this point, while Bloom is trying to argue the need (so well illustrated in this episode itself) for more temperance in an Ireland held hostage...the Citizen brings up instead the issue of the Irish language."<sup>41</sup> Whenever there is a threat to any conception of Irish heritage or social institution like drinking, nationalism eventually resurfaces in order to change the subject. Yet the futility

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<sup>40</sup> Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 55.

<sup>41</sup> Cheng, 204.



that underlies that process is exactly what Joyce is writing about; all this time in the pub is time wasted. Bloom is, at his core, a good man with good intentions. He has the foresight to note the problems that drinking causes, especially among this race, and he even devotes time and effort in helping the Dignam family, despite the suggestion that Paddy's drinking was partly responsible for his death. Two of the men in the bar do not even know the man is dead, let alone will they interrupt their drinking to ensure the family's economic welfare. Unless Bloom joins in their idleness, however, his Jewishness will only serve to further separate him from what it is to be authentically Irish and be utilized by others as an easy rhetorical tool for his debasement.

Throughout the episode the men offer Bloom drinks which he repeatedly declines. The difference in their choice of language is starkly contrasted. The speech associated with drinking is casual yet ritualized and every word that Bloom utters after refusing offends the men more:

-Could you make a hole in another point?

-Could a swim duck? says I.

-Same again, Terry, says Joe. Are you sure you won't have anything in the way of liquid refreshment? Says he.

-Thank you, no, says Bloom. As a matter of fact I just wanted to meet Martin Cunningham, don't you see, about this insurance of poor Dignam's. Martin asked me to go to the house. You see, he, Dignam, I mean, didn't serve any notice of the assignment on the company at the time and nominally under the act of the mortgagee can't recover on the policy.

-Holy Wars, says Joe, laughing, that's a good one if old Shylock is landed. So the wife comes out top dog (12.756-766).

The disparagement of his character continues, even to the point of involving his wife and emasculating him by suggesting his children are not his own.<sup>42</sup> This insult far exceeds any attack on his faith or Bloom's figuring as a Shylock, Shakespeare's famous

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<sup>42</sup> Typical of chronic male fear, an emotion that resounds in Joyce's own doubt concerning Nora Joyce's fidelity.

moneylender. Interestingly, the Citizen sits, never offering to pay for a drink and our narrator notes it, “Gob, he’s not as green as he’s cabbagelooking. Arising around from one pub to another, leaving it to your own honour”(12.752-753), yet his anger ends there. The narrator allows Joe and the Citizen to drive the conversation; as the crowd gets drunker, the conversational tone gets nastier and the insults more malicious.

Xenophobia is constantly present in the pub, albeit in subtleties, for no one attacks Bloom too harshly and never without his due response. But that is the beauty of the “pyrrhonism” that Kenner outlines; the Irish never seem to have an original argument: they merely alter someone else’s views or recall the dead and their failed history.<sup>43</sup> It is an easy rhetorical method, especially in the midst of a crowd, and the Citizen is reified in this parody. Joyce simultaneously mocks his behavior but notes how it is often accepted and promulgated in Ireland; Cheng notes this condition in *Joyce, Race, and Empire*:

Thus, from the start of ‘Cyclops’, Joyce illustrates how the Citizen’s prototypically macho qualities of physical strength and retributive violence get sentimentalized and idealized into national legendry, the very stuff Joyce is parodying in the episode.<sup>44</sup>

Alcohol is a true social lubricant in this episode because it not only provides the men with a ritual, an act that can sentimentally but erroneously connect them to the horrors of the past, but which also fuels their rants and provides some sort of rationalization for displacement of their pain through drinking. Arguably, there is no rationalization for this displacement of pain. They are underemployed men who waste time in pubs in the middle of the day discussing the same things their fathers did before them. Yet the act of drinking is heroicized and labeled Irish; and despite the thoughts of the narrator, who

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<sup>43</sup> Pyrrhic, in the sense of imitating warfare through the act of dance, or in the Irish sense, through the act of language and eventual victory.

<sup>44</sup> Cheng, 198.

often disagrees with and insults the Citizen, the other men allow him to perorate because it is perceived as decidedly male behavior and, conceivably, for the greater good of their country.

There are small lapses in the drinking where the narrative is filled with the ramblings of the debt collector, but the drinking pace is continuous. As these men talk, they drink and only wait till someone decides to buy another round, an inevitable event in this pub:

And lo, there entered one of the clan of the O'Molloy's, a comely hero of white face yet withal somewhat ruddy, his majesty's counsel learned in the law, and with the prince and heir of the noble line of Lambert.

