

“The Drama of Dedication and Betrayal”:
Betrayal in the Life and Works of James Joyce

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Abstract

This thesis offers an account of the role of betrayal in the works of poet, playwright, novelist, and occasional journalist, James Joyce. Moving away from pathologizing conceptions of Joyce as “obsessed” with betrayal, I follow the development of this theme throughout a range of Joyce’s writings. Joyce came to an understanding of the workings of this narrative as a young child, experiencing the national trauma of the downfall of Irish politician Charles Stewart Parnell and the fallout of this affair in his own household. At his father’s promptings, Joyce learned to experience betrayal as an active, though invisible force in Irish affairs, from the quotidian to the grandiose. This thesis contends, however, that this early understanding of betrayal as an “immanent” force gives way to a highly self-aware investigation into the dramatic and narrative potential of betrayal as a structuring principle in human relationships. Looking in detail at three of Joyce’s literary works—*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Exiles*, and *Ulysses*—as well as a selection of Joyce’s Trieste journalism and criticism, I attempt to offer a narrative account of how the theme of betrayal operates in and is operated on by Joyce’s texts. In Joyce’s non-fiction we find a reliance on betrayal as a means to introduce a note of melancholic pathos to nominally journalistic pieces. But in betrayal Joyce also finds a way to critique Irish constructions of heroic failure and to support the healthy antagonism necessary to his principled exile. In *Portrait*, Joyce studies the positive potential of betrayal as a tool of self-narration. Stephen is seen to achieve a narratively satisfying break with his community that is made possible by his imputation of Irish betrayal. In *Exiles*, the central dynamic of betrayal—that it is present as a possibility in any relationship—is taken to its extremity and ultimately rejected. In *Ulysses*, Joyce denies Stephen the narratives he had formerly relied on and studies instead the pathos of his painfully incomplete severance. In the same book, Joyce turns his attention once again to adultery. Molly’s sexual affair with Hugh “Blazes” Boylan offers Joyce a way of critiquing accepted conventions of the cuckold and the “adulteress” in favour of a far more nuanced understanding of the human impact of betrayal. Ultimately, the idea of betrayal is itself destabilized to the point that Molly’s act of extramarital sex can no longer be maintained as in any simple sense a betrayal.

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	4
Author's Declaration	5
Introduction	6
<i>Betrayal: the great donnée of Joyce studies</i>	6
<i>Defining betrayal</i>	16
<i>Joyce and the narrative of betrayal</i>	20
<i>Sources for betrayal</i>	21
<i>"I can psychoanalyze myself:" Psychoanalysis, psychology, and "intellectualizing" the self</i>	25
<i>Joycean betrayal</i>	31
Chapter One: Writing Drama, Writing Betrayal: Joyce's Triestine Non-Fiction	36
<i>Introduction</i>	36
<i>Reviewing his options: Joyce in Dublin</i>	41
<i>"A talent for journalism"</i>	43
<i>Writing drama, writing betrayal</i>	48
<i>Making failure a bad thing again; redefining the Irish "volkgeist"</i>	53
<i>The heroic artist and the volk</i>	58
Chapter Two: Betrayal in <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>	63
<i>Narrativizing the self, narrativizing betrayal</i>	65
<i>"The end he had been born to serve"</i>	68
<i>Betrayal and the Joycean "family romance"</i>	70
<i>"Boyhood" as "death"</i>	75
<i>"Is the mind of youth medieval that it is so divining of intrigue?"</i>	76
<i>"Did he bring his crocodile?"</i>	81
<i>Stephen as Ireland: Figuration, prophesy, and the conflation of the communal with the individual</i>	83
Chapter Three: "A nation exacts a penance": Platonic Betrayal and the Return from Heroic Exile in <i>Exiles</i>	87
<i>From Stephen to Richard, through Joyce</i>	89
<i>Joyce's audience/Joyce's Ireland</i>	91
<i>"A nation exacts a penance"</i>	98
<i>"It is too soon yet to despair": Betrayal of the self</i>	100
Chapter Four: "Like thieves in the night": Sexual Betrayal as Dispossession in <i>Exiles</i>	106
<i>"He longs to be delivered": Betrayal as deliverance from doubt / innocence</i>	122
<i>"Steal you could not . . . nor take by violence": (Dis)possession as self-defence</i>	123
<i>"He's lost in his philosophy"</i>	128
Chapter Five: Betrayal, Stagnation, and the Family Romantic in <i>Ulysses</i>	133
<i>"The aunt thinks you killed your mother": Stephen's defensive posture/ressentiment</i>	137
<i>An incomplete severance: The residual family romance</i>	141
<i>"I've lost the trick"</i>	144
<i>Joyce/Stephen</i>	151
Chapter Six: Betraying Bloom	153
<i>(Sexual) betrayal</i>	155

<i>Faith in nighttown</i>	159
<i>Bloom betrays</i>	164
Chapter Seven: Sexual betrayal in “Penelope”	172
<i>Molly’s self-defence</i>	173
<i>The case of Josie Powell/Breen</i>	183
<i>“You couldnt call him a husband”</i>	186
Coda	192
Bibliography	193
<i>Primary</i>	193
<i>Secondary</i>	194

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Author's Declaration

Some sections of this thesis have been presented in an amended form at a number of conferences. This is particularly the case with the first chapter. None of this work has been published or presented, in whole or in part, in its current form.

Introduction

Betrayal: the great *donnée* of Joyce studies

Betrayal, I contend, is one of the great *données* of Joycean criticism. When James Fairhall suggested, in 1995, that “the theme of betrayal runs throughout Joyce’s writings,” he did so with the certainty of someone not so much stating a position as acknowledging a fact.¹ The idea was an old one thirty-five years earlier, when William York Tindall, with a similar sense of treading on old ground, suggested that “betrayal . . . was one of Joyce’s central themes.”² Neil Davison, shortly after Fairhall, displays the curious mix of insistence and unease that crops up time and again in discussions of Joycean betrayal. “The very idea of betrayal,” Davison suggests, “became, *of course*, a preoccupation of Joyce’s adult life”—the “of course” is significant.³ It seems that by the mid-nineties (if not earlier), it was no longer acceptable to speak of betrayal in Joyce’s work without apologizing to the reader for what was, the writer was keen to stress, a digression into “well-known” territory. Since the reader is assumed to know everything there is to know on this subject, it is best for the critic to move on quickly. One cannot refuse to mention betrayal altogether—after all, this “preoccupation” was clearly at the centre of Joyce’s thinking—but neither can one linger on its intricacies or its indeterminacies—one cannot labour to unravel what this centrality might signify.

The complacency within Joycean studies on this issue is evident from the language that has been adopted to discuss it. While Tindall’s suggestion that betrayal was one of Joyce’s “central themes” leaves open the question of what this centrality might mean, he slips into another discourse altogether that does quite the opposite. “[B]etrayal, [is] one of the most evident [themes] in *Exiles*, and if we may judge by its presence in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, one of Joyce’s obsessions.”⁴ Davison, after

¹ James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 43.

² William York Tindall, *A Reader’s Guide to James Joyce* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 25. (First published in 1959 by the Noonday Press).

³ Neil R. Davison, *James Joyce, “Ulysses,” and the Construction of Jewish Identity: Culture, Biography, and “the Jew” in Modernist Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 39. Italics mine.

⁴ Tindall, *Reader’s Guide*, 119.

speaking more coyly about Joyce's "preoccupation" also describes it as an "obsession."⁵ The linguistic shift that occurs here is telling, since both "preoccupation" and "obsession," rather than offer an explanation or description of Joycean betrayal, attempt instead to pathologize it. When we speak of prevailing motifs and "central themes" we are speaking of a predominately volitional interest. But "obsession" suggests rather that this interest is so extreme in type and/or extent that it moves beyond the normal range of explicable action. In using the language of compulsion, we tacitly accept that this aspect of Joyce's writing is fundamentally inaccessible to analysis. There have certainly been (problematic) attempts to analyse Joyce as a *product* of his "obsession" with betrayal,⁶ but more commonly this pathologization merely allows for betrayal to be set aside altogether. Once we have acknowledged its importance, we can safely ignore it. The question of the how, why, and what for is answered tautologically: Joyce writes about betrayal because he is obsessed by betrayal, he is obsessed by betrayal because he is obsessed by betrayal. . . . The only possible continuation of this line of thought is an unsatisfying recurrence or a psychoanalytic foray into the author's unconscious mind. So totemically incontrovertible is Joyce's "preoccupation" with betrayal, I suggest, that it has shut off potentially fruitful avenues of exploration. We might forgive Andrew Gibson for engaging this language when he claims that Joyce was "obsessed by betrayal. He was obsessed with it in personal, historical and political terms."⁷ In this case, Gibson's intention is to shake up, with typical rhetorical adroitness, a stagnating field of study. In calling on the force of "obsession," Gibson hopes to bring home to his reader just how central betrayal was to Joyce's thinking and writing. But while his intentions are laudable, it isn't clear that appealing to the very language that typifies the critical complacency surrounding the subject is an effective way to combat it. The effect, intended or not, is to cast Joyce's exposure of betrayal in the same murky light as the "cloacal obsession" that H. G. Wells identified and named. As with those "[c]oarse, unfamiliar words," the theme of betrayal "seems to be deliberately obtruded." By

⁵ Davison, *Jewish Identity*, 47. Seamus Deane, notably, has also described Joyce's interest in betrayal as an "obsession." See, for example, Seamus Deane, "Joyce the Irishman" in *Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: CUP, 2004)

⁶ Most notable is Hélène Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce* (London: Calder Books, 1980).

⁷ Andrew Gibson, *James Joyce* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

pathologizing it, and apologizing for it, Wells denudes Joyce's carefully constructed unseemliness of its power and interest.⁸ The damage is done not by Wells's disapproval, but by his insistence that the matter was "by the way. . . . The value of Mr. Joyce's book has little to do with its incidental insanitary condition."⁹ This is, precisely, the power of a pathologizing critical discourse, it asserts the centrality of some element of the text under discussion even as it insists that that element is entirely incidental (since sourced in some largely inexplicable authorial quirk). In this sense, betrayal is seen to be of great interest to Joyce, but only incidental interest to the reader/critic.

A brief perusal of the indexes of books on Joyce offers some indication of the complacency I am describing. While hardly an absolute measure of the nature and extent of work on Joycean betrayal, taken together critical indexes do offer a way to give shape to the critical orthodoxy regarding Joycean betrayal. Imperfect though they are, an index must, if it is to have any value, offer some considerable insight into the contents of the book it indexes. More importantly, however, it carries with it a strong indication of what is considered "of interest" to the author; what the author of the text expected her readers to find interesting; and, in some cases, what the publisher and/or editor deemed worthy of reference. It is striking then that so very few books from any period of Joyce studies should choose to index betrayal. This is as true of biographies and general investigations of Joyce's work—such as Steven Connor's *James Joyce*,¹⁰ Lee Spinks's *James Joyce: A Critical Guide*,¹¹ Morris Beja's *James Joyce: A Literary Life*,¹² Sydney Bolt's *A Preface to James Joyce*,¹³ Stan Gebler Davies's *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist*,¹⁴ Mitzi Brunsdale's

⁸ For a discussion of Wells's comments on Joyce's "cloacal obsession," see: Patrick Parrinder, *James Joyce* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984).

⁹ H. G. Wells, review of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, *New Republic*, 10 March 1917. The review can be read online at: <http://www.james-joyce-music.com/wells031017.html>.

¹⁰ Steven Connor, *James Joyce* (London: Northcote House, 1996).

¹¹ Lee Spinks, *James Joyce: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2009).

¹² Morris Beja, *James Joyce: A Literary Life* (Columbus: University of Ohio Press, 1992).

¹³ Sydney Bolt, *A Preface to James Joyce* (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹⁴ Stan Gebler Davies, *James Joyce: A Portrait of the Artist* (London: HarperCollins, 1975).

James Joyce: A Study of the Short Fiction,¹⁵ and Richard Ellmann's *The Consciousness of Joyce*¹⁶ and *Ulysses on the Liffey*¹⁷—as it is of more targeted investigations. Books with clear reason to discuss Joycean betrayal choose not to acknowledge this in their indexes. Bernard Benstock's *The Undiscovered Country*, which deals directly with Joyce's "exilic condition," does not index betrayal¹⁸; Sheldon Brivic's *Joyce Waking Women*,¹⁹ which deals directly with female entrapment and liberation, most relevantly in reference to adultery, does not; Lucia Boldrini's *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations*²⁰ does not; Joseph Valente's *The Problem of Justice*²¹ does not; Sean P. Murphy's *James Joyce and Victims*²² does not. Joyceans are not alone in taking Joycean betrayal lightly. An ambitious new book, *Playing False: Representations of Betrayal*, which seeks to "gain a fresh perspective on betrayal" through a wide survey of literary betrayal, makes no reference to Joyce at all. This despite giving time (and index space) to Dante, Chaucer, Ezra Pound, Knut Hamsun, Leonard Cohen, and Anatole Broyard, to name only a very few.²³ In most of these cases, the problem is that, even when they are discussing issues of great importance to Joycean betrayal, they shy away from tackling these problems head on. But other texts discuss betrayal more clearly and yet do so with a reticence that is worrying. Zack Bowen's *Musical Allusions in the Works*

¹⁵ Mitzi M. Brunsdale, *James Joyce: A Study of the Short Fiction* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

¹⁶ Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Oxford: OUP, 1977).

¹⁷ Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (Oxford: OUP, 1972).

¹⁸ Bernard Benstock, *The Undiscovered Country* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978).

¹⁹ Sheldon Brivic, *Joyce's Waking Women: Introduction to "Finnegans Wake"* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

²⁰ Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in "Finnegans Wake"* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009).

²¹ Joseph Valente, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice: Negotiating Sexual and Colonial Difference* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

²² Sean P. Murphy, *James Joyce and Victims: Reading the Logic of Exclusion* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh University Press, 2003).

²³ Kristina Mendecino and Betiel Wasihun, eds. *Playing False: Representations of Betrayal* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013).

of *James Joyce*²⁴ does not index betrayal, yet there are clear references to the topic on pages 32, 104, 215, 312, 313, and 315. Bowen is informative on the subject, yet unwilling to acknowledge betrayal as a unifying structure behind many of the allusions he lists. Len Platt similarly discusses betrayal informatively at several points in *James Joyce: Texts and Contexts*,²⁵ yet does not allow these discussions to coalesce into either an index entry or a more general discussion. This is not merely the complaint of a graduate student who has had to go the long way round every obstacle, stumbling blindly and without a road map. This tendency in Joyce studies to push betrayal to the edge of discussion is not only suppressing new answers to an old question, it is allowing an imperfect and at times contradictory model of Joycean betrayal to harden ever further.

The sense of ennui around this topic (the sense that everything has already been said) seems to have set in sometime shortly after the publication of Richard's Ellmann's *James Joyce*.²⁶ That biography (not to mention Ellmann's contributory portraits of Joyce's working mind²⁷), has done more to shut off investigation into Joycean betrayal than any other work. While Ellmann himself generally maintains an admirable sense of the difference between Joyce and even his most autobiographical literary creations, the enduring effect of the work as a whole is not Ellmann's generally careful description of the process by which Joyce converted the stuff of experience into the stuff of fiction, but the seemingly limitless anecdotes about Joyce's sense of persecution, his paranoia, and his absurd hypersensitivity to the potential for betrayal. With the evidence of Joyce's obsession so readily available, there has been little reason to pry further into either the mechanics of Joycean betrayal or the motivations that underpin Joyce's exploration of it.

As a result, those books that do index betrayal often follow the same basic model as those books that don't. For example, Eric Bulson's *Cambridge Introduction*

²⁴ Zack Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce* (Buffalo: State University of New York, 1974).

²⁵ Len Platt, *James Joyce: Texts and Contexts* (London: Continuum, 2011).

²⁶ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: OUP, 1982). First published 1959.

²⁷ Most notably, Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* and Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*.

to *James Joyce*,²⁸ Roy Gottfried's *Joyce's Misbelief*,²⁹ and Michael Seidel's *James Joyce: A Short Introduction*³⁰ all index several references to betrayal, yet essentially repeat the standard critical account. This account usually takes the following form: Joyce is obsessed with betrayal on a personal level; he sees Irish history as a series of betrayals (with special reference to Charles Stewart Parnell); his own multifaceted paranoia is encoded into his texts in the form of put-upon autobiographical protagonists and a series of antagonists, such as Oliver St John Gogarty and Roberto Prezioso, whose betrayals are preserved forever in fiction. While this model is not *wrong* exactly—it does not entirely misconstrue the basic facts of Joycean betrayal—neither is it a sophisticated account of the processes by which Joyce developed and sustained his interest in betrayal; developed his understanding of its workings on a structural, theoretical, and narrative level; and engaged with these ideas in his texts.

There have, of course, been some fresh and interesting additions to the understanding of Joycean betrayal. Most of these have come from Seamus Deane, who over the last thirty years has regularly returned to a theme he seems to understand with an intuitive certainty. The great shame is that he has never been compelled to produce a longer, less concentrated account of his thoughts on the matter. To date, his most concerted effort perhaps can be found in Derek Attridge's *Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. Deane's contribution to that collection, "Joyce the Irishman," contains within its twenty-two pages some of the clearest and most imaginative writing to date on how Joyce absorbed, understood, and recycled the narratives and structures of betrayal. Some of what follows in this thesis represents an extension of Deane's probing suggestions, some of it finds new ground, I hope, using the tools he provides, and some of it moves away altogether from what Deane suggests. I cannot go along with Deane in his apparently credulous acceptance of Joyce's "obsession"—Deane uses the word regularly—but lurking behind Deane's conviction always remains the possibility that he understands Joyce's continuous return to betrayal in a manner that is very close to the central contention of this thesis.

²⁸ Eric Bulson, *Cambridge Introduction to James Joyce* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006). See particularly pages 22-31.

²⁹ Roy Gottfried, *Joyce's Misbelief* (Tallahassee: University of Florida Press, 2008), 28-29.

³⁰ Michael Seidel, *James Joyce: A Short Introduction* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 7-9, 24.

Joyce's performance of betrayal is necessary not because it is a psychological compulsion, but because in betrayal Joyce finds a way to negotiate an embattled state of Irishness that is consoling, challenges hypocrisy, has a political charge, and is narratively satisfying. While it is not clear how much of my analysis Deane would accept, I hope I have carried it out with a small share of his subtlety.

More recently, Matthew Campbell and Jefferson Holdridge have each contributed an excellent piece to Marc C. Conner's *The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered*. Campbell's account of the "invocation of betrayal" at the heart of *Chamber Music* teases out the complex "range of models" that lie behind it—resisting the temptation to convert a complex piece of literary production into a simple biographical event—while establishing the way Joyce uses these narratives of betrayal to establish his lyric as "unconfortable."³¹ Holdridge makes a connection between betrayal, the individual, the family, and society that bears some resemblances to the stresses I place on betrayal in several chapters of this thesis. I do not think it a coincidence that a book devoted to "reconsidering" an overlooked area of Joyce's writing—Holdridge's question "why the poetry?"³² could equally be asked of betrayal—should also include an overdue reconsideration of how betrayal operates in Joyce's writing. Whereas a study of *Portrait* or *Ulysses* feels the weight of a century's criticism bearing down upon it, it tends to be in discussions of Joyce's "lesser works" that we find the most interesting and suggestive discussion.

While the standard model has remained largely unchanged for decades, elements of its key structure have been considerably nuanced in recent years, without this nuance being brought back into the standard model in a clear or ordered way. According to this model the political dimensions of Joyce's emphasis on betrayal are as "well known" as his interest in betrayal itself. Early critical responses to Joyce's major works established him as an "international modernist who had shrugged off provincial Ireland, its history, politics, and culture"³³ and while that conception of

³¹ Matthew Campbell, "The Unconfortable Joyce," in *The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered*, ed. Marc C. Conner (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 51-77.

³² Jefferson Holdridge, "Bleeding from the 'Torn Bough': Challenging Nature in James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*," in *The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered*, 187-207, 187.

³³ Andrew Gibson, *The Strong Spirit: History, Politics and Aesthetics in the Writings of James Joyce, 1898-1913* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 92.

Joyce has rightly faded from acceptability, it does live on in an amended form. Michael Seidel, embodying a summative, conflative tendency in Joyce studies, has suggested that the “theme” of betrayal is provided to Joyce by “Irish politics.”³⁴ Yeats was “stung into poetry,”³⁵ but Joyce is stung into exile by a country that “in a spirit of Irish fun, / Betrayed her own leaders one by one.”³⁶ “Stephen Dedalus,” Seidel informs us unblinkingly, “speaks Joyce’s sentiments in *A Portrait of the Artist as A Young Man*” when he complains that:

No honourable and sincere man . . . has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I’d see you damned first.³⁷

Stephen may not speak for Joyce at all times, Seidel suggests, but here, in this respect, he does. Stephen’s analyses of Irish history and his proud yet essentially fearful rejection of Ireland as maliciously unfaithful are taken to be not only sincere expressions of Stephen’s own view (rather than a useful contrivance) but also Joyce’s own, which is expressed elsewhere in Joyce’s non-fiction. The simple plausibility of this account allows it to remain in place even as similarly author-centric accounts fall away. Its primary benefit comes in that it allows for the maintenance of Joyce’s absolute rejection of Irish affairs, even as it asserts its centrality.

The last two decades have, of course, seen a powerful shift towards a more politically invested image of Joyce. Dominic Manganiello, Andrew Gibson, Len Platt, Joseph Valente, Emer Nolan, and Enda Duffy have offered particularly forceful readings of Joyce as making materialist interventions into Irish politics and history. While this thesis does not go as far as any of these works in establishing Joyce as a political commentator, I take his political and historical intelligence seriously. I move away from these other authors perhaps only in my insistence on maintaining an absolute narcissism in Joyce’s artistic approach, at least until the production of *Finnegans Wake*, which moves away from close attention to thinking, feeling

³⁴ Seidel, *Joyce: A Short Introduction*, 7.

³⁵ W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats.”

³⁶ These two lines are taken from Joyce’s “Gas from a Burner,” written in response to the destruction of the printed sheets for *Dubliners*. Joyce, *PSW*, 103.

³⁷ Joyce, *P*, 202-03.

protagonists. So, in my discussion of Joyce's non-fiction, I take seriously Joyce's interventions but assert also that these interventions are mediated by concerns that are not expressly humanistic.

A great deal of the negotiated distance achieved in the standard model comes from its assertion that Joyce's "obsession" with betrayal was founded on his youthful exposure to Parnell's ousting from the leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party and subsequent death. I don't refute this in this thesis but I do attempt to offer an account of how this early experience marked Joyce's ongoing understanding of betrayal that does not give way to a stagnant understanding of its workings. The ideas Joyce develops about history, politics, and interpersonal relationships are complex and shifting. And rather than a fixed position from which to view Irish history,³⁸ the figure of Parnell³⁹ becomes a constant source of inspiration for Joyce as his analyses develop. Though Parnell does not perhaps play as large a role in Joyce's theorization of betrayal as some would have it (though he is far more important in other ways than is generally accepted), his role is indeed significant. Unfortunately, this thesis does not have the scope or space to deal with this matter in any great detail. More fortunately, some of the work necessary to understand Joyce's relationship to Parnell has begun to appear over the last decade or so. Joseph Valente is the chief orchestrator of this new interest. His contribution to Derek Attridge's and Marjorie Howes's *Semicolonial Joyce* opened up an entirely new way of seeing Parnell's influence on Joyce: as a model for a form of manner that did not degrade back into colonial expectations.⁴⁰ *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922*, extends the potential of this piece into direct and applied insight into how the notion of manliness plays out in Irish national culture and in Joyce's writing.⁴¹ The main influence of Valente's work on this thesis is his clear-eyed refusal to reduce Joyce's

³⁸ See Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics* (London: Routledge, 1980), 8. "The Parnell crisis was the pivot from which Joyce viewed the rest of Irish history."

³⁹ I use the word figure here carefully to suggest Parnell as a public persona, a conglomeration of tropic features.

⁴⁰ Joseph Valente, "Neither fish nor flesh' or how 'Cyclops' stages the double-bind of Irish manhood," in *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 96-127.

⁴¹ Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011).

understanding of Parnell to simple hero-worship; Joyce always navigates his way through the complexities of Parnell's cultural legacy, rather than simply absorbing it wholesale. Anne Fogarty has similarly challenged the standard view of Joyce's Parnellism in her contribution to Andrew Gibson's and Len Platt's *Joyce, Ireland, Britain*. In it, she challenges the idea that there was anything straightforward about Joyce's Parnellism, favouring an understanding of literary Parnellism more widely as a complex and unstable phenomenon.⁴² Matt Bevis's chapter on Joyce in the excellent *The Art of Eloquence* similarly establishes Parnell's influence on Joyce as a model for silence, a distrust of rhetoric, and an Irish propensity for talk that is played out in interesting ways in Joyce's writing.⁴³

Discussions of Joyce's political conscience often hang on the degree to which one sees Joyce's desire for various political changes as "sincere." The word can barely be uttered without the scare-quotes in which I have encased it, yet the problem remains to what extent Joyce's analyses of Irish paralysis, for example, should be seen as the reason *for* that writing, or to what extent it is an incidental part of it. Is Joyce a political writer, a writer with a political interest, or a writer whose books are complete enough to contain politics within them? Indeed, the word politics itself quickly breaks down in a discussion such as this. For the most part, I take the position in this thesis that Joyce is capable of feeling compassion for his nation, of feeling a desire for change, of analysing that need astutely. But I also seek to keep a distance from attempts to posit a "do-gooder" Joyce, the Joyce as socialist who briefly occupies Trieste. The tension between throwing oneself into a communal conflict and keeping oneself aloof is, I suggest, central to Joyce's writing. As such, Joyce's writing always seeks to achieve a kind of communion with Irish affairs that is enacted through a powerful performance of severance. Indeed, this severance is what the betrayal narrative works so well to enact. Similarly, in discussing *Exiles* and *Ulysses*, I distance myself from accounts that seek to establish Joyce's attempt to promote an "ethical love." The possibilities of such a love, while an acknowledged problem within these texts, is seen to take a back seat to a narcissistic concern with the potential for betrayal. This narcissism, rather than a character flaw, is seen as the

⁴² Anne Fogarty, "Parnellism and the Politics of Memory: Revisiting 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room,'" in *Joyce, Ireland, and Britain*.

⁴³ Matt Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence: Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

most effective way to study and understand the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships Joyce is interested in.

Though I do not accept all of the conclusions that follow from the ethical accounts of Joyce that have emerged in recent years,⁴⁴ I am struck by the willingness of Janine Utell in particular to try to see a way beyond the standard model of Joycean betrayal. As she puts it:

A number of critics and biographers have noted his peculiar propensity, even need, to see betrayers and usurpers around every corner, using this as a rationale for his fear of losing his woman to infidelity while also finding a *frisson* in imagining himself as a cuckold; I would argue that these contributions *do not tell quite the whole story*.⁴⁵

I concur. Though I am under no illusions that this thesis offers a full account of the workings of Joycean betrayal, I hope that it at least offers a fuller one, and one more closely attuned to betrayal as a tool rather than merely an outcome of Joyce's literary mind.

Defining betrayal

The verb "to betray" has two clear, though related meanings: to "expose unintentionally" ("he betrayed his true intentions") and to deliver into harm through treachery (an informant "betrays" his nation). Certainly, both uses share a close metaphorical association, since many acts of treachery involve the *exposure* of those who are betrayed, whether it is their person or their plans that are given into the hands of their enemies. When Joyce suggests in "Fenianism: The Last Fenian" that "in Ireland, at the crucial moment, an informer appears" it is clear that he considers this act of exposure an act of betrayal. But there is also a problem in using these two definitions interchangeably, for while the idea of exposure is of central importance to Joyce's understanding of betrayal, betrayal as a rather clichéd phrasing must be kept rigidly separate from the far grander, more precise conception of betrayal that Joyce

⁴⁴ In addition to Utell, see Christopher Devault, *Joyce's Love Stories* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) and Marian Eide, *Ethical Joyce* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002). Both Utell and Devault build on Eide's far more successful attempt to read Joyce's writing with reference to a Levinasian language of ethics.

