Joyce in the Hibernian Metropolis
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Essays

Edited by Morris Beja and David Norris

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Columbus
For
Ellen Carol Jones
and
Ken Monaghan
and, in memoriam,
Augustine Martin
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Preface: A View from Dublin

The overall title of the Thirteenth International James Joyce Symposium, held in Dublin in June 1992, was “In the Heart of the Hibernian Metropolis,” and Joyce’s native city certainly took to its heart once more the 600-odd [sic] symposiasts who participated.

Dublin, of course, has a special attraction for Joyceans as both the source and subject matter of Joyce’s genius. Some have feelings about the city as ambiguous as those that characterize Joyce’s own love/hate relationship. As a Dubliner, a Joycean, and one who has attended almost all the International Symposia since their inception, I can understand the complex interaction between Joyce’s readers and his native city.

The first two Symposia were held in Dublin in the late 1960s. They were comparatively small but lively affairs, full of good humor, extravagant wit, and—as will never again be possible—graced by the presence of people who had known Joyce intimately at school, at university, and from his Trieste and Paris days. There were also the freshness and sparkle of literary and topographical discovery in the air. Much of the motivating energy and many of the participants came from the United States, and the natives tended, when mocking what they regarded as the frequent excesses of Joycean scholarship, to adopt an American accent in the retelling of countless barroom stories about the academic obsession with the trivia of Dublin’s street life. The initial puzzlement and amusement at the appetite for minutiae occasionally led to a bantering and dismissive approach that extended to the whole of American scholarship. This reaction was not only naturally resented but was also obviously a mistake.

The scholarly interest in Joyce in the United States is so enormous and covers such a wide range of approaches, subject matter, and talent that it inevitably includes both the best and the worst, the brilliant and the dull, the stimulating as well as the soporific. Many Dubliners and non-Dublin Joyceans in those days regarded each other with amused skepticism, and some even engaged in barbed incivilities. There was also a small minority who happened to be both Dubliners and Joyceans and consequently received the barbs of both sides, but I am glad to say that these were confined to flesh wounds.

Almost thirty years on, the atmosphere tends more toward sweetness and light than to shite and onions. Directing the festivities in Ireland for the Symposium were Sean J. White, the late Augustine Martin, and myself; and in the United States the academic program was directed by Morris Beja. The
emergence of a new intellectually progressive Ireland was signalled with the election of Mary Robinson as President of Ireland; she very graciously consented to perform the opening ceremony of the Thirteenth Symposium in the National Concert Hall in Dublin. Although unwell with gastric flu, the President left her bed against doctors’ orders and delivered the opening address with such panache that few in the audience realized she was ill. Her genuine interest, which had already been shown when she quoted Joyce at her inauguration in Dublin Castle, and the warmth of her words of welcome, completely won over her listeners and got the Symposium off to a fine start.

Nearly 120 different sessions, ranging from major addresses to panel discussions, covered topics as diverse as parlor games and Joyce, the Joyce papers of the National Library, living book reviews, sessions on Joyce and cinema, Joyce and fashion, Joyce and commodity culture, *Finnegans Wake* and sexuality, and Joyce and homosexuality. These various activities generated over a hundred submissions for inclusion in the present volume.

Confronted by this rich harvest, Morris Beja and I sat down on opposite sides of the Atlantic to produce a book that would reflect something, at least, of the flavor and intellectual range not only of our Dublin discussions but also, and more significantly, the world of Joyce studies as we head toward the end of the century—Joyce’s century. We were reassured to find when we exchanged views that there was, despite our frequently very different perspectives on Joyce and Joyce scholarship and criticism, a remarkable degree of coincidence in our judgement of specific submissions. Above all, we tried to select essays by which we felt enlightened. Not every valuable discussion, of course, translates well from the auditorium to the printed page, and that fact and the inevitable considerations of space have led us—at times with some frustration in regard to exclusions—to a collection of about thirty contributions. We have divided the volume into a section of general essays, several groupings deriving from specific panel sessions (“Hostile Responses to Joyce,” “Male Feminisms,” and “‘Aeolus’ without Wind”), and sections dealing with the shorter works and the novels. I feel it would be both invidious and impertinent to comment here upon the merits of individual pieces. Suffice it to say that both Morris Beja and I admire all the essays, however much our personal taste did, on occasion, indicate a slightly different order of priority.

