

**JAMES JOYCE AND THE GAELIC TRADITION
OF IRELAND**

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Do mo Mháthair

Mo Bhuíochas (My Thanks)

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For it has been one of the blessings of my life to have "sat at the feet" of many excellent teachers. It would be an act of gross impertinence on my part to try to rate them; but, as well as the eminent scholars named above, I can cite the names of Professor Ann Matonis, Professor Brendan Kennelly, Senator David Norris and An t-uiséal Domhnall Ó Lubhlaí. And, I can never forget the joy I felt when, at Coláiste Éinde, Gaillimh, Father Gregory Raftery introduced my fledgling intellect to the pleasures of literature.

My thanks must also go to the *mná tí* (women of the house) who welcomed me and helped me integrate into the community of Connemara. The late Cáit Bean Mhic an Iomaire of Casla (*go dtuga Dia suaimhneas síorraí di*) and Bríd Bean Welby of Ros Caoide come to mind immediately. Bríd's late husband, Cólín Welby, together with his good friend and neighbor, the late Cólín Nell Óg, *go ndéana Dia grásta orthu*, also helped me appreciate the lore and the language of the area; and now, his daughter, Nora Welby, is the most generous of godmothers to my daughter Elise.

As for the Dublin lore, much thanks must go to my uncle, the late Liam Pollard; and also to his ever-generous wife Nancy, who often cooked dinner for the pair of us after we had stopped for "a drop o' the craythur" after work--appropriately enough at the Brazen Head Hotel in Dublin. My thanks too to all Liam's family for granting me the privilege of singing one of his favorite bawdy street ballads ("The Monto") at his wake by means of an amplified telephone. Liam, *ar dheis Dé go raibh t'anam uasal* (May your noble soul be at God's right hand).

I must also express my gratitude to many who offered me help and hospitality. In particular, I would like to thank Jeanne K. Gibbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as well as Gearoid Denvir of Indreabhán, Co. Galway who made me feel so welcome. And a huge "thank you" must go to Yves André, who, together with his wonderful wife and family, has been extending open arms of welcome to me for some twenty years now.

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Apologia pro opere sua

This work first saw the light of day as a doctoral dissertation presented at Temple University, Philadelphia in 1991 (*James Joyce: An Artist in the Cultural Tradition of Ireland*). My principle mentor was Professor Morton P. Levitt and my other mentors were Professors Thomas Kinsella, Daniel T. O'Hara and Robert F. Storey. My debt to these excellent scholars and teachers is expressed on the appropriate page.

However, I have since become woefully out of touch with Joyce studies, having pursued other career objectives. Much excellent work has been published in the intervening years. (I think, in particular, of the splendid work done by Séamus Deane and Vincent Cheng.) Consequently, if any of the ideas expressed in this work have been independently written up and/or demolished by other scholars, I respectfully request the reader to grant me the benefit of their gracious tolerance. I quite frankly do not have the time to read and integrate the mass of material published since 1991. Therefore, I beg to be excused the task.

In 1991, James Joyce was still looked on with suspicion by the Irish (with some worthy exceptions such as Senator David Norris). Now, however, Joyce has been awarded the highest accolade available in Ireland: he has become a cornerstone, albeit a minor cornerstone, of the Irish Tourist Industry. If history was once the nightmare that haunted Stephen Dedalus, Ireland's past has now been tacitly revised and gently repackaged to allow us to kowtow to our new masters: Corporate Capitalism and the sacrosanct Irish Tourist Industry. Even Kilmainham Jail has been cleansed of its iniquities. Cúchulainn, the Heroic Age warrior, so dear to both Patrick Pearse and W.B. Yeats, once had his

statue placed in the centre of the G.P.O. (General Post Office) in O'Connell Street, Dublin, to commemorate the men and women who fought and died there during the 1916 Rising. Now, his statue stands on display in a window of that building, like the bargains of the drapers and souvenir sellers whose shops share space with fast-food restaurants the length of O'Connell Street. And woe to him or her who might utter such impolite words as Sinn Féin, I.R.A. or even Northern Ireland at a cocktail party in Dublin 4⁽¹⁾. Ireland's past is much too valuable to be left in the hands of historians (Wood Quay proved that!); it now belongs to the Tourist Trade. One might, slightly anachronistically, cite the words of an unnamed writer: "no báinín sweater [has been] left unstitched in the effort to project paddywhackery."⁽²⁾ Every public house in Dublin seeks to attract the epithet "Joycean." (Will somebody please tell me what a "Joycean" pub is.) And dare any pub ballad-singer not have "Finnegan's Wake" at the tip of his plectrum. Conversely, the RTÉ (Irish National Radio and Television) Concert Orchestra could not even get the correct version of "The Croppy Boy" on their CD *Joycesongs: James Joyce's Musical Dublin*. Nonetheless, because of Bloomsday's commercial value, Posterity is, in fact, doing quite a lot for James Joyce.

Finally, as might be expected, the problem of text arises. When I was a graduate student, the version of *Ulysses* sold in bookstores and consequently used in our graduate studies was *The Corrected Text*, edited by Hans Walter Gabler. Many of these "corrections" have now been discredited and *The 1922 Text* has been republished with nearly 250 pages of notes and an Introduction by Jeri Johnson. Admittedly some of Gabler's "corrections," or lack of them, were ludicrous. In Molly Bloom's soliloquy, the

⁽¹⁾ Since this was written Republicanism has become responsible again, and in 2006, the Fianna Fáil government reinstated a military commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising.

⁽²⁾ From the cover notes of the DVD *Hall's Pictorial Weekly: Incorporating the Provincial Vindicator. The Last with the News*. Volume 2. RTE Archives, EMI Music Ireland.

robber cat has eaten the place. Evidently, this makes no sense. Ironically, the 1922 text contains the same error. But Molly is thinking of buying fish for Friday and the obvious word for what the robber cat ate is *plai*ce. This is borne out, by the first translation into French (by Auguste Morel, published by Gallimard in their Folio collection), in which Joyce, himself, had a hand. There, we learn that the cat ate "*la...plie*" or, in English (per *Harrap's Shorter French/English Dictionary*), the *plai*ce (*Corrected*, 629; *1922 Text*, 715; Morel, 1102).

Gentle Reader, you have been warned; proceed at your peril!