⁴⁵ Janine Utell, *James Joyce and the Revolt of Love: Marriage, Adultery, Desire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 19. Italics mine.

analyses throughout his writing. This is not to say that there is not interesting work to be done (and being done) on the former, but this thesis seeks to understand the workings of Joycean betrayal in its core rather than incidental manifestations. By way of example, Seamus Deane has suggested that “[t]ranslation involves betrayal in two senses.” Firstly, translation “betrays that which is native into that which is foreign.” But betrayal for Deane is also inherently “a discovery, an exposure of something about the nature of language itself rather than language in one of its culture-bound manifestations.” This is a challenging and exciting notion, but there is a process of equivalence here that I find troubling. Deane justifies this reading by appeal to the fact that “[i]t is well known that Joyce’s work returns obsessively to the notion of betrayal.”⁴⁶ Lacking significant evidence for this reading in the text itself, Joyce’s “obsession” allows, even requires, that two relatively distinct areas of interest be confused. The wide applications and manifestations of betrayal—which Deane immediately summarizes as “usurpation, deceit, self-cancellation . . . Irish history”⁴⁷—permit a concept rooted quite firmly in an applied theoretical framework to be extended metaphorically into a wider description of language that is not, at this point, rooted in specific textual evidence. My aim throughout this thesis is to provide an account of what I consider to be the core aspects of Joycean betrayal. This is not to say that readings such as those provided by Deane are unjustified, but that in a critical climate that has not properly established those core features, such an extension seems strangely complacent and potentially suppresses moves towards the kind of clarity I am seeking.

I am strengthened in this resolve by the fact that Joyce maintained a tight control over the word that best summarized his “master theme.” *Dubliners* contains two examples⁴⁸ of “betrayal” being used as a form of unintentional exposure—this is usually an *unwilled* exposure, but part of the problem with its loose use is that it

⁴⁶ Seamus Deane, introduction to *Finnegans Wake*, by James Joyce (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), xlii.

⁴⁷ Deane, *FW*, xlii.

⁴⁸ The narrator-protagonist of “An Encounter” “delay[s] a few moments . . . lest [he] should betray [his] agitation” (*D*, 20); “Little Chandler” in “Little Cloud” is “aware that he had betrayed himself,” having revealed the deeper meaning behind his suggestion that Gallaher, “will put his head in the sack . . . like everyone else if he finds the right girl” (*D*, 76).

increasingly suggests the revelation of anything that is not immediately apparent. It balances this out with two further uses of betrayal in its more direct sense—as a pernicious, harmful breach of trust. At this time, it seems that Joyce was not concerned with maintaining the distinction. Consider, however, that as Joyce becomes increasingly intoxicated by the dramatic and thematic possibilities of betrayal in his autobiographical fiction, he ceases to use “betrayal” to indicate “unintended exposure” altogether. While *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* makes use of some conjugation of the word[s] “betray[s/ed/al]” three times⁴⁹ and *Ulysses* five,⁵⁰ not a single one of these uses has betrayal as an unwilling exposure.⁵¹ As Joyce increasingly refines his theorizations of betrayal as a form of interpersonal and grandly historical necessity, he begins to shy away from diluting the force of the key word of his master theme by diffuse and incautious use. The sense of drama that Joyce packs into the word betrayal is achieved and maintained in part through cautious and infrequent use. When he makes use of the word, he is sure that it will have its effect.

Compare Joyce’s frugality and caution with Conrad’s comparatively liberal treatment of it. Conrad, along with Joyce and Shakespeare,⁵² could rightly be described as one of the leading literary analysts of betrayal, having dwelt on the theme in several of his major works.⁵³ On one page of *Under Western Eyes* we find the protagonist of the novel, Razumov, offering an astute dissection of the logic of betrayal in which some form of the word appears four times in a few lines. Here the

⁴⁹ “they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats” (*P*, 34); “Didn’t the bishops of Ireland betray us in the time of the union” (*P*, 38); “Can you say with certainty by whom the soul of your race was bartered and its elect betrayed . . . ?” (*P*, 193).

⁵⁰ “her gay betrayer” (*U*, 1.405); “of lost leaders, the betrayed, wild escapes” (*U*, 3.243); “And what, though murdered and betrayed” (*U*, 9.1036); “the Williamites . . . betrayed us” (*U*, 12.267); “misappropriation of public money, betrayal of public trust” (*U*, 17.2184).

⁵¹ These figures are correct to the best of my knowledge. I’ve done my best to catalogue every use of the word, but it is possible one or two have evaded me.

⁵² And Homer and Shakespeare most prominently.

⁵³ As well as *Under Western Eyes*, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, and a number of his short stories take up the theme quite openly.

repetition strengthens the effect, but on several other pages of the novel⁵⁴ we find Razumov “paus[ing] in the door way” long enough “to ensure his face did not betray his angry curiosity and mental disgust”; we find “eyes [that] betrayed no animation”; and someone who “betrayed no sentiment.”⁵⁵ It may be that Conrad hoped to play the two meanings off against each other for ironic effect, but for the most part what occurs is actually an awkward dilution of the force of the very idea the book professes, so powerfully, to be about. While Conrad was clearly enthralled by the dramatic and theoretical possibilities of betrayal, he does not appear to have had Joyce’s connection to the word as a nexus point for a powerful range of themes and emotions.⁵⁶ Joyce’s refusal to dilute the power of this word is a testament to his insistence on maintaining all its melancholic, melodramatic, angry, bittersweet, saccharine intensity.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart? There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience.” Joseph Conrad, *Under Western Eyes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), 38-39.

⁵⁵ Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*, 29, 121, 91.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of Conrad and betrayal, see, in particular, Robert Hampson, *Joseph Conrad: Betrayal and Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992). While these authors are obviously quite different, this thesis attempts to do many of the things Hampson’s book does: place betrayal at the centre of an author’s writing practice, tie it into a conception of identity in relation to culture and community, and understand that author’s approach as developing over time.

⁵⁷ One might compare this to his use of the word “faith” in *Portrait*. This was a word rich in meaning for Joyce—one need only think of his claim to Lady Gregory that he had “found no man yet with a faith like mine”—and of fundamental relevance to betrayal. After all, it is usually faith that is betrayed. Yet in *Portrait*, Joyce uses the word twelve times, ten of which directly refer to the Catholic Church as “the faith.” The other two are merely colloquial uses by Mr. Casey and Temple that carry a potent ironic charge. 35; 108; 141; 148; 165; 188; 190; 282; 226; 249; 38; 229. Joyce actively makes use of the ironic potential of this word’s various uses, playing Stephen’s “faith” in Catholicism off against his growing faith in himself. Similarly, his mother’s “faith” is seen to be misplaced, in that it moves further towards the church as Stephen moves further towards Europe and his personal destiny.

Joyce and the narrative of betrayal

Part of the problem with using betrayal as a catchall to identify any kind of “exposure” is that such exposure does not necessarily require or include a preceding act of “dedication,” which Joyce understands as part of the drama of betrayal. Stanislaus Joyce, in a statement that represents perhaps his most insightful piece of criticism, remarked that his brother James “was always of the opinion that a dramatist could understand only one or two of life’s tragedies, and that he always presented different aspects of the few he understood. One of the tragedies that obsessed my brother’s imagination, beginning from the time when he first understood the Mass as drama, was the tragedy of dedication and betrayal.”⁵⁸ Though we should always take Stanislaus’s declarations about his brother with a pinch of salt (especially those that begin “my brother *always*”) it is hard to argue with the prevalence of just such “drama[s] of dedication and betrayal” in Joyce’s writings. Not only does Joyce regularly fall back on these tropes, he does so in reference to a remarkably wide range of material: political, historical, personal, sexual, and platonic relationships, national narratives. When Joyce (supposedly) claimed that a dramatist could understand only one or two of life’s tragedies, he was not suggesting that a writer could only write about tragedies that fell easily and obviously into that category. On the contrary, his intuitive and methodological understanding of those tragedies acted as a lens through which the diverse data of existence was refracted; betrayal was one of the ways Joyce narrativized and dramatized the stuff of existence. The tired question of whether Joyce *really* felt betrayed by his Dublin contemporaries et al thus changes shape a little. Questions about the sincerity of his emotion are complicated by the realization that whatever martyr complex Joyce may have possessed, his representations of that sense of martyrdom were largely shaped by a process of dramatization that almost always seemed to have the refractive pressures of this structure of betrayal built into it.

It is important to understand that I am not suggesting that Joyce was *unable* to narrativize or dramatize without reverting to crude descriptions of betrayal, or that, concomitantly, betrayal is written into every element of his texts. Rather I am suggesting that the “drama of dedication and betrayal” represented a coherent series of tropic variations with which Joyce felt intuitively comfortable. The ultimate reason

⁵⁸ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 168.

for this connection to betrayal will always, I think, remain beyond the remit of criticism. I will argue, however, that his upbringing in John Joyce's particular brand of Parnellism, the Catholicism of his education at home and at school (the narrative of Jesus and Judas), and his own tendency to identify with those who had been betrayed, all led to an acute understanding of the dramatic qualities of such events and a keen eye for where such dramatic readings were available. While this led Joyce to think of his own life in such terms in so much as he wished to think of his own life in dramatic terms, it also led him to strongly associate—and at times conflate—the processes of dramatization (by which I mean both “turning into drama” and making “dramatic” in the more colloquial sense) with the processes of reading (and then writing) betrayal.

Sources for betrayal

Joyce was eight years old when Charles Stewart Parnell's leadership of the Irish Parliamentary Party was challenged by the majority of its parliamentary members. A year later—after a long, bitter, and acrimonious political struggle—Parnell died of heart failure brought about by stress and exhaustion. Parnell's death marked the final act in a public and social trauma in which central Irish concerns (most prominently religiously defined morality and “home rule”) were played out against each other, but just as importantly to the young Joyce, it marked a breaking apart of a fictional harmony within the Joyce household. His aunt on the one side defending the role of the priests, his father on the other lamenting the death of the “uncrowned king of Ireland” and striking out against the church, Tim Healy (as well as the majority of the Irish Parliamentary Party that had broken with Parnell), and the Irish people for their “betrayal” of Ireland's Moses. The Christmas dinner scene in *Portrait* appears to recreate rather closely the conflict within the young Joyce; his allegiance to the Parnellite camp was not so surely in the ascendancy as it would be later in his life. But it is precisely because the young Joyce was forced to choose, in a certain sense, between Dante and his father, the church and Parnell, that his identification was so strong. His wholehearted acceptance and repetition of the betrayal narrative of Parnell's fall was not merely an initiation into a way of viewing a single event in Irish history. It was, for the young Joyce, a form of bonding with his father, a confirmation of his place as the favourite son, an attempt to deserve his father's affections. Can you imagine how Joyce would have felt, at nine years old, to have had his father's

approval to such an extent that his naive poem, “Et tu Healy,” should be printed up and handed out? At this very early stage there was a conflation between Joyce’s sense of himself as possessing artistic talent, his father’s love and approval, and, importantly, a reading of Parnell’s fall as caused by betrayal.

As I will discuss shortly, I am hesitant to pursue a psychoanalytic reading of Joyce’s writing. I could, in an act of wild psychoanalysis establish this moment in Joyce’s life as defining the mental space of his writing career. But, while I put this anecdote forward as possibly pivotal, I don’t claim that it planted an unconscious motive force to Joyce’s writing that would survive, in a powerful though submerged form, in his adult unconscious. At the age of nine I have little doubt that the desire to please his father was fairly central to the satisfaction this act of literary production provided, but I would be suspicious of any reading of Joyce’s work that placed some residue of this youthful desire at the core of Joyce’s mature writing. Indicative, yes; formative, perhaps; but not defining. What is important is that from a young age, Joyce was being introduced to a heady mix of powerful emotions—love, hate, sex, violence, pride, envy, greed, anger, pity, tragic resignation, angry vindication—all constructed through a recurring set of structures, mediated by well-chosen words. Stanislaus establishes the founding moment of Joycean betrayal in the Catholic mass. I cannot argue against this, but I would argue that in Parnell’s fall Joyce found a narrative with a far greater applicability and scope. As he grew, Joyce would come to find that he had at his disposal a powerful literary toolkit through which even the most mundane of events could be made grand. It is also important, I contend, that his sense of these narratives as malleable constructs, as rhetorical structures that he could himself manipulate, resulted immediately in his first publication—the raw thrill of having been accepted into this cultish world of drama and story-telling must have been overpowering. Writing began for Joyce as precisely this rhetorical reorientation of the world into the betrayed and the betrayers, the heroes and the villains. But Joyce did not remain a child forever. By the time he came to write his great works, he was *deeply* aware of the nature and magnitude of his interest in betrayal and of the degree to which this interest was *at times* obsessive, paranoid, and imbalanced. What I am willing to assert with some confidence is that Joyce’s youthful conflation of writing with betrayal—and, most importantly, with *effective* writing—established a train of thought that would shape his writing career. Once the involuntary associations with

parental praise had long faded, Joyce would come back to betrayal time and time again as a source, a structuring principle, and tropic stockpile for his writing.

Though self-identification with the betrayed Parnell would of course play a major role in Joyce's self-image as an artist and as an Irishman, the degree to which he learnt this self-association from his father has been widely overlooked. In their biography of James Joyce's father, John Wyse-Jackson and Peter Costello describe how often John Joyce came close to his hero Parnell, indeed how like Parnell John felt himself to be, in manner, in outlook, and, after Parnell's removal from power, in their propensity to be betrayed. They describe just such a post-Parnellian occasion when John offered his services to the remaining Parnellites as an electioneer in an attempt to win a seat in Cork (John's home city) at the July 1892 general election. John was "not due any time off work" so he "pleaded illness (a ploy he had used before), then caught the train down to the city." Unfortunately for John, the Parnellites lost the election and he was spotted, apparently "thriving," by someone who knew him and knew his occupation. For when he returned to work, he "was reprimanded and his file taken down again from the shelf." Though the incident is not in itself remarkable, John's reaction to it was. Rather than accepting blame for what he had done, he bristled at the idea that anyone should have turned him in and, "[t]hough he may never have discovered the informer's identity, John was becoming more and more convinced that there was a conspiracy against him. There had, after all, been a conspiracy against Parnell."⁵⁹ The degree of identification that John felt with Parnell should not be underestimated. He idolized Parnell for what he had done, what he had tried to do, and how he had gone about it. Parnell was of "his sort" and John confused his own scornful superiority with the sombre diffidence he saw in Parnell. While the young James would take from Parnell's fall the lesson that "great men" in Ireland are always betrayed before they can complete their work, John took from Parnell's fall a similar, though less grandiose message: men like himself, the right kind of men (ambiguously defined), were always at risk of being betrayed.

All this John Joyce passed down to his eldest son who, as his father's favourite, had greatest access to his father's colourful accounts of his activities. John was not a quiet man, and as such his conviction that he was the victim of persecution was

⁵⁹ John Wyse Jackson and Peter Costello, *John Stanislaus Joyce: The Voluminous Life and Genius of James Joyce's Father* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 171.

broadcast constantly into the ears of his then twelve year old son. John was still a towering and impressive figure for Joyce and, already primed by his father's accounts of Parnell's treatment at the hands of Healy and the anti-Parnellites, was prepared to think of his father in the same way. After all, John's fortunes had seemed tied up with Parnell's for the majority of Joyce's life. John's political ambitions and his winning character ensured that he was continually "mixing with the great" and was thus brought into contact with Parnell and other key figures in Irish nationalism in the 1880s.⁶⁰ His failed attempt to get selected as a nominee for Cork in the 1885 election, though it did not shake his faith in Parnell, would contribute later to his distrust and distaste for Tim Healy; it had been his brother Maurice Healy who had been selected ahead of John.⁶¹ His excitement throughout the mid 1880s was entirely wrapped up in the march towards independence that Parnell represented for him and the majority of Ireland at this time. When Parnell later fell, taking Home Rule with him, it was as good as a direct attack on John himself. In these early years, Joyce would have heard recounted his father's many misfortunes, always and ever the fault of someone else, the result of a conspiracy, or a betrayal. The disappearance of a satchel with the "municipal rates in it" was spun into a yarn in which John had been set upon by a "cad with a pipe" in the Phoenix Park.⁶² His children were perhaps the only ones to believe his tale, which emphasized all the more that he was an eternally put upon man, who deserved to be a good deal more than a rates collector, and indeed would have been were it not for misfortune. This misfortune would morph permanently into persecution and betrayal in the period after Parnell's fall. Faith in the reality of forces aligned against his father and against Parnell was a matter of youthful credulity (why would he disbelieve his father?) but it also represented a powerful psychological stake. So much was placed on betrayal and persecution as a way of explaining John Joyce's failure to elevate himself beyond rates collector (indeed to explain his falling well below that position) that Joyce's acceptance of betrayal as a force at work in his life was conflated psychologically with the status of his father. The dramatic possibilities of betrayal as a theme were made evident to Joyce at exactly the same time as he became aware of his talent as a writer. It may be too much to claim that

⁶⁰ Jackson and Costello, *John Stanislaus Joyce*, 124.

⁶¹ Jackson and Costello, *John Stanislaus Joyce*, 134.

⁶² Jackson and Costello, *John Stanislaus Joyce*, 141.

this would define his career as a writer, but we can certainly say that Joyce's awareness of the dramatic possibilities of betrayal must have been heightened by the fact that betrayal was such a part of the drama of his family life. He had not only experienced the pathos of betrayal as it affected his literary heroes, but as it affected, quite directly, his family. In *Portrait*, Joyce offers an account of how his protagonist, Stephen, is "thrilled" by the "spoken word," the language of betrayal. My contention is that Joyce was himself introduced to betrayal not as a political position—though through Parnell it came to him as a political position—but as an incredibly powerful, incredibly loaded set of formal, thematic, and linguistic concerns. Before he understands the politics that betrayal represents, he understands the effects of its artistic representation. Moreover, the sense of betrayal as something mystical and malevolent, as a force of history that acted on the grand and the quotidian scales, was founded in these early experiences. After all, it was as natural for the young Joyce to accept the underlying forces of betrayal at work in the world as it was for him to accept the underlying force of gravity in the falling of an apple or, differently, the beneficence of God in the rising sun. Each supposition explains an occurrence in the world through the positing of an invisible force. Among other things, Joycean betrayal seeks to recapture this sense of betrayal as somehow immanent, as saturating quotidian reality.

**"I can psychoanalyze myself:" Psychoanalysis, psychology, and
"intellectualizing" the self⁶³**

In the autumn of 1919 one of Joyce's patrons, Mrs Edith Rockefeller McCormick, tried to arrange for him to be psychoanalysed by her friend and adviser Carl Jung. Joyce's superior retort—"I can psychoanalyze myself"—may well have lost him Mrs McCormick's patronage. But though Joyce was famously sceptical about psychoanalysts, the analysis of the psyche had always been of great interest to him. Perhaps his scepticism about Jung and Freud was a similar form of embattled professional rivalry as that which led him to be so dismissive of other, especially

⁶³ *FW*, 522.34.

Irish, writers.⁶⁴ Joyce's particularly complex brand of psychological realism had from the first relied on a powerful capacity to dig deep down below purely conscious rational motors to the psychological core of his characters' behaviour. At various stages in his life Joyce displayed an interest in dream interpretation that was kept proudly separate from any institutional methodologies, regularly interpreting his own, Nora's, and others' dreams using a sense of symbolism, emotion, and psychology derived from and developed through artistic rather than "scientific" practice.⁶⁵ Where other writers saw great possibilities in the developments of psychoanalysis, Joyce seemed to perceive a turf war, a battle over the depiction and explication of the realms of the conscious and subconscious mind. Freud and Jung were muscling in on a market that Joyce felt already belonged to literature.

Unsurprisingly for Joyce, his most powerful psychological studies (at least early on) were drawn from his own experience and that of his close acquaintances. Harry Levin has suggested that "[t]he history of the realistic novel shows that fiction tends toward autobiography. The increasing demands for social and psychological detail that are made upon the novelist can only be satisfied out of his own experience."⁶⁶ For Joyce, the writing process almost always began with a fierce contemplation and analysis of his own thoughts and experiences. Stanislaus wrote in his *Dublin Diary* of Joyce's "extraordinary moral courage," which he felt allowed his brother to "say the most shocking things . . . not because they are shocking merely, but because they are true."⁶⁷ Joyce, upon reading this (he was in the habit of reading his brother's diary), corrected his brother on the basis that "moral courage" did not accurately describe him. "When the Bard writes," he said, "he intellectualizes himself."⁶⁸ Ellmann is sceptical of the difference between Stanislaus's and Joyce's

⁶⁴ His absurd treatment of Padraic Colum is one good example of how such rivalry led Joyce to behave, but it also shows how much nicer he could be once the heat of competition died down. See, for example: Ellmann, *JJ*, 134-135.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Ellmann, *JJ*, 317, 436-8, 546-50.

⁶⁶ Harry Levin, "The Artist (1941)," *"Dubliners" and "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man": A Casebook*, ed. Morris Beja (London: Macmillan, 1973), 83.

⁶⁷ Stanislaus Joyce, *Dublin Diary*, ed. George Harris Healey (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 18-19.

⁶⁸ Ellmann, *JJ*, 138. I've paraphrased and quoted from Ellmann's account, which was, I presume taken from Stanislaus's own memory of events.

conceptions, thinking that the latter amounted to much the same thing couched in “more esthetic language.”⁶⁹ But whereas Stanislaus’s conception is of Joyce as a fearless confessor—he thinks of him here as a future “Rousseau for Ireland”—Joyce takes his attempt to move away from such terminology seriously. For one thing, though Stanislaus is thinking of Joyce as a writer, he is focussed really on his qualities of character—what he “says” to people more than what he writes. That Joyce would then aggressively refocus the discussion onto a matter of writing practice—a description of writing in practice—is telling. As I hope to show through this thesis, the distinction that Ellmann glibly brushes away is in fact central to Joyce’s conception of his fiction-writing process.⁷⁰ Of course, at the time of his comment, Joyce had not produced a great deal of fiction and his comments cannot be taken as wholly representative of the practices that would produce his major works. Yet, as well as some poems and a number of reviews, he had completed (in 1900) and destroyed (in 1902) “the first true work” of his life—a play titled *A Brilliant Career*⁷¹—and sketched with varying degrees of complexity, at least seventy “epiphanies” ranging from literal transcriptions of overheard dialogue to lyrical recitation of remembered dreams.⁷² Joyce may not have been an experienced writer just yet, but his understanding of his skill and purpose was developing rapidly through these experiments—the “epiphanies” in particular would have a powerful role to play in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*. As such, I would see Joyce’s considered

⁶⁹ Ellmann, *JJ*, 138.

⁷⁰ This is true of his more “standard” fiction-writing—*Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, *Exiles*, *Ulysses* in particular. Stanislaus is thinking mainly of Joyce’s epiphanies, which, since they are self-consciously transcriptions of the artist’s perceiving consciousness, are rigorous accounts of Joyce’s own mind. But he is also talking about elements of Joyce’s early stories (which would go into *Dubliners*).

⁷¹ Ellmann places the date of composition of this play as “the summer of 1900.” At any rate, it was complete enough for Joyce to send it to William Archer 30 August 1900. The quotation above comes from Joyce’s dedication to the play, which reads: “To / My own Soul I / dedicate the first / true work of my life.” Ellmann gives a summary of the play, including Archer’s response, in *JJ*, 77-80.

⁷² A Walton Litz suggests that Joyce produced “at least seventy-one” epiphanies between 1901 and early 1904: *PSW*, 157.

correction of Stanislaus as representing an understanding that would underpin his writing practice for at least the next fifteen years.⁷³

The approach Joyce gestures towards in correcting Stanislaus can be characterized broadly as an acute impersonal analysis of the self. To intellectualize, one presumes, does not mean here to remove emotion from analysis but to find some way to look upon and interpret those emotions without merely repeating them or reading through them. To find a way, in short, to see those emotions for what they are—to understand where they come from, and to what end they strive. Joyce suggested in a February 1905 letter to Stanislaus that the “individual passion [was] the motive power of everything.” We can see in his fiction an attempt to understand the nature of these passions down to the finest detail and in the finest degradations. As I will outline in my discussion of Joyce’s non-fiction, the passions tangled up in the complex that is betrayal represent a defining interest for Joyce. In his fiction, he set out to understand and dramatize these passions exhaustively (though not, of course, exclusively). What Joyce’s distinction between “confession” and “intellectualization” allows us to do, is make a hard separation between the role of betrayal in Joyce’s personal life—both as a “hard-wired,” involuntary response to hardship and as a motivational, consolatory, and justificatory tool—and his analysis of these mindsets and others in his fiction. While it should hardly need to be said that Joyce is not Stephen and Stephen is not Joyce, there is a tendency in Joyce criticism—that goes back to the earliest reviews of *Portrait*—to make this conflation. More dangerous than this kind of conscious acknowledgement of the connection, however flawed, is criticism that does so without acknowledging the shaping force of Joyce’s biography on our reading of the texts. As Mark Wollaeger has suggested, while the “naivete of early criticism has been replaced by more self-conscious usage, some . . . critics still analyze the two-headed creature Stephen/Joyce.”⁷⁴

⁷³ As with so many things, this process breaks down in *Finnegans Wake*. But even the most ambitious sections of *Ulysses* maintain a reliance on the general principles Joyce alludes to here.

⁷⁴ Mark Wollaeger, “Between Stephen and Jim: Portraits of Joyce as a Young Man” in *James Joyce’s “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man”: A Casebook*, ed. Mark Wollaeger (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

This common tendency becomes particularly problematic when we attempt to understand Joyce's interest in betrayal. Since this interest borders on obsession, and since this obsession is visible also in his own life, the temptation is to accept Stephen's paranoia as indicative merely of Joyce's own acceptance of betrayal as a part of Irish life and not to ground these betrayals in purposes contained within the text(s). To put it another way, we might take simply Joyce's claims in his non-fiction that Ireland is a nation of gay betrayers, and see the multiple betrayals of *Dubliners*, *Portrait*, *Exiles*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* as the logical result of this conviction. In assuming that Joyce sees betrayal everywhere, we lose sight of the extent to which this conviction is itself analysed, broken down, and reformed in his writing. Moreover, we lose sight of the complex uses to which Joyce puts these betrayals in his texts. In my chapter on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, I attempt to understand Stephen's developing sensitivity to betrayal not simply as a representation of Joyce's own paranoia—as an account and an apology for events that have occurred—but as an analysis of the role that that betrayal might be able to play in the *Künstlerroman* Joyce creates. The contrivance at the heart of Stephen's paranoia is exposed to analysis and found to be a constituent part of the narratively satisfying conclusion to the novel. In making this claim and others in this thesis, I sometimes stray into dangerous territory—Mark Wollaeger might accuse me of using “characters as windows onto the author's hidden desires”⁷⁵—but, in maintaining a strict emphasis on Joyce's own distinction between “confession” and “intellectualization,” and by steering clear of the psychoanalytic temptations thrown up by my subject matter, I intend to avoid producing a “Stephen/Joyce” of my own.

I accept to some degree Harry Levin's premise that Joyce's reliance on his own experiences was a natural by-product of his fictional process and commitment to an advanced form of psychological realism. But I do so without accepting his broader premises and associated conclusions.⁷⁶ In seeking to produce the most finely observed characters, Joyce's best source was his own experience. Similarly, the greatest source Joyce possessed for his understanding of the workings of betrayal were his own thoughts, feelings, and declarations. But, contrary to Levin, Stephen is

⁷⁵ Wollaeger, “Between Stephen and Jim,” 344.

⁷⁶ For Levin's basic approach to “Stephen/Joyce,” see “What was Modernism,” *The Massachusetts Review* 1.4 (1960): 609-630.

not a mouthpiece for Joyce's modern world-view. Despite his brother's corrective, Stanislaus does not appear to have been willing to leave the framework of confession behind. In *My Brother's Keeper* he suggests that Joyce's writing is in essence a way of "confessing in a foreign language," as if the act of incorporation was merely one of coding one's sins in language abstruse enough that it could be made safely public—an attempt to achieve the satisfaction of exposure without the concomitant risk. Since Joyce had abandoned the Catholic confessional, Stanislaus sees him embracing a secular one. This dynamic envisages first of all a need on Joyce's part to achieve some secular absolution, a demand for forgiveness that requires an acknowledgement of one's own sinfulness. This idea is problematized throughout Joyce's fiction, where both Stephen and Richard Rowan separately refuse the consolations of confession on the basis that, in a godless universe, there is no other sufficiently elevated to judge them. Moreover, as I will argue, both men construct confession as an inherently perilous situation, a giving over of power that leads, necessarily, to betrayal.