One element that it is impossible to reflect adequately in this volume is what I might call the fringe. These fringe events provided the opportunity for visitors to acquaint themselves with Joycean locations such as Clongowes Wood College in Sallins, County Kildare, where we were graciously received by Father Rowland Burke Savage. There were also memorable evening events, such as the songfest orchestrated by Zack Bowen in the Aula Maxima, for which there was standing room only, and the poetry reading in the Physics Theatre in Earlsford Terrace by Seamus Heaney and Mark Strand. This was followed by a reception hosted by Baileys Irish Cream, who sponsored the en-
tire Symposium. As chair of the organizing committee, I can say that Baileys proved themselves to be generous, effective, and tactful, and I was amused by occasional outbreaks of fastidiousness, usually from participants whose cultural backgrounds tended to endorse rather than disdain corporate sponsorship and commodity culture. But goodwill ruled the day, and some of those who came to scoff stayed to ask for the address of the sponsors!

This was the third International James Joyce Symposium in which I played a role in the management; I chaired the host committee in 1977, 1982, and 1992. It was also the last time I shall fulfill such a role, as I intend from now on to enjoy myself on the back benches. I may therefore, I hope, be permitted a few valedictory remarks.

Joyceanity has now achieved the status of a kind of secular religion, with its martyred god-king, holy books, high priests, heretics, fanatics, free thinkers, witch hunts, schisms—and weirdos. This development coincides with a time when not only the heart of the Hibernian metropolis but the heart of much of the intellectual world—and certainly that of academe—is in turmoil. Most of the ancient European seats of learning—including my own university, Trinity College, founded by Queen Elizabeth in a vain attempt to civilize the Irish by turning them Protestant—were created by an impulse that was in part religious as well as intellectual, thereby reflecting a coherent view of the universe and its function. In the late twentieth century we live in a very much more complex world, in which there is no such certainty, and the boundaries of reality are fluid and shifting; and while the academic form remains, there is no longer any consensus about a governing set of ideas. Rationality, along with God herself, is dead, the universe is absurd, communication is impossible, and the right hemisphere of the brain is at war with the left. Yet faced with the collapse of meaning, we still insist on awarding precise grades to treatises on intellectual angst in Beckett and we calmly dock marks from students for the late presentation of essays on *Finnegans Wake*. Personally I am quite comfortable with incoherence, but I like it to remain at least consistently incoherent.

For me (much more, I should say, than for my coeditor) the cross-fertilization of continental psychoanalysis and literary theory has produced some bizarre results. Meaning in a work of art, we are sometimes told, is unstable and something over which the artist cannot be assumed to be in control. No such restrictions, however, are placed on the critic, who may happily continue to pontificate on the absence of meaning and the paucity of language as a means of communication. We may have outgrown Wilde, but we have obviously not outgrown the paradoxical. None of this would matter very much were it not for the absence of joy, celebration, and humanity from much of the academic diet. Moreover, it is strange that a number of those who are disposed to be precious about the inadequacies of language should so frequently retreat into dull jargon as if to prove their point. It is an unpleasant reality not
confined to Joyce studies that one may be compelled to wade through pages of turgid prose resembling a railway timetable with a gloss by Gertrude Stein only to discover after a lengthy process of decoding that the insights artfully concealed therein may be banal in the extreme. Those who scorn the confines of stylistic simplicity often do so for good if varied motives. Nevertheless, there are times indeed when I give a heartfelt echo to Molly Bloom’s “O, rocks . . . Tell us in plain words.”

Some years ago, having given an introductory lecture on Joyce, I was approached by a young man who told me that my lecture had been brilliant and illuminating. I primped at first at what I took to be praise, anticipating basking further in the balm of his adulation, but this was far from the case. He went on to denounce me in quite strident terms, telling me that the experience had been one of intellectual imperialism and that what I had been doing was colonizing the imagination of my audience. The duty of the critic, he sternly rebuked me, was not to clarify or illuminate but to obfuscate and mystify. My antennae tell me that this young person was probably a good deal more in tune with the intellectual zeitgeist than I am. Yet Joyceanity is a broad and inclusive church, and I very much hope that there will always be room for those like myself who do not disdain Joyce the man or the writer with all his faults, and who grant to him, as an artist, at least as much “intentionality” as they cede to his text.

DAVID NORRIS
Acknowledgments

The editors are grateful to the contributors, of course. They would also like to express their special gratitude to all those who made the Symposium itself so special; we could not name them all, but we must mention a few people: Sean J. White, Ken Monaghan, and the late Augustine Martin. The original plan was that there would be three editors of this volume, ourselves and Gus Martin, but the pressure of other commitments led Gus to feel compelled to withdraw from the project, with his blessings on it. As the book goes to press, we have just heard of his untimely death. He shall be greatly missed.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you today to officially open this Thirteenth International James Joyce Symposium.

