

Anne Fogarty and Fran O'Rourke (eds)
Voices on Joyce
(Dublin: University College Dublin Press)

If – as Joyce portended – Dublin could be recreated utterly and exclusively from the pages of *Ulysses* alone, *Voices on Joyce* tells us why. One gleans from the book jacket alone that this is no easy feat of scholarship – a shadowy juxtaposition of two Joyce images adorns it. In the foreground is a profile of Joyce looking into the distance while a man (also Joyce) with his eyes lowered and forehead creased lurks in the background; Zürich, photographed along with him, looks on through reddish emboss and blur. One approaches this volume as if through these coalescent images of Joyce – at once silhouetted and translucent; at once troubled by that which lies ahead and that which remains shrouded in the present moment. The plurality of voices surrounding the enigma that is Joyce and his oeuvre are meticulously assembled here. As if set for a judicial hearing, the articles which grace this collection conduct themselves as jurors whose voices are not just brought into chorus to be heard, but also to individually resonate in the halls of history known as Joyce scholarship.

Owing to its humble congeries of essays, edited by the eminent Anne Fogarty and by Fran O'Rourke (both of University College Dublin), the volume embarks on a historical journey through the Dublin of *Ulysses* and of 1904. Plentifully bestrewn throughout are Elizabeth “Lee” Miller’s 1946 photographs of Dublin taken for *Vogue*. These photos conserve much of Joyce’s Dublin and are not just images, but compositions that bear intense historical significance;

memories which are “at once redolent, elusive and distant” (Fogarty 8). One notes, for instance, that the chapter by playwright Frank McGuinness begins with a picture of the interior of Barney Kiernan’s pub. Overhead, hangs a sign which reads “Guinness is Good for You” under which patrons toast and converse to their pints of, what seems clearly to be, Guinness. As a result, the images align themselves to the topic of each chapter, each one chosen to tell a story or provoke a Joycean Dublin memory.

We hear the hubbub of the Jewish quarter as Cormac Ó Gráda maps the relations between real Jews in 1904 Dublin and fictional Jews mentioned in *Ulysses*. He takes special care to establish historical connections between Leopold Bloom’s Jewish context in *Ulysses* and 1904 Dublin’s recorded Jewish inhabitants. His research aims to capture the “vibrancy of the Jewish community at the time” (16). Even though he claims that the genealogical trace turned out, at best, to be a bunch of “wild goose chases,” Ó Gráda’s case is convincing: Bloom is invariably disqualified from most of Dublin/Irish Jewry (16). He stands out like a sore thumb. Despite the numerous reasons for his social abjection that researchers have hitherto illustrated, Ó Gráda emphasizes the impossibility of Bloom’s Jewishness: his “pleasant old times” (*U* 4.210) in Jewish homes would mean that he would not have understood any language other than Yiddish.

What better way to celebrate Bloom’s insignificance than celebrate Bloomsyear? Real dates of events in 1904 Dublin, notes historian Michael Laffan, are lost to the reader of *Ulysses*. Socially, the standard of living was bleak at this time and a large majority of women were employed as maidservants (26). At centre stage, he asserts, is land ownership and Irish nationalism. He emphasizes the circumstances that made 1904, claiming that by the time *Ulysses* was published in February 1922, “Bloomsday and Bloomsyear, the Dublin and the Ireland of 1904, belonged to a vanished world” (35). In a

manner akin to lyrical existentialism, *Ulysses* steers clear of the political occurrences that beset Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, ironically, the undercurrents of nationalism and unionism are nowhere more apparent than in “Cyclops,” where the Citizen and his cronies deride Bloom for his ethnicity. Bloom, as Joyce already noted, may be compared to the Irish national heroes Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone and Charles Stewart Parnell, who are no more Irish than he is.

Adding to Joyce’s metronomic flitter between history and fiction is Anne Fogarty’s incisive look at “collective and individual acts of memory” with regards to Joyce’s writings on Parnell (38). The memory of the dead lingers on “in the symbol of the unrealized statue that seems a stony blank rather than a fixed and readily decipherable site of memory” in “Hades” (38). Joyce, as Fogarty affirms, identified himself with Parnell as an “outcast” in order to satirize Ireland’s political and social mores (38). A mythic rather than an historic Parnell plagues much Irish history, and for Joyce, his various identifications of this figure in his fictions are one such form of deification. For Joyce, Parnell was not just the “destructiveness of the past, the lack of the present and the revolutionary regenerative energies of Joyce’s art” but “a form of memory with a future” (49).