-Hello, Ned.

-Hello, Alf.

-Hello, Jack.

-Hello, Joe.

-God save you, says the citizen.

-Save you kindly, says J.J. What'll it be, Ned?

-Half one, says Ned.

-So J.J. ordered the drinks (12.1011-1018).

This repetition of entrances seems exaggerated but it is the social reality of this chapter, which makes a greater comment on Ireland. The forced disruption of the drinking is meant to interrupt the narrative and clearly notes the abusive nature of alcohol. Yet the only question these men can come up with is, "Where are our twenty millions of Irish should be here today instead of four, our lost tribes?"(12.1240-1241) The answer to this question cannot be found in Barney Kiernan's Public House on the afternoon of June 16<sup>th</sup>.

The trauma that Caruth outlines is theoretically unavoidable considering the impact of a famine like the one that Ireland faced in the mid-nineteenth century. The populace's reaction, however, is false and negative. Drinking and reminiscence do not

solve any political, social, or economic issues. They merely intensify those same issues, not only in realistic terms but also in the fantastical ideals of nationalism. The “Cyclops” episode is a perfect embodiment of this condition. The men, aside from abstainers like Bloom, are the human results of that famine and their futile nationalism is wasted.

The Citizen’s metaphoric crutches in the Irish language and the heroic deeds of the dead are a common subject of discussion; even though the episode is a multi-leveled parody there is a strange synthesis of that parody and Joyce’s own conception of nationalism. In a reductive sense, Joyce attacks the prevailing precepts of nationalism that abounded before the Easter Uprising of 1916. When the Citizen speaks about the Gaelic League and the proliferation of the Irish language, one can imagine Joyce cringing at the thought; Emer Nolan describes this process adeptly:

What is perhaps unusual is the wealth of Hiberno-English expressions and idioms and the profusion of Anglicised Gaelic words. In this we can recognize a culture which bears the evidence of the efforts of language revivalism, its inadequate result being the few token words of Irish on everyone’s lips.<sup>45</sup>

When the Citizen drops these phrases, he feels empowered, without actual action or basis for that emotion; the men in the pub accept those utterances as displays of nationalism, “*Sinn Fein!* says the citizen. *Sinn fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us”(12.523-524).<sup>46</sup> Yet the invocation of Sinn Fein is a calculated maneuver for Joyce because he then can make the connection between Bloom’s Jewishness, “O, commend me to an Israelite! Royal and privileged Hungarian robbery”(12.778-779), and the fact that Arthur Griffith lifted a sizable portion of Sinn

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<sup>45</sup> Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism*, (New York: Routledge, 1995) 110.

<sup>46</sup> Notably, Sinn Fein translates as “ourselves alone”; but the Irish are not alone.

Fein's principles from the Hungarian liberation movement, a statement revealed by the narrator after he visits the men's room:

So anyhow when I got back they were at it dingdong, John Wyse saying 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 of the government and appointing consuls all over the world to walk about selling Irish industries (12.1573-1577).

Nolan notes this moment as important because it involves the unemployment issue; the employed and useful men who enter the pub side with Bloom and agree, "that political progress might be made in Ireland if England's guilt were internationally recognized through peaceful actions and campaigns,"<sup>47</sup> the tenets of constitutional and economic nationalism as opposed to violent revolutionary action. In this discourse, sobriety and responsibility become joined with the peaceful and thoughtful veins of Irish nationalism, whereas unemployment and drunken idleness promulgate racism and violence.

Joyce's nationalism is difficult to define, as is his relationship with alcohol. Some portion of this novel is a very literal and autobiographic discussion of Joyce's life; one needs only to read Ellmann's tome to realize this fact. In this episode, as with many others, there are obvious biographical narrative intrusions. He is not overtly the unnamed narrator in this episode but there are moments where we see Joyce's nationalism emerge, one that is founded in the mode of an Emmet or a Parnell, two men who recur frequently in Joyce. These two men are a paradigm of nationalism for Joyce, yet he will not allow Parnell to enter this episode. Mr. Power and Hynes, men of another generation and contemporaries of Simon Dedalus, comment in the "Hades" episode:

They turned to the right, following their slow thoughts. With awe Mr. Power's blank voice spoke:

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<sup>47</sup> Nolan, 101.

-Some say he is not in that grave at all. That the coffin was filled with stone. That one day he will come again.

Hynes shook his head.