It’s particularly moving for me to be here today because I feel a special connection to this occasion. When I was inaugurated as President I spoke of the fifth province: a place without visible boundaries or actual geography, but that territory within the mind and the spirit that gives us access to the other four historic provinces of Ireland. That makes us conscious that a nation is a place of the mind and spirit as well as a place of event and actual day-to-day history.

Well, there are many treasures in that fifth province. And I feel Joyce’s Ireland is definitely one of them. Again, it’s not a place of territories or boundaries. For all his wonderfully accurate local detail, it’s not a place of regional interest. It’s that fierce territory where nothing is taken for granted, where love is frequently expressed as anger and enquiry. It’s those great gifts he left us of rebellion and uncompromising self-inquiry that prevent us ever being complacent about being Irish. In any national experience there are many smaller ones. Joyce’s Ireland may not be the most visible Ireland to me, but it is certainly one of the most precious.

This is the sixth occasion on which Dublin has played host to this distinguished group. It is fitting that you return to the city that is not only Joyce’s birthplace but the wellspring of so much of his inspiration. Joyce saw his departure from Dublin in terms of “exile,” but such was his lifelong obsession with the city that he later came to say he had never really left it. He carried Dublin in his imagination, and he never missed an opportunity to quiz visitors from Dublin on the latest news. Desmond Harmsworth recalls that Joyce tried to extract from him an admission of a feeling of affinity with Dublin. Harmsworth had demurred, pointing out that as a Londoner and a Cockney he was not bound to feel for any place but his own. This, however, did not satisfy Joyce: “Do you not feel that Dublin is your town,” he insisted, “your, shall I say, spiritual home?” I know that because of Joyce and his works, Dublin occupies a
Welcome Address

unique place in your imagination and affections and in those of Joyceans throughout the world. Your gathering today is testament to the universal appeal and fascination that Joyce's works hold, and in welcoming your Symposium to Dublin I am delighted that I also welcome each one of you "home."

For Joyceans, this is a particularly exciting time to be in Dublin. The recent unveiling by the National Library of the James Joyce/Paul Léon papers has shed further light on Joyce's life and work in Paris. Few who were present at the official opening will forget how movingly Paul Léon's son, Alexis, spoke of his father's work and friendship with Joyce. The collection that is now open to the public in the National Library was the final act in many years of devoted service to Joyce. Joyce's own tribute to Paul Léon is worth recalling: "For the last dozen years in sickness or health, night and day, he has been an absolutely disinterested and devoted friend and I could never have done what I did without him."

Poised on the eve of another Bloomsday, it is, perhaps, appropriate to consider the debt that society owes to artists such as James Joyce. When Joyce and Nora eloped in 1904 they could have had little notion of the difficulties they were to face over the coming years. In a remarkable love story, they were to remain devoted to each other through family tragedies and professional controversy. Joyce's work outraged conventional wisdom of his time and was widely banned. Here in Ireland Joyce fared no better, and we were, perhaps, more suspicious of his motives than most. To have moved from that position to the situation today, where Bloomsday is fast becoming our second great national day, is a testament not only to Joyce's genius and artistic integrity but also to our growing maturity and confidence as a nation. We are no longer afraid to see ourselves in the mirror that the artist holds up to us and now appreciate artists like Joyce who were prepared to challenge the orthodox and to shatter complacency.

The debt we owe to the artist is that he impels us to address moral issues honestly while offering imaginative insights into the human condition. It is hard to imagine what progress would be possible without the efforts of the artist who liberates us from cant and paralysis. Ireland today is an outward looking country that is proud of its role as an equal partner in the new Europe. Without the efforts of Joyce, who was himself the quintessential European, it might have taken considerably longer for Ireland as a nation to come of age.

I have studied your program of events, and it certainly is a demanding and exciting schedule. However, Joyce, who was something of a Greek scholar, would not have been slow to point out that symposium is made up of the Greek words syn, "together," and posis, "drinking." If, therefore, you fail to solve Bloom's puzzle while crossing the city and find yourself in convivial company, I am sure your memories of this Symposium and of Dublin will be all the richer.

I wish you every success in both the serious work you do and in the enjoyment of your time in our capital city.
The following abbreviations are standard for references to Joyce's works and important secondary texts. Where contributors have used alternative editions, the edition used will be noted in the Works Cited.

Abbreviations