The line I maintain between writing as an act of confession and writing as an act of intellectualisation does not negate the fact that these texts nevertheless represent a startling form of controlled, but near-total, exposure that creates a potentially confessional dynamic between author and reader. But in emphasizing intellectualization over confession, Joyce attempts to distance himself from the material of his own life. The confessional possibilities of his texts are kept always in mind, so that, when Stephen is asked (in *Portrait*) whether he believes Rousseau to be a "sincere man," he "laugh[s] outright" and says: "He was . . . I fancy . . . an emotional man" (*P*, 200). Given Stanislaus's avowed desire to see his brother become the "Rousseau of Ireland," the reference seems unavoidably loaded. Davin's desire to judge Rousseau on the "sincerity" of his self-depiction is neatly dodged by Stephen, who appears to reject the grounds of the question. In desiring confession, Rousseau records only the history of that desire. It is hard not to read this moment as a *mise en abyme* for the whole of Joyce's autobiographical fiction, which plays continuously with the reader's eagerness to read it as confession,⁷⁷ even as it insists on its own

⁷⁷ Or, at least, as autobiography, which, though not quite the same thing carried with it many of the same features. See for example Robert H. Deming's discussion of the emergence of an "autobiographical school" of Joyce criticism, in: Deming, *James Joyce: The Critical*

status as an act of intellectual reconstitution.⁷⁸ This distinction, between “intellectualization” and “confession”—this scepticism about the utility of confession as a mode to describe Joyce’s writing, combined with an openness to confession as a model for understanding the games Joyce’s fiction plays—is maintained throughout this thesis.

Joycean betrayal

The aim of this thesis is not to overthrow a dogma that is rapidly approaching its centenary. Rather, I have set myself the task of getting to the bottom of an aspect of Joyce’s writing that has for too long appeared so self-evident as to not need questioning. So, in the first chapter of this thesis I attempt to read Joyce’s Trieste non-fiction with a close eye on what it can tell us first of all about his writing practice. That is to say, when Joyce sat down to produce writing that needed to be

Heritage, vol. 1, 1901-27 (London: Routledge, 2007), 10-11. See also pages 50, 80, 89-91, 93, 95, 98, 100, 102, 105, and 112 for varied examples of this critical tendency.

⁷⁸ This doesn’t nearly get to the end of the issue of confession in Joyce’s writing, which is a rich and as yet perhaps under-studied area. John Nash provides a sophisticated reading of the way that Joyce investigates and deconstructs the confessional relationship in his fiction, particularly as regards the confessional potential encoded within autobiographical fiction and its relation to censorship and surveillance. See, particularly, “Surveillance: Education, Confession, and the Politics of Reception,” in John Nash, *James Joyce and the Act of Reception: Reading, Ireland, Modernism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 62-97. David Cotter has suggested that Joyce “used confession as vengeance,” mimicking the Catholic urge to “reveal all” by exposing Ireland’s obscenity to itself. Cotter’s desire to hold onto the idea that Joyce is himself confessing through his fiction is problematic—as is his suggestion that Joyce uses his fiction to “confess” (Cotter’s word) his own “masochistic masturbatory fantasies”—but the image of Joyce imitating confession as a way to undermine it is suggestive. David Cotter, *James Joyce and the Perverse Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2003). John Paul Riquelme has provided a fairly exhaustive reading of the role confession plays within the narrative of *Portrait*: John Paul Riquelme, “Desire, Freedom, and Confessional Culture in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,” in *A Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Richard Brown (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 34-53. Several contributors to Joseph Valente’s *Quare Joyce* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998) also address confession as a feature of Joyce’s texts.

arresting and original, but not revolutionary or aesthetically groundbreaking, how did he do it? More specifically, what role did the narrative structure of betrayal play in this process and how did Joyce manipulate the basic constituents of a drama he had learnt at his father's side into a model that could be repeated and renewed time and again? Part of this approach requires an insistent focus also on the purposes of Joyce's non-fiction, not primarily in terms of their status as potential political manifestoes, but as the product of a period of extreme and unusual uncertainty for Joyce. If Joyce took seriously the prospect of a career in journalism, as I will argue he did, then what role did betrayal play in maximizing his chances of success?

In approaching *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, I attempt to make sense of the connection between Joyce the author and Stephen the "artist as a young man." Moving away from an image of Stephen as repeating Joyce's own paranoia, reliving Joyce's own experiences of betrayal, and overcoming Joyce's own hardships, I suggest that Joyce is conscious from beginning to end of betrayal as a performance, a narrative into which Stephen slots himself. While accepting the absurdities into which Stephen must move at times, Joyce allows betrayal a special position for its capacity to console, buoy up, and motivate Stephen as he progresses through a teleological narrative (the *Künstlerroman*) that he seems to feel pulling him along. I take the normal separation from the family that the child experiences as the "family romance" in Freud's description of it as a model for a far more conscious, far more extreme severance with family, nation, and race in *Portrait*. Betrayal proves to be the mechanism by which Stephen achieves and consoles this painful manoeuvre.

Moving away from Stephen, the two chapters dealing with Joyce's largely unloved play, *Exiles*, seek to understand the play as Joyce's most concerted attempt to make sense of betrayal as a (necessary) structural element of human relationships. The process of "dedication" or "commitment" that Stanislaus identifies is provided an exaggerated significance as it is seen to bring about the immediate threat of betrayal. This is not to say that a dedication leads inevitably to betrayal, but the experience of spiritual exposure that the act of commitment is seen to bring about is constructed as intolerable. The first of these chapters deals with Joyce's resumption of hostilities with Ireland as he investigates a new aspect of exile. If exile is maintained on the basis that failure is inevitable in an Ireland that must, out of some historical imperative or racial flaw, destroy those who will save it, then what would it do to those who return to it, (published) book in hand? The rather vague restrictive and

destructive forces he dramatizes in his non-fiction and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are constructed in greater detail as provocations to “self-betrayal,” a form of compromise that is seen as fatal. The second *Exiles* chapter takes up the theme of sexual or adulterous betrayal, which, though it was hardly new to Joyce’s writing (*Dubliners* has several examples of it), is investigated in depth for the first time in this play. *Exiles* is seen to challenge a conception of jealousy as “sensational,” working consciously against the bodily obsessions of Shakespeare’s *Othello* to produce an account of the cuckold as potentially heroic. The tradition of adulterous literature, which positioned the cuckold as a helpless, often comically ignorant victim, is turned on its head as Richard Rowan seeks a complete knowledge of the adultery that *may* befall him. This pursuit of absolute knowledge is, ultimately, seen as an attempt to master the unmasterable, as Richard ends the play declaiming his desire to love Bertha not in knowledge, but in doubt.

The fifth chapter returns to Stephen as Joyce does. Having taken betrayal to its theoretical extreme in *Exiles*, Joyce becomes interested more in the pathos of Stephen’s stagnation than in the potential glory of his overcoming. Stephen is deprived of the capacity to narrate himself through betrayal in the way he was accustomed in *Portrait*. The figure of the betrayed mother is found to interfere fatally with the narratives of overcoming Stephen had relied on and he spends the day caught between the desire to sever finally with his family, race, and nation, and the realization that that severance would be painful and, perhaps, impossible. The paradigm of absolute separation, complete isolation, that betrayal helped narrate, is ultimately abandoned in favour of an acceptance of entanglement.

The final two chapters deal with Molly Bloom’s adulterous betrayal of her husband Leopold. I construct my argument as Joyce did, following first Bloom’s journey towards acceptance (in chapter six), before giving Molly the last word. *Ulysses* offers a significantly different image of adulterous betrayal to *Exiles* and it is perhaps because Joyce was able to express the farthest reaches of a doubt masquerading as certainty in his play that he was able to express so tenderly and completely Bloom’s far less impassioned anguish. Through Bloom, Joyce questions the boundaries of betrayal; at what point does an act of betrayal *become* an act of betrayal? In the act or in the conception/imagination? The role of sex as the ultimate synecdoche for betrayal is challenged and abandoned, while the traditional role of cuckold breaks down even as Bloom appears to embody it. Ultimately, Molly’s

betrayal is seen to be not the sexual act itself, but her decision to exclude Bloom from the fantasy it describes. The boundary between fantasy and reality that the novel challenges is ultimately restored by this act. Molly's decision towards the end of her monologue to reintroduce Bloom into this fantasy relationship by encouraging him to *play* the role of cuckold provides the sense of optimism and renewed affection that closes the novel.

Dubliners, Finnegans Wake, and the poetry

In conceiving of this thesis I was forced to make various determinations about what could and could not be included. A theme as pervasive as betrayal could not be dealt with in its entirety, example by example, quotation by quotation. I would not be building up a theory from a sparse array of textual mentions, but from a large body of work, much of which tackled the problem head on. As a result, I decided early on that the contribution I felt I could make to discussions of Joyce's most obviously autobiographical texts and his journalistic work was greater than that I could make to discussions of *Dubliners*, *Finnegans Wake*, or Joyce's poetical works. There is no doubt that all of these works contain a great deal that is of interest to a study of Joycean betrayal. As I have suggested, Matthew Campbell and Jefferson Holdridge have gone some way towards doing the work that I neglect here. In the case of *Dubliners*, the betrayals that occur are generally of a more subtle form than those that I deal with in this thesis. Is the complex sense of loss and self-awareness that Gabriel experiences in "The Dead" really a sense of having been betrayed? Has Gretta betrayed him with the memory of the dead Michael Furey? Joyce's notes for *Exiles*, where he discusses the virginity of the soul, would suggest that perhaps she has. Has Gabriel betrayed Ireland by attempting to set its political liberation to one side in pursuit of his own Europeanization? Will Eveline be betrayed into prostitution by Frank and would leaving her family be in itself an act of betrayal? The manipulations of Corley in "Two Gallants" would probably read as a betrayal to the maid he manipulates, but is it really represented to us as a *betrayal* in *Dubliners*, with all the sense of drama this word carries with it in Joyce's writing? Perhaps not. Betrayal was certainly one of Joyce's defining themes in *Dubliners*, but he does not make it the centrepiece or keystone of the book in the way that he does with those texts I am dealing with here. *Finnegans Wake* offered a somewhat different challenge. Betrayal is present, without question, from the opening pages of the book and it continues to

provide one of the key historical and dramatic structures around which the book is built. I am convinced that a lengthy study of the precise workings of betrayal in *Finnegans Wake* would be valuable and interesting, but a cursory five to ten thousand words would offer little. It is just too big and too broad a theme, too interrelated with too many other themes. This brings me on to my final introductory point. This thesis never set out to catalogue, discover, or re-evaluate the full range of references to betrayal (historical, political, personal, or literary) in Joyce's writing. A brief glance at any of the many Joycean reference books would prove that that would have been a hopeless task.⁷⁹ Nor do I profess to tell the whole story of Joycean betrayal, only what I consider to be its core manifestation as a structural principle that is both theoretical and dramatic.

⁷⁹ Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses: an Annotated List* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961) does not index betrayal, but one finds any number of references within the text. This is true also of Don Gifford, "*Ulysses*" *Annotated* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) and Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

Chapter One: Writing Drama, Writing Betrayal: Joyce's Triestine Non-Fiction

Introduction

In the five and a half years between writing his first piece for *Il Piccolo della Sera* in February 1907 and beginning his series of lectures on *Hamlet* for the Università Popolare in September 1912, Joyce published eight further pieces for *Il Piccolo*—"Home Rule Comes of Age" (19 May 1907), "Ireland at the Bar" (16 September 1907), "Oscar Wilde: the Poet of "Salomé" (24 March 1909), "The Battle Between Bernard Shaw and the Censor" (5 September 1909), "The Home Rule Comet" (22 December 1910), "The Shade of Parnell" (16 May 1912), "The City of the Tribes" (11 August 1912), "The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran" (5 September 1912)—and three lectures at the Università Popolare—"Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages" (27 April 1907), "Realism and Idealism in English Literature: Daniel Defoe" (March 1912), and "Realism and Idealism in English Literature: William Blake" (March 1912).⁸⁰ These Trieste articles and lectures, like the bulk of Joyce's "critical" writings have long been troublesome sources for the critic. Early on, they were largely dismissed as curios that sat uneasily with the dominant view of Joyce as a metropolitan, European, aesthete perched in his eyrie, disdaining the petty stuff of politics. But the last three decades have seen a dramatic about-turn in the treatment of these pieces, as the general direction of literary studies has moved ever further from a conception of High Modernism as deracinated and deprovincialized. Even before postcolonial studies had migrated into Joyce studies with sufficient force to demand a book on the subject—*Semicolonial Joyce* (2000)—several critics found in this strange

⁸⁰ Both Ellsworth Mason (*CW*) and, following his lead, Kevin Barry (*OCPW*) include an editorial from the *Freeman's Journal* under the title "Politics and Cattle Disease." This has been uncovered as a misattribution, the details of which can be found in T. Matthews, "An Emendation to the Joycean Canon: The Last Hurrah for 'Politics and Cattle Disease,'" *James Joyce Quarterly* 44.3 (2007), 441–55. As Matthews points out, a sub-editorial on the subject of cattle disease and referring to the "Styrian cure" did appear on 6 September 1912 as Charles Joyce suggested in a letter to Stanislaus, but, whether or not it was penned by Joyce (Matthews is doubtful), this single (four clause) sentence hardly represents a significant foray into politics or journalism. If it does indeed represent Joyce's last non-fictional enterprise until his short address to PEN on 5 April 1927 (regarding the illegal publication of *Ulysses* by Samuel Roth), then it is perhaps a fittingly underwhelming and off-message finale.

collection of articles and lectures material ripe for re-evaluation. Dominic Manganiello quotes freely from them in *Joyce's Politics*, as does Vincent Cheng in *Joyce, Race, and Empire*,⁸¹ Emer Nolan in *James Joyce and Nationalism*,⁸² Len Platt in *Joyce and the Anglo-Irish*,⁸³ and Enda Duffy in *The Subaltern "Ulysses"*.⁸⁴ Since Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann first edited and published Joyce's *Critical Writings*, we have had a new, more politically aware edition by Kevin Barry, whose annotations and introduction take the pieces more seriously as statements of Joyce's thought. While these critics do not all agree on the precise significance and meaning of Joyce's journalistic and critical non-fiction, it is clear that the "indifference" that Andrew Gibson reads in Mason and Ellmann's "cursory annotation . . . is no longer acceptable."⁸⁵

Yet it is also certain that we must treat these pieces carefully. The proliferating ambiguities of Joyce's fictional texts are to be welcomed, but in presenting themselves as part of another discourse entirely—political journalism, literary criticism—Joyce's Trieste articles demand to be treated differently. Though always a fruitful source of pithy quotations, they remain a source of some considerable, though measured, suspicion. One can use these pieces conditionally to support an argument made strongly through reference to one or more of Joyce's literary texts, perhaps an anecdote or two from *James Joyce*, but one cannot begin with these piece and work up. Whereas the non-fictional writings of avowed and lifelong critics such as Virginia Woolf or T. S. Eliot may be safely quoted as long as the usual caveats are maintained, there is the prevailing sense that Joyce's rhetorical formations must be strained through several more layers of cautious equivocation. This is partly a result of their form. Openly rhetorical, the tone lacks the precise distancing we find in Joyce's literary works. Used to catching a glimpse of the artist behind his texts "paring his fingernails" and nothing more, it is disconcerting to read in these pieces

⁸¹ Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994).

⁸² Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁸³ Len Platt, *Joyce and the Anglo-Irish: A Study of Joyce and the Literary Revival* (Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 1998).

⁸⁴ Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern "Ulysses"* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

⁸⁵ Gibson, *The Strong Spirit*, 92.

the image of an author thrusting itself bodily forward. We are not sure if this author figure is, indeed, *Joyce*—with all the illusion of finality that such a declaration entails—or some version of him, filtered through some specific performance of a more complex selfhood. Much of the suspicion regarding these pieces comes, I think, from the sense that the Joyce we are forced to posit and construct from imperfect clues in his literary texts (the distant genius behind the works) is suddenly so close and, though Andrew Gibson might disagree, so disappointing. These pieces, while they display some of Joyce’s obvious wit and intelligence, show also his flaws. The rhetoric becomes tiresome and overwrought, the phrasing, while effective, also lacks the measured subtlety we come to expect from Joyce’s prose. It is also, I suspect, not so much that the reader fails to fit the author of these pieces into their fanciful image of a deracinated modernist but that she cannot imagine the author of *Ulysses* as stating a positive opinion of any kind. *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, which *appear* at times to treat all views with equal derision and equal humour—in reality all views are not, of course, treated equally—seem a world away from the pieces we find in Joyce’s Triestine journalism. This is true even when one recognizes a phrase that has recurred, often ironically, in one of Joyce’s literary texts.

Terence Killeen has offered a typically common-sensical response to these suspicions. Embodying the cautious embrace of these pieces that I described above, Killeen accepts that “[t]he . . . pieces concern[ing] Irish politics . . . are Joyce’s most direct and unmediated expression of political opinion.” But Killeen feels also that “[t]oo much can be made of the positions espoused in these articles, and too much has been made of them in some recent publications that wish to enlist Joyce in the post-colonialist cause.”⁸⁶ What Killeen stresses, however, is that Joyce’s Triestine writings (most of them at least) are “indeed works of journalism Joyce remains true . . . to certain general principles but this does not necessarily imply consistency in particular instances. Journalism is of its nature tied to its occasion, its period, and should not be pressed too hard beyond that occasion.” Joyce is, like all journalists, Killeen suggests,

⁸⁶ Terence Killeen, “From the ‘*Freeman’s General*’ to the ‘dully expressed’: James Joyce and journalism,” in *Irish Journalism before Independence: More a Disease than a Profession*, ed. Kevin Rafter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 201; 204 . Killeen cites by way of example: Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Vincent Cheng *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

“sincere and committed at the time of writing but circumstances and attitudes may change, without breach of good faith being thereby involved.”⁸⁷ I share Killeen’s insistence on the compositional moment and on seeing these pieces not merely as flawed or immature examples of Joyce’s writing—as if they were an extension of his fiction—but as pieces responding to and playing with specific mediums of publication. I seek to understand Joyce’s reliance on betrayal here as something that emerges partly from a specific negotiation Joyce undergoes as he considers, seriously, though temporarily, a career in journalism. I also take something from Ellsworth Mason who, despite Andrew Gibson’s imputation of “indifference” offers some interesting insights into the workings of these pieces. Mason’s understanding *is* too easy, too cosily concerned with Joyce’s heroic and detached artistry, but in his suggestion that “[t]hese writings are best understood as part of that dramatized autobiography which [Joyce] spent his life in piecing perfectly together,” Mason suggests a line of inquiry that has been lost of late.⁸⁸ I take seriously the idea that Joyce saw these opportunities to publish and to speak publicly as a chance to carve out an image. Rather than a “dramatized autobiography” that reaches a final and perfect consistency, as if the Joyce struggling in Trieste had the same concerns as the Joyce flourishing in Paris, I argue that Joyce negotiates the image that he wishes to put forward as part of a pragmatic commodification of himself as embattled Irishman. Betrayal offers Joyce an effective narrative structure on which he relies in drafting his political pieces, but it also represents a way that he can maintain the embattled stance embodied in his exile.

“The problem is to get money”⁸⁹

So accustomed are we to thinking of Joyce as the pre-eminent literary artist of the twentieth century that we can at times forget that the path to artistic immortality was not so clearly marked for Joyce himself, that even his remarkable faith was shaken sufficiently to make him consider another life. His repeated flirtations with singing were not merely fantasies or passing fancies but attempts to translate one of

⁸⁷ Killeen, “James Joyce and Journalism,” 203-04.

⁸⁸ Ellsworth Mason, introduction to *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959), 10.

⁸⁹ James Joyce, *U*, 1.497.

his talents into a viable and lasting career. It is sobering to think that had Joyce been able to read music sufficiently well to win first place at the Feis Ceoil he may never have sat down to write any of his masterpieces. This annual “Festival of Music” represented an opportunity to win a year’s vocal tuition in Italy. Joyce had prepared seriously for this competition, borrowing heavily from Byrne and Gogarty in order to pay for lessons with Bernedetto Palmieri – the preeminent voice teacher in Dublin – at seven shillings each and, once the money began to run a little dry, from the less expensive Vincent O’Brien. He went so far as to rent a room on the pretext that he required a place in which he could practice his singing undisturbed and managed, with the help of C. P. Curran, to hire a piano. The effort would have paid off had Joyce acknowledged his inability to read music well enough to “sing an easy piece at sight.” The “startled judge,” Ellmann recounts, “had intended to give Joyce the gold medal” before he stormed indignantly from the stage at being presented with sheet music he had not seen before.⁹⁰ In contrast to Richard Ellmann, who remains unconvinced by Joyce’s efforts throughout this episode, I am not interested in this moment in Joyce’s life as a mere biographical curiosity in Joyce’s journey towards artistic immortality. I take seriously Joyce’s efforts in a way that Ellmann refuses to. Consider what Joyce’s literary legacy would have been had he won the Feis Coil, received his voice training in Italy, and gone on to have a serious operatic career. The sum total of his literary output up to this point would have secured only a footnote in histories of the Irish revival as a minor, enigmatic, and contrary figure whose literary promise never bore fruit. Even if he had returned to writing, it is fruitful to question whether he could have possibly written *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* from the less embattled position of working singer.

Pushing speculation aside, my point here is to emphasize that Joyce acknowledged the contingency and insecurity of his future. The sense of destiny we find within the narrative constraints of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* should not be read back into Joyce’s early adulthood. For all his declarative confidence, Joyce treated his development as a literary artist pragmatically. Though Ellmann continues to maintain a tone of coy incredulity on the matter, he acknowledges that the possibility of a singing career was not entirely quixotic. As he says, it was “in the middle of his rich book [*Stephen Hero*] and poor circumstances” that Joyce

⁹⁰ The quotations as well as the general narrative of events are taken from: *JJ*, 151-2.

“reconsidered” the singing career that he had previously “never pursued, but never abandoned.”⁹¹ In short, a combination of literary anxieties and monetary hardship—though not yet excessive amounts of either at this time—drove Joyce to consider an alternative career. Impressed by the example of John McCormack, who had risen meteorically from his own performance at the Feis Ceoil, Joyce saw singing as a way of making money and making a name; both concerns that had and would continue to spur and shape his writing. Ellmann’s rather glib conclusion that Joyce’s refusal to consider Palmieri’s offer of singing lessons in exchange for a share of concert fees was because the “tedious discipline did not suit him, and to be a second McCormack was not so attractive as to be a first Joyce” perhaps hides the fact that, for a moment at least, an alternative to writing, albeit one perceived as less glorious, was seriously considered. Ellmann himself suggests that Joyce retained the clippings that followed his recital at the Feis Ceoil because he “probably anticipated that they might be useful to him as publicity material should he revert to a singing career.”⁹² The ideal destiny towards which Joyce strove was certainly to become a leading literary artist, but when one sheds the sense of telos that comes with his eventual success, we can see in Joyce’s behaviour a genuine sense of unease. Without sacrificing his sense of himself as gifted or special, Joyce set about exploring suitable alternatives to the destiny he had chosen for himself. Though the hierarchy remained relatively clear, Joyce was acutely aware that to live required money and that literature was not guaranteed to provide it.

Reviewing his options: Joyce in Dublin

If we look at Joyce’s non-fiction writing chronologically and with an eye on the biographical context of these pieces, a pattern begins to emerge. Early on, he produces his University lectures and reviews of new books for various Irish newspapers. While in Ireland, his lecture topics were predominately esoteric philosophy, literary criticism, or personal intrusions into the cultural political field; his journalistic review work was almost completely devoted to literary and philosophical book reviews. There was an element of necessity here, as Joyce’s review work was at first attained through the help and influence of Yeats and Lady

⁹¹ Ellmann, *JJ*, 151.

⁹² Ellmann, *JJ*, 152*n*.

Gregory who wished to help him along as a writer. But this is precisely the point, the work Joyce set about doing, and the work Yeats and Lady Gregory helped him get, was directed consciously towards a specific goal. Joyce self-identified as a budding artist, was taken seriously in this endeavour, and helped to pursue it. The arrangement of materials Joyce wrote about at this time, and the form these writings took, were *determined* by their place in an imagined narrative. The teleological drive that shaped Joyce's activities was openly acknowledged and accepted. Thus, these reviews are shaped by two competing (but not contradictory motivations). Joyce must carry out this work in order to receive some small pay, perhaps only a free book (which could be sold on), but he must also retain clarity in his public image. After all, even if he was coming to have some small notoriety in Dublin literary circles, these reviews (though many were unsigned, few were truly anonymous), were his first chance at wide scale publication. As such, even if many of these reviews are, in Terence Killeen's words, "fairly perfunctory exercises . . . nothing in them can be read as a betrayal or a compromising of the stances Joyce had already enunciated."⁹³ The refusal of compromise as a fundamental Joycean principle plays an important role in this thesis. But here again, the word betrayal is being used to smooth over and justify an unnecessary or unhelpful leap. It is not so much, I contend, that Joyce was concerned to avoid betraying his own high principle, but that he was concerned to avoid compromising the future he envisaged for himself. He sets himself up as something like the "the subject of [his] portrait," the protagonist of his prose-poem-cum-manifesto-cum-personal history—John Whittier-Ferguson calls it, misleadingly, an "autobiographical essay"—"A Portrait of the Artist."⁹⁴ Pitched between "Their Bullockships" and "Their Intensities," Joyce's review work is either unremarkable, or remarkable only for its insistence on a contrary rejection of what he depicts as the twin pieties of Irish life. "Isolation," he writes in "A Portrait," is the first principle of artistic economy, but his literary reviews offer him the opportunity to make that isolation public and pointed. The real message of these reviews is not to be found in what they say about aesthetics, but in what they say about the public image Joyce was working to craft. These early reviews would have identified him as an able enough—

⁹³ Killeen, "James Joyce and Journalism," 200-01.

⁹⁴ "The subject of this portrait" is quoted from James Joyce, "A Portrait of the Artist" in *PSW*, 211. John Whittier-Ferguson makes his claim in the introduction to that piece, 203.

though idiosyncratic—critic and reviewer. If he were to become an artist of some standing, this was not a bad place to start.

It is clear, at any rate, that Joyce did not pursue these reviews for their own sake. Once the financial necessity of writing these pieces disappeared, so too did Joyce's interest in writing them. This is similarly true, I suggest, of Joyce's early journalistic pieces, but there is also a pragmatic shift in approach as Joyce leaves Dublin and, therefore, the "public" for which he was performing. While in Dublin, Joyce set about establishing his literary reputation but upon leaving he pursues, fancifully, a position as the French correspondent for the *Irish Times*. As well as "The Motor Derby," *OCPW* includes one rejected article on the Paris carnival and one unsubmitted piece on a Quixotic Frenchman's attempt to colonize North Africa.⁹⁵ These are not the topics of an aspiring litterateur; spurred on by the basic need for money, Joyce appears to have accepted the necessity of a career that would allow him to retain some degree of satisfaction. Though journalism was hardly as glamorous or as satisfying as literature, it did at least offer him the opportunity to write for a living. At least as Paris correspondent to an Irish paper he would have had the satisfaction of knowing that his Dublin friends, acquaintances, and antagonists were reading his name and Paris together; even if he would have preferred the words James Joyce and Paris to have appeared at the beginning of a book of his own making. This was writing that would pay, writing that would lead to publication, and writing that would profess his progression from the parochialism of Dublin. As it turned out, Joyce was (inevitably) rebuffed and rather rapidly left journalism behind. It would be several years before he tried his hand at it again.

"A talent for journalism"

Joyce, despite having a fair amount of reviewing experience behind him and a strong grasp of Italian, did not seek out any such work upon moving to Trieste in 1905. While in Pola, Joyce asked Stanislaus to "look up every English review for the past year and see if there is an article on D'Annunzio's 'Figlia di Joro'. If there is not I would prepare an article."⁹⁶ Perhaps Joyce wished to be D'Annunzio's champion as he had been Ibsen's and Giordano Bruno's, but he soon gave up on reviewing as his

⁹⁵ *OCPW*, 100-101.