Unlike Clive Hart and Ian Gunn’s topographical guide to the *Ulysses* of Dublin, Joseph Brady’s offering focuses on the class differences prevalent in 1904 Dublin, and in this light gives not only a tangible account of shops and services but also of demography. To know the profiles of people who shopped at the resplendent boutiques and ran the economy of Dublin is to acknowledge the ever-widening socioeconomic disparity. Brady also finds that certain connecting streets like South Great George’s street were populated with stores that rarely advertised their products and instead listed their royal patrons (83). According to an advertising guide, “Grafton Street was the most prestigious shopping area at the start of the twentieth

century” (80) and it continues to retain its old architectural glamour today (95). Traversing 1904 Dublin, one unravels its dark secrets whilst well-dressed bourgeoisie trot by in taxis.

In perhaps the most provocative read in this collection, Justice of the Supreme Court of Ireland Adrian Hardiman supplies hard facts on crimes alongside legal terminology that no well-meaning sleuth can resist. Hardiman’s article, short of being a Whodunit itself, presents a Sherlockian account of unnatural deaths in *Ulysses*. The cases Joyce fictionalized are modeled closely on reported ones, most of them without conclusive resolutions and grey areas. A “trial by law” is “a formal attempt to establish the truth of past events” and this, Hardiman says, coincides with the “unreliability of the daughters of memory” which Stephen ponders in “Nestor” (53). Hardiman references a useful court and police statement made on the 1899 Childs murder case, adding a renewed air of speculation not even the papers of the day could have sustained. Legal history chances upon fiction, and readers are reminded that “cases are not, of course, won on fine speeches alone” (61). Despite Joyce’s contempt for co-counsel T.M. Healy KC, MP, in the acquittal of Samuel Childs, he credited barrister Bushe on the “advocate’s verve, eloquence and presentation in resolving the clash of rival narratives” (61). Such hawkish attention to detail and the revered skill of rhetoric are also noticeable in Stephen Dedalus in “Scylla and Charybdis.” The author ends with the caveat that his legal treatments are “a caution against over-interpreting evidence in such a way as to reach rash or false conclusions” (63). This extends to us readers who have to reach back into history and transact varying narratives before drawing conclusions.

Other important and equally illuminating essays by individuals of diverse backgrounds abound: Journalist Terence Killeen reviews photographer Lee Miller’s journey to Dublin and her relationship to Man Ray as well as to modernism and *Ulysses*; Richard Kearney answers the difficult “what is God?” question Deasy poses in “Nestor”

by extricating the epiphanies of Aquinas and Duns Scotus and juggling the composite of *whatness* and *thisness* that is the alloy of Joyce's epiphany (*U* 2.383); Joseph Long's argument that "Joyce's choice of exile" was "a way of choosing himself" extends to his choice of models in Dante, Virgil, and Homer (202); Donal McCartney and James Pribek scrutinize Joyce's University College Dublin and schooling albeit with different trajectories. Despite Joyce's poor performance at university, McCartney adroitly maintains that "the Jesuits and their college had indulged what Fr Browne understood to be his 'weird' sort of talent" and aided his growth (75). Also deserving of special mention are Fran O'Rourke's exceptional discussion of Joyce and Aristotle, Fritz Senn's witty exposition of etymological relatives in Ovid and Joyce, and Conal Hooper's spirited explication on sport in *Ulysses*.

As a whole, while the essays investigate Dublin through Joyce's oeuvre, they benefit from an absence of pressure to stick to any one strict theoretical hypothesis. The collection makes for easy reading, jolting the reader at necessary points with references to Joyce's texts that most may have already encountered. Divided into four disparate sections, one pays sole attention to historical narratives and another to Dublin; the other two are intertextual ventures and contemporary Joyce. These sections also map different spots of time through which Joyce has grown up as a literary figure. All in all, the themes are well-paced, celebrating the diversity of Joyce's readers and the universality of Joyce's works. History features here as an important tool for reading Joyce as it colours in the circumstances that gave rise to his works. Dates and places either displace characters or root them at a point in time. They also investigate the author's imagination, and how external events influenced his characters and critics. Just like every nightmare that should be contended with head-on, the historians and philosophers of *Voices on Joyce* are just those heroes. As theoretical readers project inwards, self-reflexively following Joyce's characters

and texts, historians start by extending outwards. They read the pavements and the streets; smell the river and the air, on this nightmarish day of Dublin past.

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