-Parnell will never come again, he said. He's there, all that was mortal of him. Peace to his ashes<sup>48</sup>

Joyce mirrors these sentiments; he wrote an essay in 1914 entitled "The Shade of Parnell"

and in it he lavishes many of the same compliments upon and nostalgia for Parnell that

the Citizen bestows on his revered contemporaries in the Gaelic League:

The extraordinary personality of a leader who, without forensic gifts or any original political talent, forced the greatest English politicians to carry out his orders; and, like another Moses, led a turbulent and unstable people from the house of shame to the verge of the Promised Land.<sup>49</sup>

This passage displays Joyce's ambivalence – his sympathy for a romanticized nationalism yet and ability to realize its limitations. Jewish imagery enters the simile at the end of this quotation and locates Bloom in Joyce's later work. But the crux of these sentiments is the forceful and unequivocal nature of Parnell. He was all substance and little "blarney". The men surrounding the Citizen, however, are blowhards who have no foresight.

Joyce sets this novel in 1904, twelve years prior to the Uprising and almost twenty years before he finishes the work. In a novel filled with odes to the *Odyssey* there is a chilling comparison between this lag in history, and the omission of such a seminal moment in Irish history, with the exile of Odysseus. Although Bloom is the admitted hero of this epic, there are deviations from the original text and here is such a juncture. Odysseus fools the Cyclops and saves his men without revealing his identity, yet some powerful force, hubris, causes him to brag and boast as he sails away. Polyphemus calls out to his father:

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<sup>48</sup> Joyce, 6.921-927.

<sup>49</sup> Mason and Ellmann, 225.

Hear me, Poseidon, blue-maned Earth-Holder,  
If you are the father you claim to be.  
Grant that Odysseus, son of Laertes,  
May never reach his home on Ithaca.  
But if he is fated to see his family again,  
And return to his home and own native land,  
May he come late, having lost all companions,  
In another's ship, and find trouble at home.<sup>50</sup>

Joyce sees the same type of hubris in the men who fill this pub in the middle of the afternoon. Their worthless drinking and banter does nothing for a national identity or for the greater good of their country, a cause they are supposedly dedicated to. Even though the drinking represented in this episode and throughout the novel can be traced to the painful years of the famine, it cannot be justified by that trauma; hence the parodic nature of this episode. Joyce realized the impact of drinking on his life, as well as nationalism, but that does not imply he elucidated their relationship in his life.

There is no accepted stance on Irish history. Although the trauma of the famine justifies the vociferous opinions of the Citizen, and some of his nationalist ideals are realistic, the lack of a common ground doomed Ireland. There were countless splinter groups within the Irish Republican Army, for example, and even within the Gaelic League; thereby even the most resolute organizations witnessed their ranks separate because of differing opinions. There are only a few constants in Irish life, seemingly, alcohol, fiery nationalism, and the Catholic Church. Other than those three “pillars”, nothing is guaranteed. Joyce never fully accepted the means and ends of the Easter Uprising; even Yeats's father could not see the real merit in the Uprising and any of its results; the English were again a facilitator in the undoing of Ireland:

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<sup>50</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, Trans. Stanley Lombardo, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000) 9.522-529.

Hugh Kenner, for example, opens his account of the episode with a quotation from the father of W.B. Yeats, who wrote that the English should never have executed the leaders of the 1916 Rebellion, because had they not been transformed into martyrs: 'Ireland would have pitied and loved and smiled at these men, knowing them to be mad fools. In the end they would have come to see that fools are the worst criminals.'<sup>51</sup>

Joyce's champion, Parnell, fully fits that idealization of the grave, an important facet of Irish political life, abetted by the theological; often death is valued more than life, a worthy goal being death without sin or at least minimal reconciliation with God.

The only possibility or hope for the progress of Irish society, as Bloom suggests, seems to lie in temperance. The Church has and will always remain a dominant force in Ireland; drinking, however, can be eradicated. But the trauma that the Irish experienced seared their ancestors and their own lives. There is no history without these pitfalls, no way to recall fondly, absolutely. Alcohol eases these tensions, giving a "conquered race" a way out, a way to imagine life without such pervasive pain. One is left disenchanted because of the lack of resolution. Bloom leaves the pub as hated a personage as ever and the Citizen continues to oversee the conversation. Hence a futile scene like this one could conceivably repeat itself for countless years and sadly, and it seems as if it has.

Yet the ending of the chapter is unclear whether the pervasive xenophobia wins out or the figuring of Bloom as Elijah, the prophet, survives. Prior to those final lines, xenophobia seems to conquer all other ideologies. Bloom makes a definitive statement against the racist and violent undertones of his companions:

-But it's no use, says he. Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's the very opposite of that that is really life.  
-What? says Alf.

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<sup>51</sup> Nolan, 104.