⁹⁶ Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 28 December 1904, James Joyce, *SL*, 48.

attention turned to publishing stories from *Dubliners*.⁹⁷ It was not until nearly two years later in 1907 that Joyce made any such attempt, and this was only after being invited directly by the then editor of *Il Piccolo della Sera* and Berlitz student Roberto Prezioso to correct the “errors” Joyce had complained to him about in an article on the death of John O’Leary. The resulting article, “Fenianism: The Last Fenian,” comes across not as an exercise in correction but as an attempt to lay out a more complete conception of the nature of politics in Ireland, its relationship to England, and the possibility of liberation. It is here, importantly, that Joyce first attempts to lay out in his non-fiction a clear case for betrayal as a necessarily constituent part of Irish history, contemporary Irish life, and Irish political efforts. Neither his reviews nor “A Portrait of the Artist” refer directly to betrayal, relying instead on the more general suggestion that commitment to either Church or nation in any organized way is anathema to the artist properly constituted. “The Last Fenian” is utterly quotable and accounts of Joyce’s personal and political relationship to Ireland invariably return to statements made in this article: that James Stephens’s construction of “cells of twenty-five men each” was “a plan of campaign eminently suited to the Irish character as it minimized the possibility of betrayal;” that “in Ireland, just at the crucial moment, an informer appears;” that “the Irish, even when they break the hearts of those who sacrifice their lives for their country, never fail to show a great reverence for the dead” (*OCPW*, 139-141).

Joyce’s first journalistic piece in Trieste, “The Last Fenian” seems entirely representative of the writing he produced during this period. These pieces are bombastic and heavy with a rhetoric of distaste; they appear to state a position on Irish affairs, but generally the position is formed largely from negatives and generalities. When betrayal is cited as a fundamental feature of the Irish race, it appears to be offered as a serious analysis, yet, surely, such an analysis is patently absurd? Rather than argue for or against Joyce’s investment in this conception of Irish history, or to debate the degree to which he wished to air the grievance with Ireland these pieces appear to encode, I will stress an understanding of these pieces as quasi-literary. That is, rather than scan them, primarily, for argumentation, I will read them as examples of Joyce’s *writing*. How can we understand the process by which

⁹⁷ See, for example, *SL*, 50-54, for Joyce’s attempts to have his stories published by the *Irish Homestead* and other Dublin publications.

these pieces came together and, of most relevance to this thesis, what can this tell us about the way Joyce thought and wrote betrayal?

To understand “The Last Fenian” requires first restoring it precisely to the moment of its production. Prezioso’s offer came along at a time of peculiar sensitivity for Joyce. His son and first child, Giorgio, was nearly two years old; in the time since his birth Joyce had submitted *Chamber Music* to four publishers in Dublin and London with no success, *Dubliners* was still no closer to publication (Grant Richards had agreed to publish in 1905 but later changed his mind), Joyce’s dissatisfaction with *Stephen Hero* was rapidly reaching its denouement—he would throw it in the fire within three months—and Nora was five months pregnant with his second child, Lucia. Joyce was struggling artistically, romantically, and financially. Joyce’s time in Trieste had begun optimistically, after the isolation he had experienced in Pola—he complained to Stanislaus that he had “no-one to talk to”⁹⁸—he was confident that he would “complete ‘Dubliners’ by the end of the year and . . . follow it by a book ‘Provincials’.”⁹⁹ This positivity rapidly drains away, however, as financial realities begin to impose themselves. Within a few months, Joyce’s concern for *Dubliners* is reduced to the simple question: “Do you think it will make money?”¹⁰⁰ Uncertainty sets in regarding not only his immediate situation but the future his “voluntary exile” was supposed to enable. “It is possible that the delusion I have with regard to my power to write will be killed by adverse circumstances.”¹⁰¹ These circumstances can be resolved only through money. “I want money. You cannot imagine I want to continue writing at present. I have written quite enough and before I do any more in that line I must see some reason why.”¹⁰² His reason for writing, not previously in question, is suddenly consumed by the need to finance his (rather meagre) lifestyle. “It is impossible for me to write anything in my present circumstances. . . . What really is the point is: whether it is possible for me to combine the exercise of my art with a reasonably happy life.”¹⁰³ This is no generalized worry. After detailing to the

⁹⁸ Letter to Stanislaus, 19 January 1905: *SL*, 51.

⁹⁹ To Stanislaus, 12 July 1905: *SL*, 63.

¹⁰⁰ To Stanislaus, 1 September 1905: *SL*, 72.

¹⁰¹ To Stanislaus, 24 Sep 1905: *SL*, 77.

¹⁰² To Stanislaus, 18 Sep 1906: *SL*, 106.

¹⁰³ To Stanislaus, 18 October 1906: *SL*, 121.

last lire his incomings and outgoings, he suggests to Stanislaus, once again, that “You can see how it is impossible for me to write or do anything in such circumstances.”¹⁰⁴

This specific concern for his finances spills over into a generalized dissatisfaction as Joyce rails against the country he would continue to live in for the next eight years. “I am damnably sick of Italy, Italian and Italians, outrageously, illogically sick.” More importantly, this seemingly endless cycle of anger, dissatisfaction, and worry takes its toll on his imagination. It is not just that he refuses to write until he sees a purpose for that writing, but that the works he left Ireland to write begin to fade from him: “My imagination is so weak I am afraid all the things I was going to write about have become uncapturable images.”¹⁰⁵ “I have the idea of three or four little immortal stories in my head but I am too cold to write them. Besides, where’s the good. . . . The other day I was thinking about my novel. How long am I at it now? Is there any use in continuing it?”¹⁰⁶ Even Stanislaus, the only constant support to Joyce throughout this period, appeared to lose faith. Joyce complains wryly to Stanislaus, “You appear to be exasperated at my financial distress. No wonder.”¹⁰⁷ By the end of his time in Rome, Joyce had reached a crisis point. The word is thrown around all too glibly at times, but there was a genuine air of decision in Joyce’s letter to Stanislaus on 1 March 1907—6 days before Joyce moved his family back to Trieste; 21 days before *Il Piccolo* published “Fenianism: The Last Fenian.”

I have come to the conclusion that it is about time I made up my mind whether I am to become a writer or a patient Cousins. I foresee that I shall have to do other work as well but to continue as I am at present would certainly mean my mental extinction. It is months since I have written a line and even reading tires me. . . . I have answered several adverts and hope to be able to get some position in which I can go on with my writing. It seems to me better to try that line as it might bring me more money. . . . You seem to imagine that I should settle down to make myself a *carrier* here, beginning at 250 frs a month and ending 20 years hence at 450 frs a month, with all the accompaniments of such a *carrier*, a

¹⁰⁴ To Stanislaus, 13 November 1906: *SL*, 128.

¹⁰⁵ To Stanislaus, 7 Dec 1906: *SL*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ To Stanislaus, 10 Jan 1907: *SL*, 141.

¹⁰⁷ To Stanislaus, 10 Jan 1907: *SL*, 143.

quarter, a servant, children at school, a small bank a/c and a great fear of everything in me. This is what I *should* do but I doubt I *will* ever do it.¹⁰⁸

Upon returning to Trieste, the problem was, indeed, “to get money” but it was also to restore some sense of direction to a life and career that had stagnated. Joyce was resigned to “other work” but recommitted to pursuing the literary career he was too exhausted to carry out. When, within two weeks of resigning himself to these realizations, Joyce was offered the opportunity to be published and to be *paid* for writing, it was an opportunity he could not let pass. There is no sense that he had planned this—no evidence that he was soliciting reviewing or journalistic work—yet in this opportunity he found a realistic way to supplement his income tutoring in English without leaving his literary ambitions behind. As such, what was resting on this piece was not as intangible a satisfaction as stating a political opinion, but a very real need to turn this one-off article into a more regular source of income. Joyce was auditioning for a new audience. He needed to establish himself as a unique voice in a city that was, as John McCourt has suggested, fairly well-informed about Irish issues.

Il Piccolo della Sera rarely missed an opportunity to write about countries which suffered under foreign domination and so the Irish question received a lot of coverage—even if it was usually through the filter of English news agencies. So when Joyce wrote his leading articles he knew he was writing for a readership already reasonably acquainted with matters Irish.¹⁰⁹

Joyce had secured the article on the basis that coverage of Ireland tended to contain too many errors—O’Leary had been printed “Leary”—but he could not rely on a slighter greater grasp of the details to secure his place as a regular commentator on Irish affairs. Reports could be reprinted (at a fraction of the cost) from English newspapers with a sufficient degree of factual accuracy. Joyce needed to spice up his article with a powerful, exciting narrative and a sense of authority that presented itself as entirely unique. He did this, I contend, by warping the material to hand into a

¹⁰⁸ To Stanislaus, 1 Mar 1907: *SL*, 151-54. This passage is heavily edited in a way that provides a far clearer sense of decision than is present in the original. The basic trajectory—dissatisfaction, a reduction in artistic powers, poverty—is the same, however.

¹⁰⁹ John McCourt, “Joyce on National Deliverance: The View from 1907 Trieste,” *Prospero: Rivista di Culture Anglo-Germaniche*, 5 (1998), 34.

narrative of drama and betrayal. Through this structure he was able to make a commodity of his specific form of embattled, isolated Irishness.

Writing drama, writing betrayal

In “Fenianism: The Last Fenian,” the command of James Stephens is praised for organizing men into “cells of twenty-five men each,” a plan of campaign, Joyce suggests, “eminently suited to the Irish character since it minimized the possibility of betrayal”. But, just as “everything seemed to be going well,” as Joyce puts it, Stephens is arrested. “The reason for the collapse of so well-organized a movement? Simply because in Ireland, just at the crucial moment, an informer appears” (*OCPW*, 139). In “Home Rule Comes of Age,” Joyce introduces an ironic biblical precedent, saying that the Irish Parliamentary Party “[gave] proof of their altruism when they sold Parnell, their master, to the pharisaical conscience of the English non-conformists, without exacting the thirty pieces of silver” (*OCPW*, 144). In “The Home Rule Comet,” Joyce argues that Ireland “has never been a faithful subject of England . . . nor has it been faithful to itself. . . . It always betrayed its heroes in their hour of need without even earning the bounty as payment” (*OCPW*, 159). When Joyce describes Parnell’s removal as leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, he claims that he “was deposed by the Nationalists obeying Gladstone’s orders. Of the eighty-three deputies, only eight remained faithful to him.” In case the simple fact of his having been betrayed is not enough to win our sympathy, we are told rather grandiosely that Parnell’s shade will not be a vindictive one, “the sadness that devastated his soul was, perhaps, the profound conviction that, in his hour of need, one of the disciples who had dipped his hand into the bowl with him was about to betray him.” Further, it “redounds to the honour of [Parnell’s] fellow-countrymen that they did not fail” his “final desperate appeal They did not throw him to the English wolves, they tore him apart themselves” (*OCPW*, 196).

The overall picture provided by Joyce’s Triestine non-fiction is one in which betrayal is an unavoidable constant in Irish history, a repeating and inevitable structure that sits behind or above more prosaic matters such as economics or politics. While Ireland’s dwindling population, the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church, English economic mismanagement of Irish resources, and, relatedly, the failure of Irish industries are all put forward as contributory factors to the ongoing trouble in Ireland, the perverse logic of pieces such as “Fenianism: The Last Fenian”

insists that the failure of Irish efforts is always, ultimately reducible to some act or other of betrayal. Or, more properly, that while these other matters operate logically, in the world of rational intention, betrayal sits behind or beyond this logic, derailing Irish endeavours. Joyce depicts an Ireland that has fought for various forms and degrees of liberation in various ways at various times under various circumstances, yet within this variation he asserts a single constant: “Ireland *always* betray[s] its leaders” and an informer *always* appears.

I will offer a political reading of this depiction shortly. First, by returning to the moment of Joyce’s first Triestine article, I hope to show that the preponderance of betrayal in these pieces is more an issue of aesthetics than politics. Given his audience’s basic knowledge, Joyce did not have licence to stray too widely from the basic facts of the situation when writing “The Last Fenian.” Perhaps as a result, he seems reticent to leave the well-trodden paths of the Irish nationalist narrative: Adrian IV’s papal bull, Robert Emmet, James Stephens, etc. But if his account appears at times startlingly traditional, this tendency is balanced by his withering dismissals of important parts of the Fenian narrative. Joyce’s imputation of betrayal as a primal historical force at work in Irish affairs is startling. His Triestine audience, who may well have been accustomed to an image of Ireland as plagued by betrayals—this was hardly Joyce’s invention—would almost certainly have been surprised to see this propensity turned into a criticism of the Irish themselves. In describing betrayal not as an unfortunate fact of Irish history, but as the defining historical and racial force at work in the country, Joyce was certainly setting out to catch his readers’ attentions. An Irishman dismissing Irish efforts, even as he asserts the necessity of the attempt, Joyce was making a commodity out of his particular Irish perspective. An Irishman offering an account of Irish history might appeal to the intellect, but an Irishman performing the anguish of an embattled history appealed to the emotions. For all the aggressive rejections of Fenianism, there is cautious optimism in Joyce’s account, a feeling that though the resulting society may not be all Joyce would want it to be, independence may be achievable. In a section of about ten sentences amidst his negativity, he takes the time to recount the merits, guardedly, of Sinn Fein and to suggest that “from many points of view, this latest form of Fenianism may be the most formidable” (*OCPW*, 140). It is in the tension between optimism and pessimism that Joyce hopes to ensnare the irredentist Triestine audience of *Il Piccolo Della Sera*. Their interest in Ireland was largely as a point of comparison, a metaphor perhaps for

the concerns of Trieste. The facts on Ireland they (for the most part) had. The triumphalist rhetoric they had. The English distaste for physical force nationalism they had. Joyce was seeking to provide them with something more sophisticated, and in so doing to suggest that he was the only man in Trieste from whom they could get it. Betrayal allowed Joyce to commodify a particular performance of Irishness, to make his bitter exilic state a unique selling-point for his journalistic persona. In describing an Ireland that “had driven its spiritual creators into exile,” Joyce refers implicitly to his own situation, establishing a position as a commentator with a unique, firsthand insight into the very processes that he is describing. If you want to know the truth about Ireland, he seems to be saying, don’t go to an Irishman in Ireland, who must by necessity be defeated or worthless. Go to the exile who knows Ireland well enough to realize that the only sane response is to leave it forever, whose very exile provides a constant proof of his value—if Joyce wasn’t capable of driving Ireland forward to some new dawn, so the logic goes, the dark forces of Irish history would not have effected his removal from the scene.

While Joyce’s attack on Irish self-destruction is emotive, the real appeal of the piece is his description of John O’Leary himself. Nominally an obituary, Joyce could be expected to offer an account of the major events of O’Leary’s life, suggest the influence he had on other figures, and offer a sentiment regarding what the world had lost. But using the most basic of facts Joyce transfigures O’Leary into an archetype of Ireland’s mistreatment, its betrayal of the men, and the values, that might see it to freedom. It is no surprise that when Joyce went in search of some dramatic narrative with which he could enrapture his readers he should turn first and finally to the drama of dedication and betrayal. With a short deadline and with his creativity flagging, Joyce turned to the language and the structure he understood best. The source material offers up very little in the way of betrayal; John O’Leary was well respected and well-loved after his return to Ireland. While he may not have had quite the revolutionary fervour with which he left Ireland, he was an influential leader in the Young Ireland movement, an active member of the Irish Transvaal committee, and, “on his return to exile was treated to universal respect.” As “the handsomest old man he ever saw,” Yeats later attributed that from the Young Ireland meetings he attended and from the books and words O’Leary gave him, came “all that he subsequently set

his hand to.”¹¹⁰ By all accounts, O’Leary remained relatively content from his return to Ireland in 1885, right up to his death. In order to construct his pathetic image of the betrayed old man, Joyce either amends the facts or distorts their depiction. This is a process of careful narrativization rather than selectivity. I will quote an extended passage, for it is in the layering in of pathetic imagery that this piece finds its effect.

O’Leary returned to Ireland after years of studious exile in Paris He was welcomed by his countrymen with accolades and would appear in public from time to time to preside over some separatist meeting or banquet. But he was a figure from a vanished world. He could often be seen walking along the river, a venerable old man dressed mostly in light clothes, with a flowing head of pure white hair, almost bent double with age and suffering; he would halt before the darkened shops of the antiquarian book sellers and then, having made his purchase, he would return along the river. He had little reason to be happy: his plans had gone up in smoke, his friends were dead, and very few people in his country knew who he was or what he had done. Now that he is dead, his compatriots escort him to his tomb with a great show of pomp, because the Irish, even when they break the hearts of those who sacrifice their lives for their country, never fail to show a great reverence for the dead. (OCPW, 140-41)

What is striking is how much work Joyce is having to do to convert the active, influential figure Yeats remembered with unrivalled fondness into the inert, broken, lonely man, Joyce requires. A simple trip to an antiquarian bookshop—a fairly neutral act into which could be loaded almost any emotive reading—is transfigured into a symbol of O’Leary’s own antiquity; he is left hanging on to the shreds of an old world that no longer exists, waiting patiently for death to finally confirm the life sacrifice that he had made decades previously. For death here is merely the long-awaited conclusion to a life that had ended for all intents and purposes upon his exile from Ireland. That informer, agent of a historical imperative, had killed O’Leary long ago. But the informer is not singled out for any special blame, since in this conception of Irish history his small personal act was always already inevitable. The local is but the manifestation of the general. And in Ireland the general will always end in betrayal.

While Parnell had the decency to, to paraphrase Joyce, “die of [his] broken heart,” O’Leary lived on, inconveniencing those who would otherwise have been able to reverence him properly in his martyrdom. For Joyce is certainly aligning O’Leary

¹¹⁰ A. Norman Jeffares, *W. B. Yeats: A New Biography* (London: Continuum, 2008), 21.

with Parnell, the archetype of the betrayed. But we need not imagine Joyce carefully and patiently forging similarities between the two stories. The structures of betrayal—and its accompanying tropes and metaphors—formed such a fundamental part of Joyce’s writing practice, and his particular picture of Parnell’s demise formed such a fundamental part of his picture of betrayal, that his slightly wrong-headed reading of O’Leary’s life and death could have been formed without a single conscious comparison with Parnell. While much of Joyce’s understanding of betrayal ultimately derived from his introduction to a certain version of the Parnell myth, the machinery by which Joyce conceived of these narratives swiftly gained independence from its founding story. Joyce’s imagination was permanently receptive to opportunities to foreground betrayal as an underlying structure in human, particularly Irish, affairs.

Joyce’s reliance on this set of tropes is further shown by his redeployment of them later on in “The Shade of Parnell.” Both O’Leary and Parnell are depicted as lonely and isolated men broken by the country for which they had given everything. Both men, similarly, are described as possessing a “broken heart,” their repayment for years of service, and are shown the respect they deserved only after death. Perhaps the belatedness of this honour and respect offers us another way of reading Joyce’s claim that the Irish were “the most belated race in Europe.” It is likely that Joyce had Parnell squarely in mind when writing about O’Leary as his criticisms of Ireland were rarely distanced from the fate of Parnell. But it is also the case that Joyce’s reliance on a relatively small set of tropes to produce his drama in these pieces shows a remarkable limitedness of invention. When pressed for time and eager to produce something dramatic that would win over an audience, Joyce fell back on the drama that he knew best, and the key tropes of that drama that he had learnt in his youth. That O’Leary should become suspiciously similar to Parnell in Joyce’s conception of him is indicative of the fact that while drama and betrayal were hard to separate, Parnell and betrayal were inseparable.

We must also acknowledge that Joyce, feeling the pressure to be memorable, was capable of hamming it up a little in order to elicit a response from his readers. One of the long-running problems with critical approaches to Joyce’s non-fiction is that we struggle to contend with the idea of Joyce as anything less than a writer of the greatest sophistication. These pieces are full of so many quick, crude effects—the kind of pithy rhetoric that has made these pieces so eminently quotable—that they

can make strange bedfellows with *Dubliners*, *Portrait*, and *Ulysses*. Yet perhaps it is time that we acknowledge that even these fictional texts indulge in the odd cheap thrill and that in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* at least, betrayal is so foregrounded partly because it has such an immediate, primal effect. At the least, we have to become more comfortable in accepting the idea that in composing these pieces, Joyce embraced a mode of writing that relied on certain immediate rewards in the hope that he might reap some immediate rewards of his own. This is not to say that he “sold out” or that he sacrificed the internal consistency of his thinking on any particular matter, but that the manner in which he expressed himself was intentionally eye-catching, occasionally to the detriment of finer sentiment. In relation to betrayal, at least, the cheap thrills of the non-fiction and the sophisticated analyses of the fiction both emerge out of and return to the same fundamental narrative understanding.

Making failure a bad thing again; redefining the Irish “volkgeist”

Care must be taken, if I am right in my analyses so far, to avoid treating Joyce’s attribution of betrayal as an essential Irish trait in the Trieste non-fiction writings as a completely sincere evaluation of the situation as Joyce saw it. Nevertheless, betrayal *does* play a powerful role in a coherent Joycean criticism of Irish revivalist conceptions of Irishness. The function of betrayal in Joyce’s counter-narrative is specifically aimed at neutering a prevalent Irish cultural discourse centred on a conception of failure as a spiritually satisfying and historically inevitable feature of Irish action. The indissoluble connection of betrayal with the figure of the Irish hero in Joyce’s Trieste writings on Ireland emerges out of and enters back into discourses on the nature and role of the hero (and artist-hero) in the future of the Irish nation, rejecting some aspects while embracing others. To understand what Joyce is writing against, it is necessary to leave him behind temporarily and to trace the development of a highly influential component of Irish political and cultural thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The essentialized national character debates in Ireland were about a good deal more than the rights of representation or the propagandist national cause—though these were, of course, important enough. The revival in Ireland came at the tail-end of a Europe-wide rediscovery of national character as a possible historical force and political motivator. Joep Leersen has ably summarized this development, as follows:

[N]otions of different characters or temperaments, each particular to a given political-ethnic community called a nation, had been current from the Middle Ages onwards; . . . each *volk* or nation came to be considered as a specific personality, each with its unique contribution to the variety of human culture.¹¹¹

This “unique contribution” is no small matter; it establishes within the panoply of nations a historical impetus, a historicist faith in the destiny of nations that is made discernible by analysis of the “character” of the nation and its reflection in the nation-state. It is into this context that we must place any criticisms (including Joyce’s) of the revivalist eagerness to establish a strict definition of Irish character.

After all, such discourses were widely accepted by the end of the nineteenth century, the old and established popular conceptions of the *volk* having been incorporated into more philosophically developed and robust systems of thought such as those of Fichte and Hegel earlier in the century, and adopted to great effect by various Romantic Nationalists throughout Europe as ethnically-driven independence movements began to take hold. To a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century observer, the history of political liberation throughout the nineteenth century was precisely one of ethnic romantic nationalism; to achieve liberation, or more properly self-determination, one must determine *who* constitutes that nation, and what it is about these people that is unique (thus justifying the boundaries and exclusions of that nation). The nation *was* conceived, as Bloom wished it, as “the same people living in the same place,” but it fell to those artists and thinkers of the revival to determine what constituted “the same people” in terms that were consistent with a history stretching back into the antiquity of the *volk*. This could not be achieved through reference to the modern, socio-economic, geographical definitions provided by capitalism without rendering the conception of the *volk* as a mysterious but historically active force. Finding the *volk* and determining to whom it applied became a matter of discovering and defining a political-ethnic community that could be traced back into antiquity.

For all its focus on the past, the revival’s purpose was eminently future-oriented. It was built on that romantic tradition already described, in which Hegel’s

¹¹¹ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination in Ireland: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 21.

conception of the *zeitgeist* as a moment in which a particular people—though not restricted to ethnicity this invariably was filtered through those terms in the nineteenth century—became the active determiners of their history, leaving behind them the memories of the long periods in which they were merely its passengers. The appeal of this to the Irish mind which was for so long accustomed to thinking of history in terms of repetitive oppression, a “nightmare” as Stephen puts it, is clear. As Seamus Deane has said, for the turn-of-the-century Irish mind history was an “inescapable category,” something that “happened to” the subject in an endlessly repeating series of re-enactments of violence, disappointment, and suffering.¹¹² The *zeitgeist* offered revivalist and nationalists an opportunity to overthrow a conception of Ireland as for 800 years oppressed and enslaved by history (and England), to become empowered within that history, and eventually to become the forgers of a future determined on their own terms. For all that the Revival encouraged parochialism and propagandized a limited conception of history, the motivations were reasonable within the terms of an Irish experience of disempowerment and the aims, overthrowing an entire system of historical experience, were anything but diminutive.

Defining the *volk* was, in a very real sense, the central purpose of the revivalist movement, as the political and cultural aims of the revival emerged largely from this drive. But the effect of the idea of the *volk* on conceptions of Irish history, and as a result its future, were complex and powered by contemporary political content. It was not enough simply to acknowledge the need for a uniformly described people, and in so doing to begin the process of identification. The *volk* destiny of the nation must be accounted for within the terms of contemporary reality. If, as the romantic discourses suggested, the history of a nation was connected on a fundamental level with the character of that nation’s peoples, then any flaws or unsatisfactory aspects of that nation’s past and present required explanation with reference to the character of the nation. As Leerssen again puts it, the development of the concept of the *volk* reached a “point where each *volkgeist* or national character was seen as a nation’s cultural and moral DNA: a blueprint for each ethnic group in its historical destiny.”¹¹³ If, as seems undeniable, the Irish historical experience was so deeply unsatisfying, it was of the

¹¹² Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 12.

¹¹³ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 21.

utmost importance to be able to square this history with the conception of the *volkgeist*.

Broadly speaking, the whole conception of the *volk* and the *volkgeist* offers up two main types of response to this problem, both providing viable routes for revivalist projects. The first of these responses begins by positing an idealized conception of an antiquated and, by being closer to the source of the *volk*, “truer” version of Irish character that has since been diluted or pushed to the fringes by any number of external factors. In the case of the revival, strong remnants of this originary character were seen to survive in the atemporally conceived outposts of Celticism (for instance, the West of Ireland) where, protected from the ravages of modern life, the *volkgeist* lived on in a less imperfect form. The strength of this response was in its adaptability. The reasons put forward for the degradation of the *volk* could be almost anything, and thus reflect the most prevalent forces acting on the group or individual expressing them. Miscegenation, immigration, urbanization, political change—perhaps through the emancipation or enfranchisement of one or more previously subjugated groups—social shifts brought about by economic, agricultural, and industrial developments. Any or all of these and more can easily be blamed for the erosion of supposedly traditional values that are seen, once the essential character of the *volk* is posited, as the *true* characteristics of the nation. Indeed, once the idea of the *volk* is accepted, change itself becomes deeply suspect and a nostalgic clinging to elements of Irish society most assimilable into a conception of the traditional or Gaelic/Celtic takes hold. Due to this adaptability and assimilability into contemporary anxieties, this response became the most widespread revivalist employment of the *volk*, and would explain a large part of the revival’s tendency to foster a parochial and backwards looking idealism. Old Ireland becomes true Ireland and the ills of contemporary society are deferred onto the loss of that true and happy destiny, the possibility of which can still be discerned in the remnants of folk-culture. The job of rediscovering and recreating this culture is then an attempt to restore Ireland to a more fulfilling and triumphant racial destiny.

The second of these responses takes the concept of the *volkgeist* as not only historically active but as being of *fundamental* importance to the action of history. If Ireland has been bound into a position of colonial oppression, economic hardship, and cultural suppression/eradication, then it is because this was the destiny laid out by the nature of the *volkgeist* of the Irish people. If England conquered Ireland, it is because

it was in their ethnic destiny to do so—in the clash of two *volkgeist*'s the English were seen to be, if not necessarily “superior”—the term does not really have a place in this type of system—then at least suited to overthrowing the Irish/Celtic *volkgeist*. Conceived like this, we can see how suitable this conception is to a colonizer's view, decontextualizing the actualities of colonial domination into an atemporal and ahistorical matter of fate. Indeed, these discourses, in an altered form, were used widely as a way of resisting Irish claims for self-rule. The Anglo-Saxon, described paradigmatically by Matthew Arnold, is eminently suited to government, sober rule, and economic and political guidance; the Celt, for all his positive characteristics, was always portrayed as too “romantic,” feckless, erratic, or even bestial for governance.

For all that this response seems completely unsuited to the revivalist project the revival did indeed manage to empower a version of this narrative. The English version posits an ideal character in terms conveniently suited to the contemporary conceptions of the Anglo-Saxon character and then proceeds to universalize the relevance of this superiority. But as I said before, the idea of the *volkgeist*, for all that it establishes local and relative superiorities, does not have any space for any ultimate ethnic superiority. That England conquered Ireland may reflect that the English character is more suited to conquering, but that is *all* it reflects. The attempt by English discourses to universalize relevance is an attempt to hide this fact, to pull the wool over the eyes of its colonies and to protect itself against anxieties of inferiority in spheres other than the economic, military, or governmental. Joseph Valente, in his explication of the “double-bind of Irish manhood,” has similarly shown how English hegemonic discourses sought to put forward Englishness as the perfect balance of the animal and the spiritual, the masculine and the feminine virtues. The problem for the Irishman, in this account, is that any attempt to prove this balance invariably collapses into evidence of imbalance. Eloquence, rather than being an example of intelligence or rationality, becomes a sign of excessive romance and femininity, and a lack of manly vigour. An attempt to force the matter, either through the physical force of the Fenians—who expressly foreswore the fine talk of parliament—or through political protest and parliamentary obstructionism, became a sign of uncontrolled masculinity or bestiality. In short, to be considered well-balanced, one had *already* to be considered well-balanced; it could not be shown by any other means.¹¹⁴ The trick

¹¹⁴ Valente, “Neither fish nor flesh,” 96-127.

of the revival was to accept this universalization, to accept Irish material defeat at the hands of England as being historically inevitable, to accept that England would always prove superior economically, martially, and technologically. By embracing an English conception of Ireland as incorrigibly romantic, the revival did not find a way through the colonial double-bind so much as cease to acknowledge its power to bind; agency was discovered within the very conceptions designed to deny it. By refusing to argue against the terms of England's sense of *volk* superiority, the revival sought paradoxically to find a form of empowerment that sat outside of the hegemonic structures of that very system. It is in this light that we must read the revivalist distaste for English materialism—represented by Joyce in the form of Mr. Deasy's claim that the Englishman's proudest claim is "I paid my way"—and the concomitant exaggeration of Irish spirituality, closeness to nature, and the purity of the peasant lifestyle.

The heroic artist and the *volk*

The best place to observe these discourses at work in the revivalist project is in their heroes, for as Wayne E. Hall has aptly put it, "the Irish writers of the 1890s seek over and over to create for their literature and nation a hero, to define his values and, most importantly, to determine what he is to do."¹¹⁵ It is in the hero that the *volkgeist* as imagined is made concrete and established both as a lament for what has faded out of Irish life and as an example of what must be brought back in. What is it then about revivalist forms of heroism that is distinctly Irish? In the last twenty-five years there have been a number of studies that have attempted to describe the unique experience of Irish history. Luke Gibbons has described it as a form of "attrition," an aspect of an "aphasic condition of colonialism" that denies the Irish subject the reassuring sense of "the continuity and permanence of English tradition"; an historical experience that meant that "even natives were considered strangers in their own land."¹¹⁶ Seamus Deane has similarly stressed the destabilizing forces of constitutional and insurrectionary failures from the seventeenth century onwards. The sheer attritional force of these regular disappointments, especially when framed by the "hybrid"

¹¹⁵ Wayne E. Hall, *Shadowy Heroes*, ix.

¹¹⁶ Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 6, 7, 134, 137.

semicolonial situation of being neither wholly colonial nor wholly national, has meant that “the idea of society and the assumption of stability have never been securely lodged in Irish experience.”¹¹⁷ One obvious response to this experience was the concerted attempt to “smuggle” into Irish culture the continuity it lacked through mythic accounts of Ireland as “the oldest nation in Europe,” a response, as shown above, that was also inspired by *volk* theories.¹¹⁸ In the absence of a stable present, nationalist leaders set about finding this stability in an idealized past.

By means of a mythological repetition of the ‘past,’ the nationalist leaders, it may be argued, sought to redeem Ireland. Incarcerated in a history of colonial oppression, the evangelists of the Provisional Republic appealed to a prehistorical mythic power whereby their present paralysis might be miraculously transcended. By *repeating* the names and deeds of the ancient heroes and martyrs of Erin they sought to revive her sacred destiny. The only way to redeem the nation seemed to be the negation of present history in favour of some Holy Beginning, some eternally recurring Past.¹¹⁹

But there were other less clear but equally influential developments in Irish culture that had a powerful role in defining the nature of Irish heroism. In attempting to forge a communal Irish experience, Lady Gregory offered an insight into Irish responses to this attritional history, pointing out that the (true) Irish poet was “in touch with a people ... whose heroes have been the failures ... who went out to a battle that was already lost.”¹²⁰

This experience of history makes absurd the figure of the all-conquering hero, exposing all too easily such fantasies as delusions, and eventually rendering such triumphalism inappropriate. As such, the heroic paradigm in Ireland shifts at the hands of the Irish writer towards a “dark” and “tragic” man, who is constantly thwarted.

¹¹⁷ Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, 10, 12.

¹¹⁸ Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, 137.

¹¹⁹ Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 212-13.

¹²⁰ Lady Gregory, “The Felons of our Land” in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, vol. 5: Irish Women’s Writings and Traditions*, ed. Angela Bourke, et al (New York: NYU Press, 2002), 1079.

[E]xternal forces . . . frustrate his intentions and overturn his accomplishments. Material victories prove ephemeral and sometimes lead to the complete ruin of the person who has relied on action; but more often, ‘too good for this world,’ he gains a moral victory in his loss. The external defeat necessary to define his heroism also confirms the superiority of his inner qualities: simplicity, innocence, disciplined pride, spiritual intuition, and the capacity for transcendent vision. The literary hero, like the Irish artists in their society, cultivates failure and frustration as an essential part of his experience, or else he withdraws completely from action.¹²¹

The material/spiritual dichotomy is hoisted as a weapon against English discourses of superiority, whose constant and ongoing material victory over Ireland is converted into a spiritual victory for Ireland. Defeat is thus figured as a form of spiritual development; while England accrues material success—in wealth, land, power—Ireland accrues an ever-deeper sense of spiritual ascendancy, “a spiritual power greater in its way than British national might.”¹²² By an act of perspectival magic, the central distress of Irish experience is thus converted into its greatest strength and consolation. If it was the *volk* destiny of the Irish people to be defeated materially, so was it their destiny to be the eternal victors of the spirit.

It is into these discourses of Irish superiority through inferiority that Joyce writes his Trieste articles and lectures, not merely as a voice of derision, but as a product of a similar set of cultural conditions. For Joyce’s writings make clear that he was particularly sensitive to this notion of history as an oppressive category, a reminder of endless failures. But the conversion of abject failure into resounding success by nothing more than a change of perspective appeared to him a mystification of reality. As Dominic Manganiello has put it, quoting Joyce’s own words, “Joyce insisted that we must accept life ‘as we see it before our eyes, men and women as we meet them in the real world, not as we apprehend them in the world of faery’.”¹²³ This emphasis somewhat overlooks Joyce’s commitment to an understanding of history guided by “speculative rather than positivistic methodologies.” He preferred “postulations of unconscious and irrational motors behind temporal occurrences and cultural developments rather than the operations of immutable laws or a rational or

¹²¹ Hall, *Shadowy Heroes*, ix.

¹²² Hall, *Shadowy Heroes*, xi.

¹²³ Manganiello, *Joyce’s Politics*, 1.

purposive Providence.”¹²⁴ Nevertheless we can say that when it came to Irish affairs Joyce was acutely sensitive to a form of mystification as consolation. Accepting the world “as we see it before our eyes” is not a question of veridical accuracy, but a desire to expose, even foreground the lowest and most contemptible aspects of existence, to lean towards pessimism as a route to honesty—*not* truth, which as a concept plays into the hands of oppressive and restrictive power discourses, but honesty, which resists consolation on the national level. Consolatory discourses should be valued only if they promote forward motion. As Oliver MacDonagh has put it,

a past seen in terms of subjection and struggle, seen as a pageant or tournament of heroic defeat, is one of the roads towards fundamental distrust of or even disbelief in achievement [I]t is true that the characteristic Irish time-frame inclines Irishmen to a repetitive view of history and that such a view inclines them—perhaps in defensive wariness and from fear of failure—to prize the moral as against the actual, and the bearing of witness against success.¹²⁵

Joyce calls on his country in “Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages”¹²⁶ to break with its history and be “finished once and for all with failures.” He does not mean merely that Ireland should *stop* failing—such advice would be hard to put into action—but that Irish cultural discourse should stop constructing failure as a good, stop seeking out failure as an end, and stop recalling the long history of past failures as if to legitimate the present. He ends resignedly, “I for one, am certain not to see the curtain rise, as I shall have already taken the last tram home” (*OCPW*, 126).

The concept of the *volk* is inherent within the Trieste articles about Ireland, which posit the Irish tendency to betray as being the main motivating force (for the worse) in Irish history. Rather than a destiny of spiritual ascendancy, the Irish *volkgeist* is thus described in terms that are intrinsically resistant to conversion into virtues. Whether it is the treatment of Parnell first by his party and then his people, or

¹²⁴ Margot Norris, “Joyce, History and the Philosophy of History,” *Palgrave Advances in James Joyce Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 219.

¹²⁵ Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of Anglo-Irish Conflict 1780-1980* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 213.

¹²⁶ He presented this lecture less than a month after publishing the article on John O’Leary in *Il Piccolo della Sera*.

the smaller betrayals that lead Joyce to claim that “in Ireland . . . an informer always appears,” the will or urge to betray—oneself, one’s nation, one’s friends, etc—becomes the only regularly defining Irish characteristic in Joyce’s work. If I am right in suggesting that the revivalist image of Irish history negotiates a space between two versions of the *volk* discourses of the nineteenth century—one stating that the Irish people suffer at the hands of oppressive forces that are too great for them to overcome, but are made spiritually superior as a result; and the other that only through a return to a more genuine Irish character can Ireland rediscover its destiny—then we can understand Joyce’s use of these discourses in the Trieste articles as more tactical than is usually accepted. The betrayal narrative works to undermine the *volk* discourse from within. In conjunction with his more sober claims against the possibility of describing Ireland in ethnic terms (in “Saints and Sages”) the betrayal narrative satirizes the whole conception of the *volkgeist* as a meaningful description of the nation. The *only* thing in which the Irish character is united, he suggests, is its greatest ignominy, thus eradicating the possibility of a spiritual heroism born out of a failure that, far from being laudable, is here described as emerging precisely out of a *failure* of spiritual heroism. The two strands of the Irish response to the *volk* discourses of the nineteenth century come together here in the form of a narrative that purports to accept its premises but deny its conclusions.

Chapter Two: Betrayal in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

The “thrill” of the “spoken word:” The language of betrayal

During Christmas dinner, shortly after Parnell’s death from exhaustion in October 1891, Stephen looks on confused as his father Simon—ably assisted by his friend Mr Casey—engages in an increasingly bitter and vociferous argument with Stephen’s aunt Dante. They are split over the role of the Catholic Church in Ireland, particularly regarding Parnell’s fall from power and grace (several prominent bishops and many local priests had campaigned against him on the moral grounds that a man who had carried on a long term relationship with a married woman was not fit to lead Catholic Ireland). Simon, no longer able to control himself, explodes into a rhetorical account of the many wrongs done to Ireland by the Catholic priesthood.

Didn’t the bishops of Ireland betray us in the time of the union when Bishop Lanigan presented an address of loyalty to the Marquess Cornwallis? Didn’t the bishops and priests sell the aspirations of their country in 1829 in return for catholic emancipation? Didn’t they denounce the fenian movement from the pulpit and in the confession box? And didn’t they dishonour the ashes of Terence Bellew MacManus?
(*P*, 43-4)

Simon reels off a litany of offences against the Church that was fairly typical in the aftermath of Parnell’s fall from power.¹²⁷ More interesting than the content of

¹²⁷ Parnell’s fall from power was actually a fairly complex affair. The “priesthood” that Simon Dedalus maligns, were not unanimous in their treatment of the divorce case. Regional, political, and personal discrepancies were rife and, even when the majority of churchmen did accept that Parnell’s position as de facto (political) leader of Catholic Ireland was untenable, relatively few “turned” on him. It is still difficult to produce a “neutral” account of Parnell’s fall, but it is generally agreed that Parnell could have saved himself (and ultimately his party) had he accepted political reality and taken a pragmatic vacation from frontline politics. His refusal to bend to tradition political wisdom had been the source of his unique, apparently inexplicable effectiveness, but it would also come to represent the major faultline of the dispute that dogged him until his death. The Parnellite position, vividly captured in Simon Dedalus’s litany of wrongs, would maintain the necessity of Parnell’s refusals; the anti-Parnellites argued instead that Parnell, despite his unarguable good work, had become an obstruction to the goals of the Irish people. The Parnellite irony kept alive throughout Joyce’s fiction and non-fiction, is that without Parnell at the helm, the Irish Parliamentary Party

Simon's speech is the specific effect it has on the young Stephen, who only partially understands the argument taking place. "His face was glowing with anger and Stephen felt the glow rise to his own cheek as *the spoken words thrilled him*" (*P*, 44. Italics mine.). Stephen does not respond so much to the historical or even rhetorical content, of which he struggles to make sense ("Who was right then?" [*P*, 40]), but to the rhetorical *form* in which this content is delivered: the "thrill" of the "spoken words." Language properly arranged and passionately delivered: these are the components of Stephen's early inculcation into Irish politics. It is *anaphora* and *erotema* not argument that wins the day.

Long before he is capable of constructing an involved political consciousness, Stephen is marked out as an anti-Church Parnellite by his emotional responses to the narratives, tropes, and language that constitute his father's bitter lament. His thoughts are confused and conflicted, but his aesthetic sense is less easily muddled. Stephen is marked out, more properly, by an inclination towards a certain kind of language, a certain kind of heroic martyrdom, and a certain kind of dramatic narrative. The flush of his cheeks—which, though inspired by language and speech, is importantly non-verbal—cannot lie. Even when Stephen attempts to apply his Jesuit logic to the sudden dichotomy he is presented with—the Church or Parnell?—his thoughts devolve inevitably into a judgement based on a purely imaginary and empathic image.

Who was right then? And he remembered the evening in the infirmary in Clongowes, the dark waters, the light at the pierhead and the moan of sorrow from the people when they had heard.

(*P*, 40)

The image Stephen recalls refers to the arrival of Parnell's corpse to be buried in Ireland. But of course, Stephen was not there; he remembers instead a fever dream he had while lying sick in the infirmary in Clongowes. Steeping in his sense of ill-use (he was pushed into slimy water by Wells) and the satisfaction of his moral superiority (he refuses to "peach"), Stephen takes great satisfaction in envisioning the mourners at his own funeral. This image then slips seductively into a vision of the crowds hearing news of Parnell's death. The "real," the solid, the mundane is

would fragment into ineffectualness. The fallow decades following Parnell's death fuelled much of the Parnellite mourning Joyce captures in *Simon Dedalus*.

surpassed by the emotive power of the fictional, which Stephen experiences as profoundly and improbably personal. When Dante says “hotly” that Stephen will “remember all this when he grows up . . . the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home,” the comment is doubly ironic (*P*, 42). Firstly because Dante’s prediction will backfire as Stephen grows up to be firmly set against the values she stands for, and, secondly, because it is precisely the “language he heard” that will remain most powerfully with Stephen. It is the *drama* of Parnell’s fall, rather than the political realities of his rise, that enchants Stephen.

Narrativizing the self, narrativizing betrayal

Stephen’s acute and developing sense of the “beautiful” or beguiling latches on to betrayal and martyrdom as nexus points for a literature rich in tragedy and high in emotional content. To put it simply, Joyce makes clear throughout *Portrait* that Stephen’s “tastes” lean heavily towards a literature formed in betrayal and martyrdom. When Stephen envisages his own death wrapped up in Parnell’s, he is drawn above all to the beauty of the imagery of tragic death and drawn similarly to the possibility for envisioning his own life in such terms.

He wanted to cry quietly but not for himself: for the words, so beautiful and sad, like music. The bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell!
(*P*, 26)

For Stephen the language of tragedy is so beguiling that he is driven to desire his own dramatization; he wishes to be made both more and less than real through language—language “made beautiful. It cannot be a coincidence that Stephen’s fever-dream represents some of the most quietly crisp and poignant language in the novel. *Portrait* appears, moreover, to respond consciously to its own status as arranged narrative (i.e. a novel). It opens, after all, with Stephen embedded in another narrative altogether: “a moocow [coming] down along the road” (*P*, 1) From this point on, Stephen will fit himself into different developmental narratives as he seeks one by which he can finally find satisfaction. Stephen simply does not know how to live without a sense of enclosed narrative momentum to give shape to the quotidian chaos of his life.

There is a long though not always distinguished strain in Joyce studies (the “lunatic fringe”)¹²⁸ that seeks to understand *Portrait* and *Ulysses* (even *Exiles* and *Finnegans Wake*) as having emerged from the pen of Stephen Dedalus himself. Max Saunders has offered the most recent and most sustained construction of this position, suggesting that *Portrait* is “an entirely fictionally authored book . . . a book not only including Stephen’s writing, but possibly entirely written by him.”¹²⁹ Saunders is understandably cautious in making this claim—“possibly” and “perhaps” repeat throughout the chapters—and ultimately the results of his arguments are more suggestive than convincing. But that such conceptual contortions have appeared necessary to critics down the years is telling about the pressures Joyce’s autobiographical fiction puts on the analytical reader. More precisely, this strain of criticism seems to be responding to pressures of narrativization that are present within the texts themselves. So much weight is placed on Stephen’s attempts to find a way to adequately narrate his life that *Portrait* comes to be seen as precisely that narrativization. As will become clear as the chapter progresses, I see such a step as unnecessary and erroneous. Joyce is in control of a fiction that keeps an ironic and knowing awareness of Stephen’s role in his own self-making. *Portrait*, rather than Stephen’s self-validating account, is an account of self-validation. It is a narrative about narrativization, a story about Stephen’s growing ability to tell stories about himself. As I will suggest, *Portrait* maintains a distance from Stephen’s narrativizations even as it insists on their necessity.

I have spoken already about the introduction to the workings of the narratives of betrayal Joyce received at his father’s side. In *Portrait*, Stephen is similarly introduced to betrayal in this way as Joyce offers an account of the processes by which such a narrative could take root in an impressionable mind. On the night of yet another family move—on this occasion, from Blackrock to more humble accommodation in Dublin—Stephen sits “on a footstool beside his father” who, evidently feeling sorry for himself, begins “a long and incoherent monologue.” There is no direct quotation and, since Stephen understands “little or none of it” we are

¹²⁸ Max Saunders, *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 315.

¹²⁹ Saunders, *Self-Impression*, 299. This is the first place Saunders makes this claim, but it is the general thrust of his argument throughout chapters seven and eight of the book (291-370).

privity only to Stephen's response to his father's words. He becomes "slowly aware that his father had enemies and that some fight was going to take place" (*P*, 77). Just as at the Christmas dinner table, Stephen responds not to his father's logical argument, but to a dramatic or narrative appeal. His father's enemies are necessarily vague (for they are non-existent), but to disbelieve his father at this point would represent a significant break with that authority, a (painful) acknowledgement that the father is capable either of significant error or falsehood. It is unsurprising then, that Stephen should accept his father's garbled explanation for his struggles, since invested in this belief is, essentially, the entire status of his father as paternal authority. Loyalty to the father (the maintenance of a "natural" bond between them that is increasingly under threat as Stephen matures) becomes deeply intertwined with the observation of Simon's semi-mystical narratives of persecution and betrayal.

Stephen accepts his father's narrative as a description of the world, but he also feels "that he [is] being enlisted for the fight, that some duty was being laid upon his shoulders." His heart becomes "heavy" and he has "an intuition, a foreknowledge of the future" (*P*, 78). Stephen is not just made aware of the purported plots against his father, he is drawn into the conflict that they represent. His experience of himself as a product of a primary filial relationship is also an experience of himself as destined to be betrayed and persecuted. More importantly, Stephen's growing sense of himself as possessing a destiny is also tied up with the battle he will have to undergo against those forces. Little does Simon know in this moment that he is shaping his son's sense of reality, that in the future Stephen will pay more heed to his own readings of malevolence behind events than to the events themselves. Many years later, Stephen tells Cranly that he "imagine[s] that there is a malevolent reality behind those things" he fears (*P*, 304). "[R]eality," for Stephen, becomes that thing "behind" the thing itself. Because this reality is unknowable through the senses, the space of the imagination is given full speculative reign.¹³⁰

It is remarkable how many of the moments of closeness between Stephen and Simon, and between Joyce and John Stanislaus, relied on or drew upon betrayal and persecution for their bonding power. As well as the episodes that Joyce drew on for his fiction (such as those already described) Joyce displayed an insistent desire to

¹³⁰ Joyce develops this idea exhaustively—and in very different ways—in *Exiles* and *Finnegans Wake*.

move John Stanislaus to the centre of his decision to leave Ireland. Ellmann gives a brief account of Joyce's surprising amendments to the proofs of Gorman's biography in the wake of John Stanislaus's death. "Mr. Joyce's father (this should be inserted somewhere) was coming to the conclusion that his son's literary intransigence was up against an insurmountable barrier in reactionary Dublin and in fact later advised him to seek a freer atmosphere in which to live and work according to his own ideas." When Gorman wrote a rhetorical question, "Of whom was he the spiritual son and where would he find the Mystical Father?" Joyce inserted with evident impatience, "His spiritual father is Europe, to which his natural father constantly urged him to go."¹³¹ The insertions are remarkable, if only because they divert so far from what actually happened. In contrast, in the last interaction Stephen has with his father, Simon asks why "he did not join a rowing club" and tells Stephen he "wants [him] to read law" (*P*, 250). Joyce, similarly, was encouraged to stay in Ireland to study law, not to "seek a freer atmosphere" to think, to write, or to otherwise. But Joyce, particularly in the months after his father's death, sought a reconnection that, since it could no longer happen in life, must happen in text. To do this he reversed the silent agreement through which he has Stephen enlisted into his father's battles, and retrospectively enlists his father into his own. Simon's declaration in *Portrait*, "We're not dead yet, sonny," haunts, not unpleasantly, this act of filial recuperation.

"The end he had been born to serve"

In *Stephen*, Joyce offers an account of how a young mind might turn towards betrayal. But rather than observe this turn as a quirk of character, Joyce establishes Stephen's self-narrativization through betrayal as key to his artistic development. The degree to which Stephen can develop into an artist at all is seen to be determined by his capacity to narrate himself through betrayal. To understand this better, we must consider first the kinds of development privileged by the *Künstlerroman* in general and by *Portrait* in particular. For both the *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*, the telos of the novel is relatively clear: the, usually eponymous, protagonist is headed always towards some special state of freedom, morality, insight, or ability that gives all the events of his/her life significance. As a form concerned with the "*Bildung*," or formation, of a protagonist, there is always a final "form" towards which the novel is

¹³¹ Ellmann, *JJ*, 725.

directed; the bildungsroman charts a difficult process of making, but the end of that process is usually not in doubt. For the reader of *Portrait*, this sense of forward motion is provided not only by the generic expectations of the *Künstlerroman* but by the title of the novel. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* posits the existence of an artist as an old(er) man whose early life this novel depicts. Even if one wants to retain an ironic distance from Stephen's journey—or to hold off on making judgements about the nature and extent of his development until the end of the novel—one is propelled unavoidably along by this sense of expectation.

But while Stephen's destiny appears at times to be the central *donnée* of the novel, for Stephen himself, this sense of narrative destiny must be constantly constructed, adjusted, and supported through a process of adaptive self-narration. While the reader of *Portrait* can be fairly certain that all the events recounted in the novel contribute in some way towards a narratively satisfying conclusion, Stephen must live his life with no clear sense of the significance of any given event.¹³² This uncertainty appears to be deeply uncomfortable for Stephen, who is caught always between the grandiosity of his aspiration and the modesty of his quotidian reality. It is for this reason that Stephen is so eager to manufacture some of the narrative certainty that the reader takes for granted. Take, for example, the period of elation into which he enters shortly after receiving the good news that he has been accepted to “The University!” (*P*, 165). His nerves had clearly been frayed, as “for a full hour he had paced up and down, waiting.” He paced “from the gate of Clontarf chapel to the door of Byron's public-house and then back again to the chapel and then back to the public-house” where his father had entered with “Dan Crosby, the tutor, to find out something about the university” (*P*, 164). Upon receiving the good news, the second thing Stephen does (I will discuss the first a little later) is to enter this new information into an ongoing narrative that, though it is unfolding unpredictably, has a definite sense of direction.

The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path and now it beckoned to him once more and a new adventure was about to be opened to him.

¹³² Indeed, as a putatively selective medium (the novel does not pretend to detail a complete life, only representative or remarkable events), the novel in fact engineers significance through the act of selection.

(*P*, 165)

In short, Stephen prefers the consoling certainty of the *Künstlerroman*—which transmutes insignificant event into potentially significant narrative—to the overwhelming uncertainty of life as lived. As such, he attempts to turn his own life into literary narrative. The road remains uncertain—an “unseen path”—and the destination unclear, but in claiming for himself a narrative, Stephen can transform hardships into “challenges” to be “overcome.” In completing one task, he is given access to the next stage of his narrative, “a new adventure.”

Betrayal and the Joycean “family romance”

I focused above on the sense of direction Stephen’s self-narratives provide. But perhaps more important than the rather vague destination (destiny) this narrative posits is what this narrative attempts to leave behind. Stephen constructs a loaded conception of “boyhood” or “childhood” that seems to bear the brunt of this load. In the scene described above, the narrator suggests that “he had passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who had stood as guardians of his boyhood” (*P*, 165). This is not merely those who guarded him when he was a boy, but those who sought to keep him, metaphorically, youthful; by seeking to keep him as a child these guardians are attempting to resist his entry into the maturity that his narrative demands. Thus, these “guardians” are seen as resisting the *telos* of the *Bildungsroman* itself. The “mists of childhood and boyhood” are constructed as a time of dangerous fragility through which Stephen has passed only because his destiny has more narrative force behind it than those that seek to resist it: “the end he had been born to serve and had been following” (*P*, 169). Rather than just the time before adulthood, “boyhood” is seen as an artificially maintained state of ignorance through which the repressive forces of authority maintain control. The entry into maturity that Stephen sees himself accomplishing is seen then as the defining battle for the aspiring artist in Ireland: “Where was his boyhood now? Where was the soul that had hung back from her destiny” (*P*, 171).

But this notion of boyhood remains rather vague. To understand what exactly Stephen means by his “boyhood” in *Portrait*—and why it takes on such a negative connotation—it is worth considering the idea in relation to Freud’s discussion in “Family Romances” of the “formation” of functioning individuals. In this account,

the child develops individuality and independence through a series of breaks with the family—it is this focus on severance in Freud that makes it such a fitting comparison to Joyce’s construction of maturity in *Portrait* and later *Ulysses*. The development of Stephen into an artist-hero (at least, an artist-hero-in-the-making) is not of a different sort but of a different intensity to the development of any other child. We can trace in *Portrait*, with surprising ease, the events that Freud describes as necessary to the development of the individual in relation to its parents. The book opens with Stephen as a small child, literally dancing to the tune his mother plays for him, spouting information gathered from his parents, who are, in Freud’s terms, Stephen’s “first and only authority.”¹³³ His desire to marry the protestant Eileen Vance when he grows up, while it points towards his later willingness to break taboos, is nevertheless an attempt to replicate, to become, his parents—“the most intense desire of these early years”.¹³⁴ Later, Stephen is sent off to school with the advice of his parents circling in his mind—his mother’s warning “not to speak with the rough boys in the college” and his father’s advice “never to peach on a fellow” (*P*, 7). But the central events of this early section all require Stephen to engage, confusedly and therefore painfully, with both these parental instructions. Indeed, it is the necessity of engaging critically with this vague yet absolute command that enables and drives the development of individuality in these terms. Respectively, his decisions not to “peach” on Wells, who pushed him in a ditch, and to go to Father Conmee when he is unfairly punished by Father Arnall are both preceded by pages of worried analysis and equivocation. Lacking the security of his parents’ authority, Stephen has to construct a moral world built on the few words of instruction he has been given. As a result, his father’s authority is not directly challenged, but in practising a kind of investigative, creative morality, the young Stephen enters into a form of proto-individuality whereby that authority may come to be understood as provisional. The absolute authority of the parent becomes suddenly and irrevocably contingent.

The profundity of this moment in the development of Stephen as an individual can easily be overlooked, given the light comedy these scenes contain. But while the affair is comical, it is also fundamental to the development of individual character.

¹³³ Sigmund Freud, “Family Romance,” *The Penguin Freud Reader*, ed. Adam Phillips (London: Penguin, 2006), 422.

¹³⁴ Freud, “Family Romance,” 422.