-Love, says Bloom. I mean the opposite of hatred. I must go now, just round to the court a moment to see if Martin is there. If he comes just say I'll be back in a second. Just a moment.  
Who's hindering you? And off he pops like greased lightning.  
-A new apostle to the gentiles, says the citizen. Universal love.  
-Well, says John Wyse. Isn't that what we're told. Love your neighbour (12.1481-1490).

Bloom's theory, a Christian response to the current state of Ireland, is quickly shoved aside and belittled, in spite of its accuracy. These men should see the validity of his point, but Bloom's Jewishness again becomes an easy fault, "-That chap? says the citizen. Beggar my neighbor is his motto. Love, moya! He's a nice pattern of a Romeo and Juliet".<sup>52</sup> For a moment Bloom's thoughtful response seems plausible, but the Citizen resorts to "pyrronhism" and another, safe Hiberno-Irish phrase to further his insult.

Love has a chance to survive this vicious scene but parody and debasement swiftly overpowers its late introduction. The narrator also mocks Bloom's sentimentality, "And this person loves that other person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody"(12.1500-1501). This discussion of love, a universal emotion and the repeatedly mentioned "The word known to all men"(15.4191-4192), could be the ending theme of the midday session but the tone instead turns to violence. Again Bloom's Jewishness stands as an ever-present insult to the drunken men and eventually he must be escorted out of the pub, with the Citizen exclaiming, "-Where is he till I murder him?"(12.1847) In this chaos the narrative continues in his outrageous voice, occasionally returning to reality only to end with the image of Bloom as Elijah, disappearing into the distance:

And there came a voice out of heaven, calling: *Elijah! Elijah!* And He answered with a main cry: *Abba! Adonai!* And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the

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<sup>52</sup> Joyce, 12.1491-1492.

brightness at an angle of fortyfive degrees over Donohoe's in Little Green street like a shot off a shovel (12.1914-1918).

The passage starts with an accurately biblical tone but dissipates into the colloquial banter we encounter throughout the chapter. The narrative even gives us the scientific classification of “an angle of fortyfive degrees”, a further topography of Dublin “over Donohoe's in Little Green street”, and the final idiomatic simile “like a shot off a shovel”. Thus the transcendental collapses into topography and, through the profane, Bloom is figured as a prophet of nothing. It is difficult to definitively state what survives this chapter in light of this rapid shift in the final lines.

Joyce does not end this episode neatly. It is, essentially, a small part of a long, complicated day. Joyce confronts Irish nationalism but does not answer any of the political questions that plague its population; he also portrays a traumatized society that compensates with empty, ritualistic drinking. Thus there is no definitive statement on Irish politics or the abusive drinking that stifles the country's collective growth. There is, though, a strange sort of hope produced by the aforementioned discussion of love. Despite the unanswerable nature of Irish nationalism and the deeply engrained drinking culture, the parody, within the confines of that parody, gives the reader a sense of St. Augustine's ideal of a love, his notion of “caritas”. Bloom presents this unadulterated form of love, an ideal that closely resembles Augustine's pure emotions before his soul fought within itself later in life. The narrator's refiguring of Bloom's statements is a parody but still promulgates the untainted nature of Augustine's love, “Not yet did I love, though I loved to love, seeking what I might love, loving to love”.<sup>53</sup> These unfeeling men do not thoroughly live the Christian ideals of love; at this point their drunkenness

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<sup>53</sup> Gillian Clark, *Augustine, Confessions*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 12.

has rendered them useless in the discussion. Similarly, Bloom exits the episode, though in parodic form, as Elijah, a courageous Jew who ascends into heaven to join the Lord. This parody continually sustains while it debases and these two examples span that spectrum.

The episode cannot answer Ireland's numerous political issues nor neatly explain the traumatic event of the famine; it can however, locate Bloom within a Jewish consciousness that acknowledges his courage and fortitude. The text can also laugh at itself, when that same Jewish man explains the Christian ideal of love better than the men who supposedly practice the faith. Possibly though love, courage, and an informed and retrospective view on country and nationalism, these men could live for and assist Ireland in its revival. Bloom cannot succeed because of his Jewishness but he can be a non-traditional ideal of Ireland, Christian love, and masculinity, a non-answer in a complicated text and a fitting hero for Joyce. The Irish race is not "pure" and has not been so for centuries; nothing can erase their complicated history, with its repeated colonization, the trauma of the famine, and the societal response to that trauma via repetitive, ritualistic drinking. Bloom can, nonetheless, be a purveyor of "caritas" but unfortunately, his opinions fall on deaf, drunken ears.

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