From this moment on, Stephen's story will alternate between the taking on and casting off of various sources of authority (the parent, the church, the university) until his advanced individuality, his refusal of *all* external authority, comes to be the feature by which he defines himself. This is an important point, for, whereas in a normal child the "separation of the individual . . . from the authority of the parents" is only a matter of developing *basic* individuality (a sense of the self as separate from the mother and other "others"), in the narrative of the developing artist, this forging of individuality takes on a far greater symbolic importance. If Stephen is to become the artist-hero, "forging the conscience of his race," he must first make the acknowledgement of the contingency of external authority a conscious and performed constituent of his character. The "normal" child experiences the degrading of their parents' authority as a series of traumatic events (as does Stephen), but s/he soon seeks out new sources of authority to fill the void left by the parents, rarely acknowledging on a conscious level that any change has occurred. Stephen, by contrast, moves through different forms of authority only to cast them off, gradually developing to the point where this rejection of authority is performed as a conscious (and self-conscious) act.

Patrick Parrinder first suggested Freud's "Family Romances" as a model for understanding Stephen's development in *Portrait* thirty years ago. But whereas Parrinder treats Stephen as undergoing a rather textbook search for "fantasy-compensation for the inadequacies of the actual family," Stephen's development is anything but typical. *Portrait* takes the logic of development encoded within the family romance and makes it the defining, problematic feature of Stephen's artistic becoming.¹³⁵ Severance from the family is seen then as necessary for the achievement of individual authority (freedom) in the Freudian sense, but it also acts as the ultimate metaphor for communal authority, what Said refers to as "filiation."¹³⁶ As Bradley

¹³⁵ Parrinder, *James Joyce*, 87. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Joyce models his depiction of artistic overcoming on Freud's theories. This is far too strong a claim, given the evidence to hand. However, I am suggesting that reading *Portrait* with this framework in mind suggests strongly that Joyce consciously foregrounds a form of development as severance that shares helpful similarities to Freud's descriptions of child development.

¹³⁶ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984). Said discusses this term throughout.

Buchanan has suggested, “Joyce’s early fiction posits individuation from the mother, a severance of all possible incestuous bonds, as the key to attaining full human status.”¹³⁷ Joyce goes further than Parrinder allows in that Stephen does not merely break with parental authority—a negotiation that allows for the production of an amended, mature bond—but constructs severance as an ultimate, though problematic good.¹³⁸

I suggested earlier that the second thing Stephen does upon finding out that he has been accepted to the University is to work this information into an ongoing self-narrativization. Before he does this, however, his first thought is to use this new development to enact a partial, temporary break with his family.

[H]is mother was hostile to the idea [of his attending university], as he had read from her silence. Yet her *mistrust* pricked him more keenly than his father’s pride A dim *antagonism* gathered force within him and darkened his mind as a cloud against her *disloyalty* and when it passed, cloud-like, leaving his mind serene and dutiful towards her again, he was made aware dimly and *without regret* of a *first noiseless sundering* of their lives.

(*P*, 164-65, emphasis mine)

Where I have been talking about “severance,” Stephen thinks here in terms of “sundering,” but the effect is broadly the same. Stephen is making a clear equation at this point between his own self-making—his narrative forward motion—and a break with his mother. We start too to see the role that betrayal plays in this process: Stephen’s mother is “disloyal” for desiring something other than the imagined good he desires for himself. This conflict is inevitable, since what Stephen’s mother desires most is the maintenance of their filial bond and what Stephen desires most is to loosen or break that bond. An overlooked element of the *amor matris* that will haunt Stephen in *Ulysses* is that mother love, as the “one true thing in life”—counter to the “legal fiction” that is “paternity”—cannot be easily shifted into another form. In *Ulysses* it is seen to have a rigid, non-contingent reality. There is no compromise available between Stephen’s position and May Dedalus’s; the bond either survives in

¹³⁷ Bradley Buchanan, *Oedipus Against Freud: Myth and the End(s) of Humanism in Twentieth-Century British Literature* (London, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 110.

¹³⁸ We will see this in another, more anguished form in *Exiles*, where this good is, ultimately, called into question. Indeed, in *Portrait* this tendency of Stephen’s is kept at an ironic distance, even as it is embraced.

its current form (even if that survival is bitter, hateful, and distant), or it is rejected wholesale.

Stephen's construction is therefore telling, since it establishes a form of "bad faith" in the family relationship that will, ultimately, excuse his own disloyalty, his decision to reject his biological heritage in favour of a narrative destiny built on a metaphorical heritage (Daedalus). While one may "dedicate" or "commit" oneself to a friendship, a cause, or lover, the *amor matris* is seen to precede one's existence as a being capable of consciousness. One is committed to the bond before one is able to make that commitment; it is not volitional, but it is binding. This counters the logic of development we find in Freud, where the parent is made contingent when the child imagines an alternative, "true" genealogy for themselves. But Stephen does not do this here. He accepts the reality of the maternal bond, but seeks to break it in another, more difficult and, ultimately, more painful way.

Though Freud does not use the term himself, we can see his construction of the family romance as a series of what Joyce would recognize as minor betrayals. In the early stages of development, the child experiences an apparently immanent connection with the mother, whose singular love is not questioned. But as the child emerges into consciousness of itself, s/he is faced with the knowledge that this immanence is false; the mother loves others—the father, other children—in a way that does not include, and is inaccessible to, the child. While this experience of sudden severance is necessary, since it makes the child aware that they are, on a fundamental level, an individual, it is nevertheless extremely painful. The alternative genealogies the child constructs are ultimately, Freud suggests, an attempt to "preserve, under a slight disguise, the child's original affection for the parents" in the form of fantasized personages better able to live up to the impossible demands the child places upon them.¹³⁹ But these narratives also shield the child from the deep-ridden guilt that arises from their attempt to distance themselves from the primary filial bond: the family. These bonds come into being at the moment of birth (perhaps earlier) and bring with them a historical chain of associated responsibilities that stretch back into antiquity. In moving him or herself into another imagined family, the child can, temporarily and symbolically, cancel their inherited (non-elective) responsibilities to the genealogical family. Since the child's responsibilities to its

¹³⁹ Freud, "Family Romances," 425.

parents appear contingent, his/her attempt to leave that family behind are made less painful. In *Portrait*, Joyce dramatizes Stephen's growing awareness of these pressures, but in insisting on complete, conscious severance from the family, he does not allow Stephen the easy consolation of an imagined family. Stephen can feel "hardly of one blood" with his family, a "fosterchild," but, ultimately, he knows that he feels alienated not from his own family, but from family itself (*P*, 98).

"Boyhood" as "death"

Before attempting to understand how Stephen's understanding of the logic of betrayal works as a consolatory narrative in *Portrait*, I wish to consider how and why complete severance from the family comes to be seen as necessary. Rather than seeing Stephen as aggressively opposed to family life—as constitutionally disgusted by its comforts—we need to understand the role that family comes to play for him as the central repository for social stagnation. It is not that Stephen is immune to the appeal of a loving family, but that in this comfort he sees also a form of spiritual "death" counter to the "life" it is his destiny to seek. Stephen's conflation of boyhood with death is connected with, though may not proceed from, his understanding of social conformity (obedience to external authority) as the prime source of Irish stagnation (on a national and individual level). In this sense, Ireland taken as a whole is caught in an unending childhood that Stephen seeks to mature beyond. They are "the dead" in that they are immune to (and antagonistic towards) the "call of life" that he hopes will mark his "deliverance" from "the world of duties and despair" (*P*, 170). The life Stephen yearns for is conceived of as a kind of radical creativity and freedom envisaged in opposition to conformity and social observance. But Stephen's pursuit of this life also relies on being freed of the duties (bonds of responsibility) that come with filial social ties. Life, taken as a self-evident good, is seen then to require a break with filial ties; individuality ("full humanity") is seen to require a rejection of communality (severance through an extended form of the family romance); and creativity (the ability to produce things of worth) requires an access to "life" mediated only by the individuality achieved by those methods. Before leaving for Paris, Stephen writes in his journal that he would "[l]et the dead bury the dead. Ay. And let the dead marry the dead" (*P*, 248). Dead Dubliners marry dead Dubliners while mourning other dead Dubliners. In replicating the structures of society and family that constrain them, these Dubliners merely reinforce their own servitude. The self-

imposed exile from Ireland towards which Stephen narrates himself is constructed also as an exile from presiding structures of community and morality. Where Padraic Pearse found revolutionary potential in the legacy of the heroic dead—“life springs from death and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living waters”—Stephen finds, ultimately, only a self-replicating stagnation. If Stephen must abandon the family to achieve maturity, he must abandon also the nation, which is merely an extension of that family.

“Is the mind of youth medieval that it is so divining of intrigue?”

One of the further benefits of the family romance as a model for Stephen’s developmental struggle in *Portrait* is that it keeps always in mind that the child’s severance from the family is painful (an acknowledgement of profound loss), anxious (a response to an uncertain new world emerging from that loss), and ridden by guilt (the child reads their own desire for severance as a betrayal, disloyalty). As I have said, the “romances” the child contrives are specifically formulated to lessen these discomforts. Since Stephen breaks not only with his family, but with filiation altogether, he requires a consoling narrative of a different sort. In betrayal, towards which he is already predisposed, Stephen finds a way to justify his extreme severance, while assuaging the powerful sense of guilt that this brings with it. We have already seen some of this in Stephen’s “first noiseless sundering” with his mother. As I suggested in the previous chapter, betrayal was useful to Joyce since it allowed him to encode a large number of specific criticisms of Ireland into a form that was still narratively satisfying. While in his non-fiction, betrayal offered a way of maintaining his principled exile, in *Portrait* it offers Stephen the route to that exile.

The clearest example of Stephen’s reliance on betrayal comes in his final sundering, a moment of decision that convinces him the time has come to leave Dublin. J. F. Byrne, who would form the basis for Cranly in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, had been an acquaintance of Joyce’s since their time at Belvedere, and fast friends since Joyce joined Byrne at University College Dublin—as Byrne put it: Joyce “cleave[d] to me.”¹⁴⁰ Their friendship blossomed after Joyce published his article on Ibsen. Joyce’s “relationship with his few associates,” Byrne suggests, “became impaired by

¹⁴⁰ John Francis Byrne, *Silent Years: an Autobiography with Memoirs of James Joyce and our Ireland* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Young, 1953), 40.

either their jealousy or sycophancy; and so it happened that Joyce was forced during the next couple of years to rely more than ever on me for companionship.”¹⁴¹ Along with Stanislaus, Byrne became Joyce’s most trusted confidant in this period, both a valued reader of his poetry and an audience for Joyce’s serial confessions, aesthetic theories, and self-analyses.¹⁴² While Joyce was in Paris, however, Byrne, flushed to have received a postcard from Joyce with a newly penned poem on it, bragged to Vincent Cosgrave that “no man in Dublin knew more about Joyce than he did.” Cosgrave, relishing the opportunity, brought out his own postcard from Joyce—this one containing salacious details about Paris prostitutes—and said, “Perhaps that’s something you didn’t know.” Embarrassed at his own behaviour, disappointed in Joyce’s crudity, or hurt that Joyce should confide in someone other than himself, Byrne handed over his postcard to Cosgrave with a brusque, “You can have this one, too.”¹⁴³ Byrne was cool with Joyce on his return from Paris and their relationship, so close beforehand, never recovered. Surprised by the sudden breakdown, Joyce searched “in vain for any foundation [for] his feeling that Byrne’s change in attitude towards him was a betrayal.”¹⁴⁴ But rather than dissuade him, this failure imbued the event with an even greater significance. Joyce’s suspicions were more troubling for not being fully confirmed and thus fully known (certainty is a more peaceful state than uncertainty, as we will see in *Exiles*) and Byrne’s change towards him would later seem to him but the first of many times that “this brusque and unexplained [change of] attitude of certain admirers” towards him would occur.¹⁴⁵

Ellmann’s conviction that Joyce failed in his attempts to transfigure Byrne’s actions into an act of betrayal can only be meant locally. On 24 August 1904 (a little over a year later), Joyce wrote to Nora: “When I was younger I had a friend to whom I gave myself freely—in a way more than I give to you and in a way less. He was

¹⁴¹ Byrne, *Silent Years*, 63.

¹⁴² Byrne, *Silent Years*, 64.

¹⁴³ This account is quoted and paraphrased from: *JJ*, 116.

¹⁴⁴ *JJ*, 116.

¹⁴⁵ This quotation comes from one of the additions that Joyce made to Herbert Gorman, *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (London: The Bodley Head, 1941). While it would be problematic to suggest that it therefore represents Joyce’s thoughts on the matter, we can at least be sure that it represented the way Joyce wished the matter to be seen by others.

Irish, that is to say, he was false to me.”¹⁴⁶ Any blame Joyce felt for the breakup of his relationship with Byrne is deflected away and transfigured into an indictment against both his friend and Ireland. As we will see most clearly in *Exiles*, for Joyce, to give oneself “freely” is to give someone else power over you. If this relationship is properly formed, then each is dedicated to the other, each open to harm by the other’s hand. For Joyce, embracing this risk—presented as the greatest of all risks, for it aims for the complete exposure of the self to another (an “other”)—is either the ultimate expression of human love (romantic or platonic) or human stupidity. Implicit within any such relationship is the possibility that the other (who is always a threat because always unknowable) may take advantage of your vulnerability—that they will betray you. This is part of what Stanislaus meant when he referred to Joyce’s interest in the “tragedy of *dedication* and betrayal.” I want to see Joyce’s transfiguration of the breakdown of his relationship with Byrne not, as Ellmann appears to do, as yet more evidence of Joyce’s delusional self-importance. Rather it is a testament, first, to the importance he placed on this relationship, and, second, to the centrality of the mechanics of betrayal to Joyce’s mental machinery. For all that he cultivated a willing “isolation,” Joyce relied throughout his life on intense relationships modelled on this early one with Byrne. But while Joyce is conscious of his need, or at least his desire, for these relationships, he is also acutely conscious of their implicit danger. Byrne’s boast that no man knew more about Joyce than he did would have sounded uncomfortably to Joyce’s ears. For the more Byrne knew, the more power he had to misuse that knowledge, to betray Joyce in the most Irish of senses: to “give him away,” to expose him for personal gain.

Byrne’s “falseness” suggested to Joyce a way of justifying Stephen’s eventual flight from Dublin.

Away then: it is time to go. A voice spoke softly to Stephen’s lonely heart, bidding him go and telling him that his friendship was coming to an end. Yes; he would go. He could not strive against another. He knew his part.

(*P*, 307)

In shortening his novel from *Stephen Hero* to *Portrait*, Joyce chose to present this relationship in its final throes only, as if all that mattered was its dissolution and not

¹⁴⁶ *SL*, 27.

its formation. As happens throughout *Portrait*, the beginning prefigures and prophesies the end and we are being given hints from our first introduction to Cranly that Stephen has reason to be cautious. When we first hear of him he is connected with some of the things that Stephen most fears and distrusts.

It was a priest-like face, priest-like in its pallor, in the wide winged nose, in the shadowings below the eyes and along the jaws, priest-like in the lips that were long and bloodless and faintly smiling; and Stephen, remembering swiftly how he had told Cranly of all the tumults and unrest and longings in his soul, day after day and night by night, only to be answered by his friend's listening silence, would have told himself that it was the face of a guilty priest who heard confessions of those whom he had not power to absolve but that he felt again in memory the gaze of its dark womanish eyes.
(*P*, 219-220)

Priests and women, Stephen has already battled with and thrown off the first and, through Cranly's intervention, will soon be forced to cast off the second. Cranly is physically priest-like, but we get the sense that this physical resemblance is more than anything else a response to his role as chief confessor for Stephen's sins. But Cranly is not merely a priest, he is a "guilty priest" who cannot or will not fulfil his function (absolution). The lack of reciprocity in their relationship—Stephen speaks, Cranly listens—becomes threatening. Cranly's apparent failure to return exposure with exposure creates an imbalance in power between the two men. The experience of exposure without guarantees of safety—this is the Joycean relationship—becomes uncomfortable for Stephen as he comes to see himself as vulnerable to Cranly's moods.

Experiencing a growing discomfort, Stephen writes himself into a Parnellian narrative of betrayal. A dominant force in his social circles, Stephen now complains ironically that Cranly is the new "shining light." His protestations that "I discovered him. I protest I did. Shining quietly behind a bushel of Wicklow bran" establish his relationship with Cranly as one between the master and his disciple (*P*, 313).¹⁴⁷ In Joyce's writings, the disciple inevitably betrays and supersedes the master, it is a narrative law. As Parnell was, in this configuration, betrayed by the lesser Tim Healy, so too will Stephen be betrayed and superseded by the lesser Cranly. If Cranly is to continue his rise, how else can he do it but by going through Stephen? But since

¹⁴⁷ See *Exiles*: "the dedication of the master to the disciple who will betray him" (*E*, 24).

Stephen is primed for this occurrence, he can observe Cranly as he positions himself for betrayal. This, at least, is how Stephen sees what is happening (the distinction is important). Stephen observes the “slight flush on Cranly’s cheek” that follows his greeting to E. C. and wonders whether this would “explain his . . . listless silence, his harsh comments, the sudden intrusions of rude speech with which he had shattered so often Stephen’s ardent wayward confessions” (*P*, 289); Cranly is later spotted drinking tea with E. C. in “Johnston’s.” Cranly’s “angry” step and “angry abrupt gestures,” which appear to be a result of his comical distaste for Temple—Cranly chases him off, only half-joking, with Stephen’s ashplant—appear to Stephen to have some darker cause and he begins to fear physical violence against himself. As Stephen pulls him away, already nearing the point of realization that Cranly’s rise must force him to leave Ireland, the “bird call from *Siegfried* whistled softly followed them from the steps of the porch” (*P*, 297). The operatic allusion suggests betrayal, since the bird attempts to warn Siegfried of Mime’s treacherous plans. Siegfried triumphs without being able to understand the bird’s warnings, and Stephen similarly needs no help in divining his friend’s intentions. Siegfried leaps gaily into battle, but Stephen will not “strive against another,” choosing instead to retreat nobly into “silence, exile, cunning.”

Robert Martin Adams has commented, with some exasperation, that “[t]he most distinct but illogical betrayer of Stephen Dedalus is Cranly in the *Portrait*. . . . Stephen’s suspicions of betrayal are pretty dimly founded,”¹⁴⁸ But this is precisely the point. We are not privy to a single piece of evidence for Stephen’s suspicions. Joyce carefully deprives us of anything that might confirm Cranly’s bad faith and ill intentions. For Adams, this makes Stephen (and perhaps Joyce) appear ridiculous. But what he fails to acknowledge is that it is precisely Stephen’s capacity to *read* Cranly as having betrayed him—no matter how inconclusive the evidence—that empowers his flight from Dublin. To put it another way, the narrative conclusion of the novel—Stephen’s flight from Dublin—*cannot* come about without Stephen first producing the conditions for that narrative himself. What Adams finds so perplexing, is that Joyce should not have given us a more convincing vision of betrayal with

¹⁴⁸ Robert Martin Adams, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce’s “Ulysses”* (Oxford: OUP, 1962).

which to drive Stephen from Ireland. But *Portrait* is not, ultimately, about the betrayals that Stephen suffers, it is about the betrayals he creates.

One of the major shifts between *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is that in *Stephen Hero* Joyce cannot resist the temptation to break into the narration with “distancing phrase[s]” whenever Stephen’s “uncompromising side . . . becomes absurd.”¹⁴⁹ So, Stephen is the “fiery-hearted revolutionary” and the “heaven-ascending essayist” (*SH*, 67). Hugh Kenner has astutely observed that we find “more and more of these excusing clauses . . . slithering between detachment, irony, and anger” as the novel goes on. Whenever Joyce becomes “uncertain of Stephen’s convincingness,” one of these phrases appears.¹⁵⁰ Joyce certainly appeared to worry that his readers would remain unconvinced by Stephen’s propensity to see betrayal everywhere he looked, for in both “A Portrait of the Artist” and in *Stephen Hero* he asks: “is the mind of youth medieval that it is so divining of intrigue?” (*SH*, 39). Yet Joyce is not making Stephen more believable or relatable; he is merely hammering home his own distance from Stephen’s excesses. The effect is to move the reader further from Stephen but to let them know they do so with the author’s permission. In *Portrait*, Joyce takes a very different tack. The artist retreats fully into the background, “paring his fingernails.” Stephen’s absurd self-narrations are allowed to stand or fall on their own merits and the reader is not allowed recall to an authorial (an authorized) perspective. By resisting the temptation to remind the reader that Joyce can see Stephen’s absurdities, he allows those absurdities a little more room to stand or fall on their own merits. Stephen’s ability to “divine intrigue,” rather than being killed by a heavy-handed irony, is permitted to justify itself.

“Did he bring his crocodile?”

Richard Ellmann comments astutely that in Joyce’s “writing more is at stake in the friendship of Stephen and Cranly than in the relationship of Stephen and Emma.” This focus allows Joyce to make “the theme of broken friendship” represent “Stephen’s broken ties with Ireland and the world.”¹⁵¹ Cranly’s betrayal, already connected thematically with the betrayal of Parnell by Tim Healy, becomes the final

¹⁴⁹ Hugh Kenner, “The *Portrait* in Perspective,” in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook*, 29.

¹⁵⁰ Kenner, “The *Portrait* in Perspective,” 30-31.

¹⁵¹ *JJ*, 116.

confirmation of a putative Irish tendency that Stephen had railed against to Davin earlier in the chapter.

No honourable and sincere man, said Stephen, has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell, but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I'd see you damned first.

(*P*, 252)

The historical force of betrayal that Joyce asserts and describes in his non-fiction is available to Stephen as a way of making his exile necessary and narratively satisfying. Ireland becomes for Stephen an inherently problematic construction—he wishes he could devote himself to it (he longs constantly for the release that devotion would provide) but fears it would suffocate him. Whereas betrayal by an individual will cause him great harm, the betrayal that his nation has the power to enact upon him will stifle his “soul.” Stephen’s famous manifesto—“When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.” (*P*, 252)—embodies his attempt to sever himself completely (and therefore impossibly) from his nation. Stephen does not give himself to things half-heartedly. Since he would not be subsumed by the Church, he had to break from it completely; since he would not be subsumed by his nation, he has to break from it completely—the inevitability of betrayal is both a construction that provides the justification for this break and an element of the psychological framework that makes this break necessary.

Joyce once divided the “seven deadly sins” among the nations of Europe—Ireland’s was “envy” (*JJ*, 382). While this was largely tongue-in-cheek, it spoke to Joyce’s desire to read the history of Ireland as if it were a singularly constituted individual possessing a consciousness and motivations, as if it were an “other” into which he feared to let himself be subsumed. As the “sow that eats her farrow,” Ireland consumes her children through the very stifling processes that Stephen wishes to “fly by” (*P*, 252). Cranly’s role as “priest-like,” “womanish” betrayer emphasizes and crystallizes the inevitability of Ireland’s betrayal and reveals him to be a particular expression of a general principle. By associating him with the priests, Joyce is trying to make concrete the connection between Cranly and those very forces of subjection that Stephen is attempting to resist. It is for this reason that Stephen

associates Cranly bitterly with the crocodile from Cranly's own "problem" ("did he bring his crocodile?"): "A crocodile seized the child. Mother asked it back. Crocodile said all right if she told him what he was going to do with the child, eat it or not eat it" (*P*, 313). The problem is a double-bind; once the crocodile's malevolent intention is set, there is no way that the woman can answer the question that doesn't result in the crocodile eating her child. Cranly is transfigured into the embodiment of this restrictive process, a figure for Ireland's devouring of its children. In Stephen's heightened family romance, he must leave childhood behind altogether, and with it the bonds of filiation that childhood represents.

Stephen as Ireland: Figuration, prophesy, and the conflation of the communal with the individual

Towards the end of the Christmas dinner at Bray in which Simon has introduced Stephen to the thrill of a certain type of bitter language, Simon laments to his friend, Mr Casey, "We are an unfortunate priest-ridden race and always were and always will be till the end of the chapter" (*Portrait*, 42). Mr Dedalus's choice of expression seems unavoidably loaded; its reference to chapters draws attention to the fictiveness of the world in which it is expressed, collapsing to some degree the close realism of the piece. One of the ways fiction differs from "reality" is that all events are truly pre-ordained (you can flip forward in a book to see what is going to happen) and it is therefore possible to gesture forward to events that have yet to happen. What is for Simon an offhand (though heartfelt) remark can be understood by the reader as a strange act of inadvertent prophecy. The Stephen of the first chapter (in which Simon's comment is made) is a pious believer surrounded by Jesuit priests (priest-ridden?) most of the year at Clongowes, while the second chapter begins with Stephen removed from Clongowes and its priests altogether and suddenly lacking in "piety" (*P*, 72)? Joyce seeks to foreground a conflation between the individual (Stephen) and the communal (his "race") that runs problematically throughout *Portrait*. When Simon's inadvertent prophecy for the Irish race is seen to come true in the form of Stephen it is because Stephen *represents* Ireland. More properly, he represents the possibility of Ireland's transformation; the fact that Stephen has escaped the influence of the Church does not have material consequences for the rest of Ireland, but in the symbolic space of the novel his personal overcoming gestures outwards to the general and the communal. Stephen is not merely a model for other

young Irishman, he is made to bear within the symbolically loaded space of the novel the burden of representation. He succeeds or fails *for* Ireland. Given the novel's emphasis on severance, this metaphorical bringing together is important: it allows Stephen's often bitter pursuit of absolute separation to be understood, paradoxically, as being *for* the community he leaves behind.

Joyce is tapping into a tendency towards allusive referentiality in Irish writing at the time. Whereas Revivalists mapped Ireland onto figures such as Cathleen Ní Houlihan and Róisín Dubh, the 1890s writers in particular also sought to develop a series of heroes (built similarly around mythological figures such as Cú Chulainn) capable of redeeming the fortunes of their race.¹⁵² Colm Tóibín has commented on the lack of communalism in Irish history as a whole: "Those central moments in French history are communal and urban" while in Ireland there is "personal sacrifice as a metaphor for general sacrifice."¹⁵³ Stephen is loaded with this same referentiality. This is a matter of Joyce's style throughout his work; as Dominic Manganiello argues in *Joyce's Politics*, "for [Joyce] there is no discontinuity between individual and communal life." Moreover, "what is evinced in a situation describing love [for instance] becomes a paradigm for the Irish political scene" (Manganiello, 94). The *Künstlerroman*, which appears to be focused on the individual and to eschew the nation, turns out to be of great importance to the national and communal as synecdochic representation of the (projected) aspirations of the whole.

The conflation of Stephen (as individual) with his race (as communal) is not without its problems. It is almost as if Stephen feels this associative narrative pressure; he is continually concerned with identifying, understanding, and later "forging the . . . conscience of [his] race," as if he were aware of his own importance in this process. His artistic concern returns time and again to what he can do for the "bat-like soul" of his race "wakening to consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness" (*P*, 226). While *Portrait* encourages us to try to map a narrative of Ireland onto Stephen's narrative, so that his overcoming or otherwise can be read as Ireland's more generally, Stephen does a similar thing, reading himself into Ireland. "[D]arkness and secrecy and loneliness" are his domains and he extrapolates

¹⁵² See Hall, *Shadowy Heroes* for a discussion of this element of Irish writing.

¹⁵³ Colm Tóibín, introduction to *The Penguin Book of Irish Fiction*, ed. Colm Tóibín (London: Penguin, 2001), 12.

from his tortured conception of his own identity a shared racial experience, an experience that can be detected with his powerful artistic vision in those who cannot detect it in themselves. This conception of the soul as in an important sense communal, national, and racial invites an ongoing tension for Stephen between his sense of his capacity for individual growth and overcoming and that of his race. For Stephen is only partially of this community; while he feels “the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged flitting like bats across the dark country lanes, under trees by the edges of streams and near the pool-mottled bogs,” he is also acutely, painfully aware that he is cut off from this community (*P*, 297). He thinks of the woman who had inspired his vision of the soul of Ireland, a woman who “had waited in the doorway as Davin had passed by at night and, offering him a cup of milk, had all but wooed him to her bed.” “But him[self],” he thinks, “no woman’s eyes had wooed” (*P*, 298). Stephen’s rejection by Ireland (embodied in this representative figure) is configured as necessary, for he cannot save, redeem, or (re)form the conscience of his race from fully within. To stand above and beyond it is also to stand outside it, heroically martyred by one’s own crushing isolation. The “isolation” sought by the protagonist of “A Portrait of the Artist” as a form of “artistic economy,” is expanded into a more general pose. Stephen experiences his antagonistic relationship to his natural community as a hardship but also as a source of pride, leaving “the ground chosen to his disadvantage” in favour of the “highlands . . . his ground” where he flings “disdain from flashing antlers” (*PSW*, 212). Stephen’s commitment to a narrative of ever-threatened betrayal is fundamentally a rejection of community on the grounds that community is inherently opposed to the individual, that it imperils the self. But this rejection of community is in turn seen as a form of heroic embrace of that community, for it is only through a form of acute separation that that community may be redeemed. Like Moses (and, with bitter irony, Parnell), Stephen envisages himself as leading his people to a promised land that he may never enter.

Stephen’s psychically satisfying exile relies on his capacity to envisage Ireland as having already broken the bond that he seeks to break. The conception of Irish betrayal found in Joyce’s non-fiction and enunciated by Stephen in his discussions with Davin—that is, betrayal as a structural necessity of Irish history—allows for a slackening of the normal rules of cause and effect. The inevitability of Stephen’s constructions mean that he is always already betrayed. Stephen is paradoxically both

too connected and too disconnected from Ireland to remain a part of it. If he is to redeem it, he must leave it behind, but this departure is made easier by the fact that Ireland has already chosen not to embrace him. Stephen's escape *from* Ireland becomes also an escape *for* Ireland and his sense of guilt at his betrayal of his "natural" ties to country and race are consoled. It is a betrayal for the good of the betrayed, and thus no betrayal at all.

Chapter Three: “A nation exacts a penance”: Platonic Betrayal and the Return from Heroic Exile in *Exiles*

Exiles has a unique and important place in the narrative I am tracing in this thesis. It represents, first of all, the purest literary distillation of Joyce’s theoretical perspective on betrayal—Joyce effectively set his stall out as clearly and as directly as he could. Betrayal is given a schematic centrality that is not found elsewhere in Joyce’s writing. But *Exiles* is also the first of Joyce’s works to bring together, consciously and carefully, the two main aspects of his structural understanding and analysis of betrayal. Stephen, as I have already suggested, is almost constitutionally incapable of experiencing romantic love in any real-world, quotidian sense and thus his love-life is never more than an unconvincing subplot in his *Künstlerroman* narrative. I have read Stephen’s pursuit of E. C. largely for its role as a convenient spur to his pre-decided exile, while Stephen’s only other significant romantic experience is with the idealized vision of Mercedes. In this sense, Stephen’s only real understanding of the pain of romantic love (and, more importantly, betrayal) is his understanding of it as a source of powerful fictional denouement. Even during the irony debates of the 1960s that surrounded *Portrait*, few, I think, would have been keen to accept the purity and fullness of Stephen’s love for E. C. at face value. From the off, Stephen’s pursuit of E. C. is little more than a pose, an attempt by the teenage Stephen to remake himself in the image of the great and, eventually, spurned artist-lover. He doesn’t experience any of the epistemic anxiety or sense of ontological instability that Joyce nurtured in his other, fuller descriptions of romantic betrayal. Stephen must leave Ireland or risk betrayal. That the betrayal that precipitates his exit comes in the form of a romantic rival is convenient rather than necessary; sexual betrayal and platonic betrayal do not undergo any meaningful theoretical, thematic, or emotional comparison as a result of this conflation.

Both these modes do share important structural similarities in Joyce’s thinking, while remaining different in ways that Joyce was increasingly coming to recognize as important. Stephen concerns himself with an abiding fear of what we might call, with acknowledged irony, “platonic” betrayal. He fears the harm that might be done to him by his friends, his family, and his nation. Relationships of trust (even of the most basic kind) are sites of great existential uncertainty, for a contract is in its essence an act of mutual exposure; how can I *know* that you are as exposed as I am? In writing

Irish history as a history of constant betrayals, Stephen is really expressing and justifying his refusal to risk this exposure, to the nation, the race, the family.

Exiles marks a development, then, in that its central character is consciously aware of himself as potential victim of both amatory *and* platonic betrayal. The sources of each betrayal are not precisely the same (though Robert is a potential source of both) but it is clear that while unconnected on a literal level, they are metaphorically, perhaps metaphysically adjacent. This chapter seeks to unpick the logic at the heart of this play and to establish its position as a necessary stepping stone between *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. In dealing with this logic I will make use, as much as possible, of the language that Joyce himself provides. But I will also need to draw on the “ethical turn” in Joyce studies in order to better represent Joyce’s analyses of betrayal. As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the language introduced into Joyce studies by critics such as Marian Eide is invaluable both as a tool for decoding Joyce’s approach to interpersonal dynamics and as a way to describe those dynamics as they feature in his texts. But the tendency of these studies to attribute a system of ethics to Joyce is at times excessive and misleading. As far as this thesis is concerned, such an insistence on Joyce’s inherent concern for ideal, theoretically grounded interrelations occludes the more dynamic force of his own and his character’s radical narcissism. This narcissism, rather than simply a character fault that is laboriously and subtly exposed across Joyce’s fiction, is highly generative, being the fundamental source of his understanding of the very interpersonal dynamics the “ethicists” wish to read, optimistically, as marking out a more or less conscious ethical position on interpersonal relationships.¹⁵⁴ Joyce’s understanding of betrayal is then, inherently concerned with a logical structure centred on the “I.” Whereas Eide, for example, insists that Joyce sets out to “construct a literary ethics. . .” I insist that Richard Rowan’s fear of the other, rather than dissolving into an ethically positive acceptance of radical difference, remains fundamentally active in his insistence on the very logic the “ethicists” seek to applaud. While *Exiles* is, I will argue, a play designed to see Joyce’s theoretical considerations through to their conclusions, it is

¹⁵⁴ As far as I am aware, this term has not been used at all in relation to Joyce studies or literary studies more generally, and those whom I describe do not group themselves under such a designation. I use it, however, to denote any of the varied approaches characterized by the desire to bring a more or less Levinasian perspective to Joyce studies.

also a play about the *failure* of this very process of theoreticization. The play insists that while the logic Joyce had pursued and explicated in his writing to that point is sound, Richard's solution is too inhuman, too contrived to succeed.

From Stephen to Richard, through Joyce

I have given significant space so far in this thesis to determining exactly how Joyce's personal circumstances shaped and directed his literary projects, arguing for a complex view of the autobiographical aspects of Joyce's fiction and non-fiction. Joyce's fictional process ("intellectualization," as he called it) sees him draw from closely observed autobiographical events. But the fictional text is not justified by these events; nor does the fictional text in turn justify the events that inspire them. While such a justificatory connection between text and life is not present for Joyce, he was clearly adept at manipulating the (understandable) tendency of his readers to assume such a connection and, in his life, profiting where possible from the association. As I discussed in my chapter on Joyce's non-fiction, Joyce carefully cultivated the air of an exilic artist, driven out of a barbaric backwater, even as, in *Stephen Hero* and, later, *Portrait*, he captured the often preposterous contrivance of this position.

This connection between artistic argument (the "message[s]" carried by the text) and artistic life is particularly problematic in relation to *Exiles*. The central character, Richard Rowan, is a serious, avant-garde writer who, at about Joyce's age at the time of composition, returns to Ireland after years of self-imposed exile. He is not legally married, but cohabits with the mother of his young son, Archie. The autobiographical parallels are obviously enticing, and raise the same questions as *Portrait*. First among them: did Joyce expect his audience(s) to pick up on any of these correspondences? And if not, why are they there? As I argued in my chapter on *Portrait*, even for those with no specific knowledge about Joyce the man, his writing encouraged startling assumptions about the autobiographical basis of the narrative, tone (one might say "argument"), and perspective. It is as if the specific national charges that they contain announced themselves as personal grudges rather than detached observations. This, *Portrait* seemed to say, is the writing of a man who suffered for his art as Stephen does. The sheer depth and detail of Joyce's psychological realism, similarly, led numerous early reviewers to assume, not unjustly, that *Portrait* was simply a poorly disguised autobiography, depicting not

merely the growth of *an* artist but *the* artist whose work it is. I argued, in counter to this strain of thought on *Portrait*, that the novel offers instead an analytical account of the performative processes that lead Stephen to a much-sought exile. This allows both for the depiction of Irish failings *and* for the clear-eyed analysis of the mindset required to escape them. *Exiles*, similarly, performs a dual function: the restoration of the “necessary” distance between Joyce and Ireland—necessary in that *Exiles* renews the logical necessity of the separation of principled, modern artist and vampiric, smothering, self-defeating motherland—and the analysis of the flaws—human and analytical—implicit in that logical procedure. The question remains, however: to what extent can *Exiles* be seen as an earnest pronouncement on the fate of the artist returning from exile, or the lover contemplating his partner’s fidelity? The debate that raged over the requisite level of “irony” in *Portrait* had been settled to such a degree that Seamus Deane could write in 1992 that “it is such a cliché of commentary . . . that Stephen’s position is ironized by Joyce that it must be considered.”¹⁵⁵ Yet such consideration has at least allowed for the production of more nuanced evaluations of the exact nature of Joyce’s irony in regards to Stephen. *Exiles* has presented a far greater problem for critics, in that its fundamental humourlessness either renders whatever irony that is present not worth bearing—such irony would render the business of Richard’s heroism a waste of time—or displaces it into a form of authorial distance that does not register as irony in any significant sense. It is difficult, to put it simply, to read *Exiles* without reading its sense of suffering heroism back onto Joyce (this is true to an even greater extent than it is of *Portrait*), either as a validation of his own principled stance on Ireland and on Irish morality, or as a self-regarding document of the artist’s (justified or unjustified) self-pity. As Vicky Mahaffey put it, “[i]t has never been clear . . . whether *Exiles* is ironic, or whether . . . its ironies are earnest ones.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Seamus Deane, introduction to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), xlii.

¹⁵⁶ Vicki Mahaffey, “Joyce’s Shorter Works,” in *Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 201. Mahaffey also notes that “the objective, even clinical mood of *Exiles* yields to self-pity and hallucination” (187). It is perhaps this indeterminacy of tone within the play that has made analysis of it so difficult and rejection of it so easy.

Joyce's audience/Joyce's Ireland

Though it is difficult to discern the specific nature or extent of irony in *Exiles*, the play nevertheless performs a dual function that becomes clear when considered in light both of Joyce's developing theories of betrayal and the specific context out of which the work emerged. As with the non-fictional Triestine writings, *Exiles* must be understood as the product of Joyce's ever developing understanding of the inevitable logic of interpersonal relationships. But, since his process of artistic production relied on his extrapolations from closely observed and analysed personal experiences, we must also understand *Exiles* as a product of the economic and artistic situation in which he laboured. This is particularly interesting in relation to *Exiles* as the conception and completion of the play spans a period of immense and fundamental change in Joyce's artistic and, eventually, domestic circumstances. The wavering and sometimes failing confidence in his artistic vocation that contributes to the content and form of Joyce's non-fiction gives way, as Joyce prepares *Exiles*, to the most consistent and rapid period of improvement in Joyce's writing career.

The Trieste period, by and large, was characterized by failure. The more Joyce was rejected by publishers, exhausted by poorly remunerated and unfulfilling work as an English teacher, and worn down by inveterate poverty, the more he came to see journalism (at least a form of journalism) as a realistic, yet sufficiently high-minded, alternative destiny. Joyce's non-fiction is then marked by this careful negotiation between principle and pragmatism. The preponderance of betrayal in these writings is thus similarly split in purpose; it is both pragmatic—Joyce understood the workings of betrayal so well that he trusted it implicitly as an emotive tool—and principled—the betrayal narrative allowed Joyce to maintain his spirited criticism of Ireland as self-destructive and sub-consciously malicious. Similarly, such journalism provided a vehicle through which he could continue to develop his ideas (not least among them, his theories of betrayal). In writing his imaginative histories, he could deconstruct and reconstruct reality according to a principle of betrayal that was as metaphysical as it was psychological. Simply put, Joyce's use of betrayal in these pieces is

representative of the complex negotiation he underwent between his desire to be successful and the nature of the success he wished to achieve.¹⁵⁷

The context in which *Exiles* was conceived and written was markedly different, coming at a time of almost revolutionary change in Joyce's circumstances—both artistically and financially. Indeed, the composition of *Exiles* spanned this moment of transition. When Joyce began sketching ideas for the play in Autumn 1913,¹⁵⁸ he had all but given up hopes of publishing *Dubliners*¹⁵⁹ having faced a dispiriting year of rejections and false dawns. The drawn out affair with George Roberts finally came to an end with the destruction of all the printed sheets on September 11 1912. Joyce left Dublin that day for the final time, stopping in London to offer the book to English publishers on the 12th. This attempt also proved fruitless: Joyce was rejected by Martin Secker in December 1912 and, eventually, by Elkin Matthews in April 1913. Matthews's rejection was all the more dispiriting since Joyce had offered to defray all printing costs. Though *Dubliners* was of course published little more than a year after Matthews's rejection, Joyce never offered the manuscript to another publisher. Joyce's willingness to accept considerable losses to secure publication is indicative of how desperate he had become at this point. Not merely to be rid of the book (he had the reformed and more or less complete *Portrait* equally short of takers at this time), but to achieve publication in book form and, in so doing, attempt to establish himself as a writer of literature. After years of fruitless, sapping effort, he had no choice but to accept the failure of *Dubliners* and limited hopes for *Portrait*.

It is remarkable, perhaps, that under the circumstances Joyce should have any desire to write at all. Yet, despite his struggles he had found a renewed energy, composing *Giacomo Joyce*—which may have been all the more satisfying a project in

¹⁵⁷ Note that I am not offering a psychoanalytic reading of Joyce's writing at this point. In shaping his journalism and criticism in the way that he did, Joyce was largely in control of the image he sought to produce and was conscious of the uses to which betrayal was being put.

¹⁵⁸ The extant notebook, held by the University of Buffalo, contains entries approximately two thirds of the way through dated 12 and 13 November. The first draft of Act I appears to have been completed by this point or shortly after, and the last third of the notebook is devoted to sketching out ideas for the rest of the play.

¹⁵⁹ At least in the near future; Ellmann suggests Joyce had professed some hope for it longer term.

that publication was never its intention; the writing was its own reward—beginning preparations for both *Exiles* and *Ulysses*, and publishing a poem. In addition, from November 1912 to February 1913 Joyce gave a series of twelve lectures on *Hamlet* for the Università Popolare in Trieste to add to the two lectures on Defoe and Blake he had given earlier in 1912. It was in this mixed atmosphere of failure and success that *Exiles* was first conceived and the first act drafted. In short, Joyce was writing but still not publishing. His career as a literary critic was probably at its peak, yet, given it had been almost five years since his first (and, until his Defoe lecture, last) public lecture in Trieste,¹⁶⁰ even this comparative rush of work hardly promised to be a source of income steady or serious enough to transform Joyce's fortunes. Though Joyce could be trusted to have both ambition and faith in his abilities, he could not have seriously expected that a series of lectures in Trieste would suddenly catapult him into a position of prominence on any European level (or, perhaps, even on a Triestine level). Moreover, it is clear that Joyce was at best ambivalent about the appeal of professional literary criticism, producing it predominantly as a source of income or as a gateway to greater things. It can be no accident that, in contrast to so many of the other great modernist writers of the time—Woolf, Pound, Eliot, most notably—Joyce's small output of what we might call critical writings (be they his notes on aesthetics or his handful of reviews for the *Daily Express*), dries up to nothing as soon as he establishes himself as a writer of fiction. Joyce published "Il miraggio del pescatore di Aran: la valvola dell'Inghilterra in caso di guerra" ("The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran" in *Il Piccolo della Sera* on 5 September 1912.¹⁶¹ After that he produced no journalistic or critical writing for public consumption bar, possibly, a short sub-editorial on "foot and mouth disease" for the *Freeman's Journal*, which appeared just a day later on 6 September 1912. The life of the essayist was, bar moments of fleeting interest, clearly appealing to Joyce primarily as a

¹⁶⁰ The lecture was of course "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages." Joyce had originally been asked to present three talks but the other two lectures, one on James Clarence Mangan and the other on the Irish Literary Renaissance, were never given, though versions of both are gathered together in Kevin Barry, *OCPW*, 127-36; 137. The Mangan essay is more or less complete, but of Joyce's proposed talk on the Irish Literary Renaissance only a single unnumbered holograph leaf from a notebook remains.

¹⁶¹ *OCPW*, 201-205.

potential source of income and exposure. So, while we should, as I have argued, take Joyce's efforts at journalism seriously, we must do so with Joyce's own serious reservations in mind. The pointed separation made in the character list for *Exiles* between "Richard—A writer" and "Robert—A journalist" is revealing of the separation Joyce appeared to make in his own life. The experiment with journalism as something for which he may have "a talent" gave way to his distrust in rhetoric. While Richard devotes himself to the integrity of his own soul, Robert acts as an opinion-former whose opinions are self-serving, a crafter of effective phrases rather than an exposé of complex truths. He has the power to condemn and confirm, he claims, Richard's public image and, as a result, has a power over his fortunes that is not founded on superior merit.¹⁶² The journalist, in short, is denounced, while the "writer" exalted.

So, *Exiles* began its life during a period of ambivalence—Joyce was treading water financially, yet energized artistically—but it was completed in a period of exciting forward motion. Joyce appears to have conceived of the bare bones of the play, drafted the first act, and begun taking disparate notes on future scenes and redrafts by the autumn of 1913; the only dated notes in the extant notebook for *Exiles* are from November 12 and 13 and in the subsequent notes, Joyce writes as if the first act were already drafted.¹⁶³ At this point, Joyce was still in a position of defiant failure. Yet, on November 25, Joyce received the first of two unexpected letters that would change his circumstances for the better. Grant Richards, with whom Joyce had had a protracted and somewhat bitter fight over the publication of *Ulysses*, wrote to Joyce indicating that he would be eager to take another look at *Dubliners*. In private, Richards admitted to feeling some remorse over his treatment of Joyce and his book, considering Joyce's anger with him to have some justification (*JJ*, 349). Taken alone, this softening on Richards's part would not have buoyed Joyce's spirits overly much;

¹⁶² Matthew Bevis has discussed Joyce's distrust of misdirected "eloquence": "Joyce's Breathing Space," in *The Art of Eloquence*, 204-269. Patrick Collier has provided an account of the complex antagonism felt by many modernist authors towards the press: Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2006).

¹⁶³ This notebook is held by the State University New York at Buffalo Library. All references to it in this thesis are taken from the transcription printed in James Joyce, *Poems and Exiles*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 342-354. Hereafter cited in the text as Mays.

Joyce had suffered enough disappointment over *Dubliners* to be wary of new dawns, even if Richards's experience with the book suggested this was no idle request.¹⁶⁴ But if Joyce remained cautious about the prospect of publishing with Richards, the letter received from Ezra Pound two weeks later (15 December 1913) could leave him in little doubt that his fortunes were improving.

Pound's letter is typically direct, offering Joyce a clear route to publication in several forms and on several continents. Pound rattles off the magazines, journals, and "papers" with which he has influence of one kind or another: *The Egoist* and the *Cerebrilist* ("which means God knows what"), "the only organs in England that stand and stand for free speech and want (I don't say get) literature"; "two American magazines which pay top rates"; "'The Smart Set' wants top notch stories. 'Poetry' wants top notch poetry"; "Essays etc. could only go into the 'C' (*Cerebrilist*) or 'E' (*Egoist*)."¹⁶⁵ For Joyce, who had not only been struggling to publish his problematic novel and book of short stories, but to establish himself at all as a literary voice, Pound's offer represented not only an opportunity but a lifeline.¹⁶⁶ Admittedly, Joyce

¹⁶⁴ Had Joyce not remained dubious about the prospect of Richards finally publishing *Dubliners*, it is unlikely that he would have allowed Pound to publish his faintly inflammatory "Curious History" in *The Egoist* in January 1914. Joyce was still waiting for Richards's decision and while the piece may have acted as a prompt to Richards, it could as easily have acted as a final burning of bridges. *The Egoist* piece was intended, of course, to drum up interest in his cause and, one presumes, to find him a publisher, but it offered no guarantees that it would attract one. If Joyce had had any confidence in Richards's seriousness, then the move would have to be viewed as foolhardy to say the least.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in *JJ*, 349-50. All further references to this letter are taken from here. Ellmann puts a similar stress on this letter as a turning point in Joyce's career. As he says, "the temper of Joyce's life changed."

¹⁶⁶ It is notable that Pound's interest in Joyce came through Yeats, who retained a rather general appreciation of Joyce on the basis of the impression he had made in Dublin, as well as a few fragments of poetry he had read since (Yeats soon after gave Pound Joyce's "I Hear an Army" to read). Were it not for this relatively insubstantial connection, Joyce may have remained largely unpublished and almost entirely unknown to the literary communities in England, Europe, and America for far longer than he did. While Joyce may well have been touched by Pound's declaration that it was "the first time that [Pound had] written to anyone outside [his] circle of acquaintance" (which was considerable), the subtext is that to be a

was not being offered publication directly; Pound stressed that while he was the *de facto* editor of *The Egoist* and *Cerebrilist*, he could not “promise publication” in the American magazines as he had “no absolute powers for accepting mss” and, as he says to Joyce, “[a]s I don’t in the least know what your present stuff is like, I can only offer to read what you send.” But, with this scent of opportunity, Joyce could trust to his ability and the quality of his writing to take advantage. Pound expresses his desire for “markedly modern stuff” and offers Joyce room to “speak [his] mind on [anything] the Spectator objects to”; the problems that had beset *Dubliners* were unlikely to arise here. Pound was (quite explicitly) offering Joyce the opportunity to not only make money from his writing—“pay top rates”; “they pay 2 bob a line”—but to make a name for himself among the literary circles on two continents, all without making any of the significant textual alterations that book publishers had demanded of him. As Pound advises Joyce, “The Smart Set” and “Poetry” offered him the opportunity to be published alongside “most of the best people,” while “[a]pppearance in the Egoist may have a slight advertizing value if you want to keep your name familiar”—one might rather say of Joyce at this time, *make your name familiar*.

If Joyce had maintained any doubts about Pound’s seriousness, they disappeared a few days later when, before Joyce had even replied to Pound’s initial letter, he wrote again to say that Yeats had given him Joyce’s “I Hear an Army.” Both Pound and Yeats were highly impressed by it and wanted to use it in the now famous anthology of “Imagism,” *Des Imagistes*. Not only was Pound eager to use the poem, but eager to pay for it. By mid-January, Joyce had put the finishing touches to *Portrait* and sent it and *Dubliners* to Pound. Just four days later (January 19 1913), Pound responded to Joyce, describing *Portrait* as “fine stuff” and declaring his intention to have it published in *The Egoist*. He was less sure about the prospects for *Dubliners* but sent three of the stories off to H. L. Mencken at *The Smart Set* anyway. If Joyce had any more verse, particularly along the lines of “I Hear an Army,” then Pound would send it to *Poetry*.

It is no real exaggeration to say that in the space of a month, Joyce had managed through Pound to go from outsider, living and working on the edge of

writer outside Pound’s circle of acquaintance at this time was a rather cold and lonely place to be.

European culture, to insider, in touch with the major avant-garde movements of literary culture on two continents. Pound, who Ellmann nicely describes as “the most active man in London” during this period, could bring Joyce into contact with flourishing networks of activity and cordiality (*JJ*, 350).¹⁶⁷ Joyce did not just become publishable (and published) almost overnight, but he had the opportunity to be known by those who mattered. Through Pound, Joyce had the good will of Mencken and Monroe in the U.S., Ford Madox Ford and the *Egoist* in the UK, and Henry Davray of the *Mercure de France* (to name but a small and influential few). Ellmann sums up the transformation in Joyce’s fortunes with characteristic elegance. “In Ezra Pound, as avid to discover as Joyce was to be discovered, the writings of Joyce found their missionary” (*JJ*, 350). And if Pound’s sudden aid wasn’t enough, on January 25 1914 Grant Richards wrote to inform him of his intention to publish *Dubliners*. The first serial instalment of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was published a week later on February 2 (Joyce’s 32nd birthday) and *Dubliners* was finally published in a run of 1250 copies on June 15 that year.

My attention to this turnaround in Joyce’s fortunes should not be seen as the grounds of any psychoanalytic reading of *Exiles*. By no means am I suggesting that the changes in Joyce’s fortunes should be understood as decisive in determining the tone or prominent themes of the play. But, as I have already argued, it is important to find a way to discuss the role that Joyce’s personal circumstances had on shaping his self-consciously “impersonal” texts.¹⁶⁸ Keeping in mind the circumstances I have described, I will offer a reading of the play’s central discussion of betrayal, primarily

¹⁶⁷ Joyce’s immediate adoption into “imagism” is evidence enough of the speed such a transformation could occur.

¹⁶⁸ The idea of Joyce’s writing, and the great texts of High Modernism more broadly, as “impersonal” and self-effacing has a long critical history dating back at least as far as Eliot’s description of “the progress of an artist” as “a continual extinction of personality” in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” This idea is evidently not without problems in modernism and the notion appears to ring a particularly false note in regards to *Exiles*, purely because the humourlessness of the play seems to reveal the author sitting behind every line. Tim Dean provides an interesting account of the major issues in this discussion and offers an interesting case for Joyce’s fundamental separation from Eliot on the matter of impersonality: Tim Dean, “Paring his Fingernails,” in *Quare Joyce* ed. Joseph Valente (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 241-72.

(more first than foremost) as a continuing development of Joyce's analysis of the artist's (and artist hero's) necessarily antagonistic relationship to Ireland. From here, however, I will show the shift in Joyce's interest in betrayal from the grand, heroic, and historically inevitable, to the quotidian through his continuing analysis of interpersonal betrayal as a necessary constituent of any relationships (at least any relationship of value).

“A nation exacts a penance”

In *Dubliners* Joyce offered a detailed, multi-layered diagnosis of the paralysis that he saw at the heart of Irish society at the beginning of the twentieth-century. In *Portrait*, Joyce captured the necessary, generative delusions required to evade this paralysis by capturing the struggle of one heroic individual. If *Dubliners* was an account of myriad, unrelenting failures then *Portrait* was the account of a success or failure that is always about to be. As Seamus Deane has pointed out with some relish, Stephen departs for Paris with “an absurdly stated ambition . . . a project that can never, by its nature, get off the ground.” For all the talk of destiny (the future), he is “armed” with little more than a “half-baked aesthetic theory that, after mountainous labour, has only produced a little mouse of a poem.”¹⁶⁹ *Exiles* appears then to have been conceived as being complementary to these other accounts. Having used the short story to study the fate of those, like Eveline, trapped in Ireland, and the novel to offer a way out, Joyce's play would dramatize the return of one who had found success beyond the paralyzing forces of Ireland. Joyce clarifies this point in one of the first entries in the *Exiles* notebook at Buffalo.

Why the title *Exiles*? A nation exacts a penance from those who dared to leave her payable on their return. The elder brother in the fable of the Prodigal Son is Robert Hand. The father took the side of the prodigal. This is probably not the way of the world – certainly not in Ireland; but Jesus' Kingdom was not of this world.

¹⁶⁹ Deane, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, xlii. As I have argued, listing Stephen's inadequacies in this way slightly misconstrues the point, since Joyce's account, rather than wholly “ironic” takes Stephen's semi-delusional self-making seriously. But, equally, it is important that in *Portrait* Stephen remains perched always on the precipice of greatness rather than achieving it; the driving teleological force that the *Künstlerroman* provides, gives a false sense of completion that Joyce denies.

(Mays, 334)

The irony is bitter as Joyce oscillates between a wry contrast between real-world and fable and an attack on Ireland for being unnaturally quick to attack its returning son (“certainly not in Ireland”); Joyce’s structural and universal drive competes with his sense of Irish exceptionalism.

This dynamic, which drives much of Joyce’s thinking and writing on betrayal, is then present also in the fundamental composition of *Exiles*. The threat of suppression by Ireland that Joyce had made Stephen’s “*raison d’être exile*” in *Portrait*, that pervades the paralysing atmosphere of *Dubliners*, and forms the central tenet of Joyce’s Trieste non-fiction, is both confirmed and yet problematized by Joyce’s improving fortunes. He was right to leave Ireland, he can say, since his work would not have been recognized there, but, since his work is being recognized internationally, why not return to Ireland anyway? Joyce’s key themes for the preceding years had been the stultifying forces of Irish self-destruction, the necessity of exile, the historical force of betrayal in Irish history, and the dramatic and poetic potential this logic provides. It’s clear from the conception of *Exiles* that Joyce felt he had more to say on the subject. Yet, his improvement in circumstances subtly changed the dynamic in which he worked. Perversely, the themes of betrayal and exile that so dominated his work—as narratives of overcoming—became all the more vital and central in *Exiles* for being so suddenly contested. This is not to say that Joyce was moved to offer a rebuttal through his fiction, but that new expressions of the logic that had undergirded his writing became apparent. The intellectual foundations of betrayal and exile upon which *Portrait* had been built were now incomplete expressions of the logic through which Joyce had (re)constructed the world in his fiction.

Similarly, as Joyce’s sense of imminent failure receded, he lost some of the energizing force of persecuted genius that drove his literary investigations. *Exiles* is not simply an investigation of what would happen were a grown Stephen Dedalus (or Joyce himself) to return to Ireland, but an attempt to purify the conception of betrayal that drove the Joycean exile¹⁷⁰ from Ireland in the first place. If Joyce’s writing up to this point had been saturated with a concern for betrayal, *Exiles* is a head on assault on betrayal as a problem to be understood and solved. If Ireland’s threat to the

¹⁷⁰ Both Joyce’s characters and Joyce himself as, in a sense, a character performing exile.

budding artist manifested itself always through betrayal, how did that betrayal manifest itself when the artist had already, in a sense, broken free?

“It is too soon yet to despair”: Betrayal of the self

This question, since it is essentially a question about success, is wrapped up in the larger Joycean theme of Irish failure.¹⁷¹ Not so much the failure of *Dubliners*—which catalogued the quiet suffering of unremarkable people¹⁷²—but the heroic failure that Joyce attacked as typically Irish (and typically self-defeating) in his non-fiction. This concern with heroism was, as I have suggested, both an apology for an already desired exile (Stephen wants to leave Ireland for the excitement of the continent; Joyce, from his position of exile, wishes to establish the necessity of that exile) and a response to a history of glorious martyrdom in Ireland that was, for Joyce, entirely unsatisfying. Stephen left Ireland in order to avoid what was, in his terms, an unavoidable decision between a form of heroic martyrdom—which achieves nothing—and fundamental compromise—which achieves nothing but strengthens the forces of stagnation at the sacrifice of personal integrity.¹⁷³ More simply put: if one were unwilling, as Stephen was, to submit one’s independence to the “mob,” only two choices remained. One could be a dead hero or a living exile, but one could not be a living hero. Stephen’s solution—and the implicit argument of Joyce’s non-fictional constructions of Irish heroism—is to be both hero and coward: too much a hero to compromise, too much a coward to accept martyrdom. In exile, the principled refusal to compromise is sustained simply by the act of continued exile. Joyce’s refusal to return to Ireland is itself an embattled position that contains within it the germ of all supporting conflicts. The permanence that Joyce achieves—and

¹⁷¹ It is a commonplace of Joycean criticism that *Dubliners* is a book about failure, while both *Portrait* and *Ulysses* are clearly interested in this problem to varying degrees.

¹⁷² This wording is imperfect. But some clear line needs to be drawn between the quotidian paralysis of *Dubliners*, which refuses to be absorbed into the grander tone of overcoming and achievement that *Portrait* promotes, and the heroic narratives Joyce responds to in his non-fiction. In *Portrait*, the possibility that Stephen may redeem, save, or at least transform his nation is central to the novel’s dynamic, even if one reads this possibility as inherently deluded.

¹⁷³ This sacrifice might be made in the name of nationalism, revivalism, Catholicism, or any other –ism.

Stephen flees in pursuit of—allows him to be at war without ever fighting any specific battles.

In the period prior to Richard's return to Ireland, he appears to have similarly balanced this tension between battle and retreat. He tells Beatrice that "on account of her [Richard's mother] I lived years in exile"; Richard has retreated from the powerful forces of social convention that his mother personified. But Richard also stresses, without any sense of contradiction, that he "fought against her spirit while she lived to the bitter end" (*E*, 9). In exile, Richard could "fight against her spirit" without ever having to confront the reality of that fight. In exile, simply existing in accordance with his principles was sufficient. But this static tension cannot be sustained upon Richard's return to Ireland, where refusal to conform is a political act that will not go unnoticed, precisely because it is an attack on the status quo. It is this question that appears to have motivated Joyce to compose *Exiles*: not merely what "penance" would Ireland require of a returning exile? But could the life of heroic integrity that was possible in exile also be possible in Ireland? Particularly when the failure that Ireland threatens to enforce has already been evaded? In having one of his heroic exiles return, Joyce reopens the logic of exile to fresh analysis.

Richard returns to Ireland an ambiguous success. He has a reputation, but one built largely on the scandal that has followed his principled and public moral stances (on, one presumes, marriage, the church, and the Irish Literary Renaissance). He has published a book (its title, form, and content are unknown to us), but the publication has not sold well in Ireland (or, as far as we know, anywhere else); as Richard sarcastically responds to Robert's well meant comment about the sale of his book, "I shall smoke a cigarette. Thirty-seven copies have now been sold in Dublin" (*E*, 19). That said, both the book and Richard himself appear to have made a significant impression on the Dublin literary classes, particularly a prominent and influential figure: the "vicechancellor."¹⁷⁴ As Robert Hand says to Richard, the vicechancellor

¹⁷⁴ The "vicechancellor" is not referred to in *Exiles* by anything other than his title. This vicechancellor should not be confused with "Old Chatterton, the vicechancellor," who is, Bloom thinks, Ned Lambert's "granduncle or greatgranduncle" (*U*, 7.261-2). Chatterton, rather than a University official, was Vice-Chancellor of all Ireland, a position in the national judiciary abolished upon his retirement in 1904. He died in 1910, two years before *Exiles* is set. If Joyce was referring to Chatterton, then it was an uncharacteristic lapse on his part.

“has the highest possible opinion of you, everyone has” (*E*, 19). It is unclear who precisely “everyone” includes, but given Richard’s small sales it must be a rather small group. Nevertheless, the good will of the vicechancellor—and the job as professor for which he is offering support—represents an opportunity to move from outside (exile) to inside in one swift motion. But Richard has not, it appears, been softened by his success and remains cautious; Robert chides him: “Richard, you are too suspicious. It is a defect in you” (*E*, 19). While he can no longer be prevented from achieving his basic goals of literary achievement (publication), Richard nevertheless perceives the attempts by “the vicechancellor” to embrace him as a form of attack, more subtle and pernicious in its own way than those Stephen sought to escape. Richard claims to have been driven into exile by the force of social convention, emblemized for him by his mother’s refusal to acknowledge Bertha or their child (*E*, 9). But the danger is not now that he will be forced to conform to those conventions he previously dismissed—though this is part of his fear—but that his ongoing non-conformance would be silenced, deprived of its heroic resistance.

While Richard has been away, little has been heard of him in Ireland except vague rumours and hearsay. Robert has worked “tirelessly” to pave the way for Richard’s glorious return to Ireland by providing his own, more credible counter-rumours. But for Richard, responding to the moralizing disapproval of his countrymen with anything more accommodating than quiet disdain (what Stephen would think of as “silence”) is the worst kind of compromise; his sense of personal integrity demands that he must be accepted as he is, totally and openly (*E*, 40). To obscure any aspect of himself, however questionable, is seen as a denial of that self. Since Richard’s “moral fearlessness,” as Robert construes it, is the bedrock of his genius and his philosophy, any deviation from complete autonomy and disregard for social convention would implicitly undermine the entirety of his personal, literary, and social project.

The vicechancellor’s approach, regardless of the conscious intent behind it, does carry with it a certain danger. Through Robert the vicechancellor is offering Richard his support for the post of “chair of romance literature,” an eminent and, one presumes, well-reimbursed academic position. This move into the mainstream of Irish thought would represent a clear success, an implicit recognition by Ireland’s intellectual elite that Richard’s decision to leave Ireland was the correct one, that he was right to scorn outdated morality, and right to follow his own path. But Richard

astutely and immediately strikes upon a problem. He is not in fact being offered a *job*—“no questions asked,” so to speak—but the possibility of a job upon certain conditions. For all that the vicechancellor has influence, the process of evaluation would continue to judge him by more or less the same standards that drove him from Ireland in the first place. As Robert says, “[the vicechancellor] told me that, if your name goes forward, he will work might and main for you with the senate” (*E*, 19). Robert, similarly, promises to “do [his] part, of course, in the press and privately,” which apparently consists of setting “rumours afloat” that Richard need only “refrain from contradicting” (*E*, 20). For Richard, the entire process is merely a lure, a way of forcing him into a position of implicit compromise. The question of whether or not he might get the post is really a moot one; by playing the game at all, by showing himself to be willing to be anything other than completely honest and open about those acts of his that society may call immoral, he would not only have failed by his own standard, but implicitly bowed to such moralizing. This is shown by his sharp and pertinent response to Robert’s offer: “The conditions?” he asks. “You mean about the future?” Robert responds, confused. “I mean about the past” (*E*, 19). Robert has picked up on the type of discourse to which Richard is appealing—bartering—but not understood its import. He assumes that Richard is establishing the terms of his employment—the rate of pay, length of the chair, etc. But Richard appeals to this mode of discourse with a bitter irony; he is really talking about the integrity of the self, something that by its nature cannot be bartered with, traded in scraps, but, in Richard’s absolutist philosophy, must remain whole and unrestricted by “conditions.”

Richard, doubtless tempted by the position, if only because it would offer him irrefutable and ongoing evidence of his success over the stultifying forces of Ireland, is nevertheless as conscious of what he would lose as of what he may gain. Like Stephen Dedalus, therefore, he constructs a narrative of betrayal in which he can cast himself as the victim of a grand plot, orchestrated not so much by the individual players in the drama (the vicechancellor and Robert) but by some unconscious, repressive Irish force of traditional morality. In order to seek the position, Richard must, in his words, “give the lie to [his] past life . . . for the sake of social conventions” (*E*, 20). Doing so would be a betrayal of his fundamental principles, a neutering of his capacity to mount a radical critique of the prevailing morality, and a denial of those very things that gave his past meaning and value. Compromise of this sort would represent an act of violence against the self as real to Richard as the moral

and physical assassinations that befell Caesar and Parnell, respectively. Richard's fear is that Robert will tempt him into betraying himself. His refusal to commit to Ireland, indeed to remain in Ireland, has up until this point immunized him against such threats. But in returning, he has disrupted the static antagonism of exile and necessitated action. In Joyce's fiction, the possible outcomes of such action are strictly delimited: heroic refusal; full dedication to the nation, race, and family such that it can be bettered, even saved from within; or the exile from which Richard is already attempting to return. The first of these leads inevitably to destruction at the hands of powerful repressive forces and the second leaves the hero open to Irish betrayal, which is characterized in Joyce's writing as inevitable.

The question is then, what kind of heroism is available in Ireland, if any is possible at all? In summarizing the nature of Joyce's shorter works, Vicki Mahaffey has commented on the change in perspective in Joyce's writing as "heroism is increasingly replaced by humour in Joyce's mature works."¹⁷⁵ The choice of word is important here; Mahaffey is not suggesting merely that heroism becomes less interesting while, unrelatedly, humour a greater draw, but that somehow the two occupy a similar place in Joyce's writing, but at different times. As Joyce becomes less concerned with the dramatic and narrative possibility of heroism, Mahaffey suggests, he fills the hole left behind with comedy. Any reader of *Ulysses* would likely agree with Mahaffey's general suggestion here since the book enacts this process in its movement from Stephen to Bloom, from the dour, lonely pursuit of integrity in a country that lacks it (this is how Stephen sees himself) to the whimsical wanderings of an everyman. But the problem of *Exiles* is still primarily the problem of the life lived heroically in Ireland. For Richard, the "automystic" (Mays, 342), heroism is found in the refusal of "social convention" (Mays, 343), in "fighting for his own hand, for his own emotional dignity and liberation" (Mays, 348), in suffering the loss of a mother, a country, perhaps a wife in pursuit of high principle. And lying behind this heroism is, of course, the literary conviction made explicit in Stephen's self-prophesying, that the heroism of the artist individual might somehow redeem and

¹⁷⁵ Vicki Mahaffey, "Joyce's Shorter Works," *Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 187.

mend the country against which he battles.¹⁷⁶ But in Joyce's construction, the Irish hero is *always*, ultimately, a martyr. Stephen's acknowledgement of this fact in *Portrait* leads him to the conclusion that he had no choice but to sacrifice his life, his integrity, or his homeland. Integrity is for Stephen, as it is for Richard Rowan, all important; yet what use is such heroic steadfastness if it will not effect change to that which is resisted? If Ireland always betrays, forgets, and sanitizes those who are best suited to save it (as it did, in Joyce's description, to Parnell, John O'Leary,¹⁷⁷ and any number of its most realistic hopes for improvement) then the Irish hero is also, necessarily, either a fool or a willing but pointless martyr.

¹⁷⁶ It is a critical commonplace to think of Richard Rowan and Stephen Dedalus before him as "heroic," even if this heroism is read as ironic, comic, or deluded. For examples of differing takes on Richard as "heroic" see: Joseph Voelker, "The Beastly Incertitudes: Doubt, Difficulty, and Discomfiture in James Joyce's *Exiles*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 14.4 (1988), 514; Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 18, 44-5; Joseph Valente, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice*, 148-153.

¹⁷⁷ See my discussion of "Fenianism: The Last Fenian" in the first chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Four: “Like thieves in the night”: Sexual Betrayal as Dispossession in *Exiles*

Joyce’s resumption of hostilities with Ireland was clearly central to the early composition of *Exiles*, but it is also clear that Joyce was beginning to tire of his central subject. The only extant notes for the play show him working through many of the contributory ideas, themes, character histories, and pieces of dialogue that would make up the play. Of the roughly forty more or less discursive entries in this notebook, only eight deal at all directly with problems of personal integrity (the key theme of the play) in conflict with nation, history, art, or society. Yet some twenty-seven of these entries deal with adultery, sexual betrayal, or the spiritual indeterminacy of quasi-marital relationships (not necessarily monogamous). In short, there are more than three times as many entries relating to amatory betrayal as there are entries relating to platonic betrayal.¹⁷⁸ This startling imbalance is even more apparent on the page, since many of these amatory entries are significantly longer than those relating to platonic or national betrayal. Joyce’s understanding of these latter themes, and his experience at manipulating them in his texts, was such that he scarcely needed to note down many exploratory thoughts on this theme. As I have suggested, Richard’s understanding of betrayal is not much different to Stephen’s in its core aspects, nor is his conception of nationalistic affiliation as submitting to Ireland’s cannibalistic, fratricidal hunger. As such, Joyce did not need to devote as much preparatory effort to working through his position, testing it with metaphorical associations, and developing ways to add depth to the depiction. The preparatory work, in a sense, had been carried out in *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and in his Trieste non-fiction.

Richard Ellmann attributes much of the resurgence in Joyce’s writing shortly prior to the composition of *Exiles* to Joyce’s “affair of the eyes” with the “dark lady” of *Giacomo Joyce* (*JJ*, 348). Ellmann names this dark lady very directly as Amalia Popper, but for various reasons I will make use of Joyce’s intentionally vague assignation. For one thing, subsequent scholarship has contested Ellmann’s assertion in several ways. Helen Barolini offered an apparently devastating attack on Ellmann’s

¹⁷⁸ This list is of course imperfect and open to some degree of interpretation. Entries that deal with both sets of issues have been counted twice.

claim by disputing the timeline of Joyce's supposed affair with Popper. Since Popper moved to Florence in 1910, Barolini argues, she would have been absent for many of the events *Giacomo* depicts.¹⁷⁹ Peter Costello followed Barolini's line in *James Joyce: The Years of Growth* and John McCourt cast doubt on the centrality of Amalia Popper to *Giacomo* in showing that while several of Joyce's female students appear to match up with aspects of the narrative, none of them match up with all of them.¹⁸⁰ Vicki Mahaffey has restored a good deal of credibility to Ellmann's Popper theory by pointing out that though Popper moved to Florence in 1910, Joyce continued to see the family, a point missed by Barolini and Costello (and, indeed, Ellmann). Certain key events also match up, such as the "betrayal" in *Giacomo*, which occurs at the same time as Popper's engagement to another man, Risolo. Ellmann, at any rate, received strong encouragement from both Ottocaro Weiss and Stanislaus Joyce to view Popper as the "dark lady," despite his own concerns about the dates involved.¹⁸¹ Despite Mahaffey's restorative work, the matter remains at best contested and it is not of sufficient importance to this study to deal with the issue at any great length. I use the term "dark lady" to name the character as she appears (composite or not) in *Giacomo Joyce*, but I also use "dark lady" to refer to a specific convocation of extra-marital desire with the writerly performance of those desires that this affair allows/encourages. *Giacomo* rather than a love letter to a real woman is a performance of problematic and taboo desire.

What is clear, at any rate, is that in the years following the completion (for the most part) of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce was developing an increasing interest in extra-marital desire, particularly in relation to the complex and charged issue of interpersonal betrayal. This does not simply mean adultery in the

¹⁷⁹ Helen Barolini, "The Curious Case of Amalia Popper," *New York Review of Books*, 20 November 1969 and again later, and more summatively, in "The end of my Giacomo Joyce affair," *Southwest Review*, 88.3 (2003): 248-61.

¹⁸⁰ John McCourt, *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste, 1904-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

¹⁸¹ Vicki Mahaffey, *States of Desire: Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, and the Irish Experiment* (Oxford: OUP, 1998), 244.

standard sense (sex “*inter vas naturalis*”¹⁸² with someone outside one’s marriage) but rather an investigation of the emotional possibilities of a desire that is, by its nature, forbidden, taboo. More specifically, in *Exiles*, Joyce attempts to understand such desire through the application of his schematic understanding of betrayal. In mounting this “study,” as he calls it, Joyce appears to be making a conscious contribution to a long literary history. In his preparatory notes, he picks out *Othello* as being “incomplete” as a “study of jealousy” in that its “analysis [is] made from the sensationalist standpoint” (Mays, 343). Joyce’s use of the words “analysis” and “study” here justify my own use of these and similar words to discuss the heavy schematization at work in *Exiles* and in Joyce’s other works. Joyce’s notes are also poetic, thematic, and literary in a way that makes clear that this play is not completely and coldly intellectual (functional rather than emotive). More than any other Joycean text, the drama is, however, slave to analysis. Indeed, the drama is almost entirely a product of that analysis. One might even wish to say that, given the paucity of “action,” the analysis *is* the drama.

Joyce connects *Othello* with Spinoza’s analysis of jealousy, where he argues that “he who thinks, that a woman whom he loves prostitutes herself to another, will feel pain, not only because his own desire is restrained, but also because, being compelled to associate the image of her he loves with the parts of shame and the excreta of another, he therefore shrinks from her.”¹⁸³ Both “*Othello*” and Spinoza represent a “sensationalist” understanding of adultery in that they turn irrevocably towards a reaction that is violent and overwhelming. *Othello* is driven, all too easily, to murder that which he loves, unable to bear that love while it is continually confronted with the false knowledge of her betrayal. The sensational power of such representations of adultery relies on the dynamic Spinoza describes. Amatory love is depicted as a form of idealization where the loved one is made perfect in the eyes of

¹⁸² Joyce’s pronounced and loaded concern with this technical (and, as a result of the church’s need to take a position on it, *spiritual*) definition in *Ulysses* begins in his notes for *Exiles* and in his construction of the act of betrayal in the play itself.

¹⁸³ Joyce quotes a shorter section of this piece in its original Latin—“*pudenda et excrementis alterius jungere imaginem rei amatae*”—which describes the lover’s association of the loved one with another’s “excreta”; I have provided the preceding comments to give Spinoza’s argument its basic context (Mays, 343).

the lover. The adulterous act cannot overwrite this loved image immediately, but instead “associates,” in Spinoza’s terms, this ideal image with the foulest (most grossly bodily) counterpoint available. In confronting an idyllic image with its opposite, a dynamic and painful tension is established. This tension, in general, is settled at great cost, by murder, exile, or some other dramatic act.

Joyce certainly understood and accepted the reality of such bestial jealousy. This is clear enough from his response to his former friend Cosgrave’s accusations about Nora’s faithlessness in Dublin. When Joyce visited Dublin in 1909, Cosgrave suggested to him that while Joyce had believed Nora to be busy at work, she was in fact with him, going “for walks along in the darkness along the riverbank.” Despite the “inherent improbability of the tale,” as Ellmann puts it, Joyce’s imagination carried him to visions of infidelity, treachery, and betrayal (*JJ*, 279). His next letter to Nora, in which he confronts her with this revelation, is self-indulgent but relatively restrained as Joyce laments his “sorrow and mortification” and that his “faith in the face [he] loved is broken.” But he also recreates his vision of Nora’s treachery “*every second night*” (Joyce’s italics), as she “stood with him: he put his arm around you and you lifted your face and kissed him. . . . I can see nothing but your face as it was then raised to meet another’s.”¹⁸⁴ The concentration on the painful image of the loved one (important because, though self-consciously imagined, it presents itself as potentially real) is present in this first letter, but the next morning Joyce sent another letter to Nora that shows the “Spinozan” turn of his thoughts. The language has become cruder and the focus more intensely physical: “were you fucked by anyone before you came to me? . . . A gentleman named Holohan . . . wanted to fuck you . . . Did he do so? Or did you allow him to fondle you and feel you with his hands?” (*SL*, 158-59).

Despite (or perhaps because of) his experience of such a passionate response to the possibility of adultery, in *Exiles* Joyce is clearly interested in investigating a conception of sexual/romantic jealousy beyond that which Spinoza allows. As he puts it: “The scholastic definition of jealousy as a *passio irascibilis* [“spirited resistance”] comes nearer—its object being a difficult good” (Mays, 343). Joyce is referring to St Thomas Aquinas’s separation of the “passions.” These passions are, in Aquinas’s account, essentially the motivators of good; if a thing is good, it may elicit desire so

¹⁸⁴ This letter, dated 8 August 1909, can be found in *SL*, 157-158 and is quoted in full in *JJ*, 279-80.

that in wishing to attain it I wish to benefit myself. So, a good thing may taste pleasant, so that I may desire it and, in satisfying that desire, benefit myself. If I feel sadness, it is because something stands in the way of my good, which may then lead to anger, and then action.¹⁸⁵ In Aquinas's terms, the "concupiscible" passions concern the good taken simply: If my hand is in the fire, I am motivated to remove it in order to reduce the damage the flame causes. The "irascible passion," however, has as its "object . . . something arduous . . . its tendency is to overcome and rise above obstacles." The object of the irascible passions are necessarily more complex. If I remove my hand from the fire as soon as I feel pain, I will avoid the bad (burnt flesh); but if I keep my hand in the flame a little longer, then I may be able to save part of a manuscript that has been rashly thrown away.¹⁸⁶ Peter King has glossed this distinction clearly enough: "Concupiscible passions are directed at sensible good and evil taken simply, as described, whereas irascible passions are directed at sensible good and evil taken as difficult."¹⁸⁷

Joyce's disagreement with Shakespeare and Spinoza appears to be that their descriptions of jealousy are centred on an understanding of the passion of jealousy as purely concupiscible, as concerned only with the swift and simple removal of the animal pain that jealousy provokes. Through Aquinas's terminology, Joyce can think about jealousy in terms of Aquinas's conception of man as necessarily body and soul in concert (and, at times, in conflict). *Exiles* is consciously concerned with the construction of an apparently detached, spiritual conception of love (and, therefore, jealousy, betrayal, adultery) that consciously eschews the reductive animality that Joyce reads in other literary accounts of adultery. The act of adultery is perceived not as a simple wrong, but as the opportunity for a complex response that tends towards the good. Whereas betrayal in Joyce's preceding writings had tended towards a Dantean depiction of betrayal as the ultimate sin, the ultimate dramatic denouement,

¹⁸⁵ This is my gloss on Aquinas's argument, the bulk of which can be found in *De Animabilus* VIII.

¹⁸⁶ This, of course, refers to the anecdote regarding Joyce's sister and the aborted draft of *Stephen Hero*. Whether rescuing part of this abandoned novel was worth burnt hands remains up for debate.

¹⁸⁷ Peter King, "Late Scholastic Theories of the Passions: Controversies in the Thomist Tradition," in *Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Mikko Yrjönsuuri (London: Kluwer, 2002), 230.

Exiles opens the possibility that betrayal, rather than enacting the final severing of relationships, may open up more complex possibilities.

This analysis of love in *Exiles* centres primarily on a dispute between Richard and Robert (and to a lesser extent Bertha) about precisely what love is. While *Exiles* is, fundamentally, a play of ideas, the characters are not merely mouthpieces for a Socratic dialogue Joyce is having with himself. As Joyce writes in his notes, “Critics may say what they like, all these persons—even Bertha—are suffering during the action” (Mays, 343). The ideas Joyce is tossing around also provide the emotional dynamic at the centre of the play, as each character’s conception of love determines the ways they betray, and understand themselves to be betrayed, by the others. Vicki Mahaffey has said that “fundamentally . . . [*Exiles*] is about: the discovery that betrayal is only meaningful in response to a prior expectation.”¹⁸⁸ While I would not go as far as that, the construction of betrayal as a problem of relationships, as something that is the product of relationships, is central to the play’s workings. As I have and will argue, the drama of betrayal acts to expose the danger of commitment, but the nature of that commitment must determine the nature of the betrayal. That said, I am also arguing for a Joycean analysis of betrayal as possessing a logic that, once understood, is amenable to manipulation.

As an aging womanizer and sentimental philosopher (in the sense Stephen makes use of in *Ulysses*), Robert struggles even to use the word “love,” preferring “like” or “passion.” He entices Bertha with his desire to speak “the one word which [he] has never dared to say to” her,¹⁸⁹ but when pushed responds: “that I have deep liking for you” (*E*, 14). It is possible that he is merely being coy in an attempt to draw Bertha in (Bertha, for her part, is well aware that she may be merely another of Robert’s conquests). Indeed, in his discussion with Richard, it is clear that Robert’s understanding of love is essentially as a desire to “possess,” whether “carnally,” “spiritually,” or “emotionally” (*E*, 39). He returns constantly to such language—“possess[ion]” (*E*, 37; 54) and “yours” (*E*, 37; 43; 69)—in his attempts either to

¹⁸⁸ Mahaffey, “Joyce’s Shorter Works,” 201.

¹⁸⁹ This echoes suggestively with “the word known to all men” in *Ulysses*, which, in the Gabler edition at least, is revealed to be “love.” The further association with the “big words that make us so unhappy” suggests the question contained in this earlier text: is “love” worth all the pain and suffering it causes?

describe his own desires or to placate Richard: “[Bertha] is yours, as she was nine years ago, when you met her first” (*E*, 69). It is this conception of love as a form of possession that provides the main theoretical and emotional antagonism in the play. Richard, the “automystic” moral hero, rejects out of hand this conception of love as ownership, insisting instead on an idealized and unworkable conception of love as willed dispossession and absolute freedom (“liberation”). He takes this up with Robert, who is attempting to justify his own rather aimless hedonism through an appeal to nature that is, even in his own terms, really an appeal to animal nature devoid of a spiritual sense.

ROBERT

[*Rapidly.*] [There] are moments of sheer madness when we feel an intense passion for a woman. We see nothing. We think of nothing. Only to possess her. Call it brutal, bestial, what you will.

RICHARD

[*A little timidly.*] I am afraid that that longing to possess is not love.

...

ROBERT

But if you love... What else is it?

RICHARD

[*Hesitatingly.*] To wish her well.

(*E*, 37)

Richard’s hesitant definition is much like Bloom’s definition of a nation in *Ulysses*: it contains, perhaps, a naive depth of insight, but rather than offer a workable template for understanding love, it is essentially a definition built on avoiding other, more restrictive definitions. Richard, like Bloom, refuses to define, because such definition produces restrictions that are harmful. Joyce’s characters regularly find themselves caught between a classicist concern for precise definition—whether in the form of Stephen’s aesthetics or Bloom’s idle speculation on all matters—and a constitutional distaste (phobia even) for the limitations these definitions provide. Indeed, “liberation” from restrictions of all kinds is seen to be Richard’s central motive in the play—this is acknowledged by all the characters at one point or another. As Joyce suggests in his notes, Richard is throughout the play, to the exclusion of all other concerns, “fighting for his own . . . emotional dignity and liberation” (Mays, 348). As such, Richard’s definition offers at best a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for love. One might even question whether “wishing [another] well” *is* a necessary component of love, since the “complex good” it tends towards can lead to such a

miserable form of well-being. The suffering by all characters that Joyce stresses to himself in preparing the play¹⁹⁰ is a good indication of quite how muddy such waters rapidly become. If all these characters are working out of their love for one another—their desire for each other’s good—then why is this love the direct cause of so much suffering?

The ultimate answer to this question is perhaps the very point the play sets out to make: love *is* suffering. More precisely, love is suffering of a very particular kind, brought on by the “wound of doubt” that is seen as the fundamental metaphysical price of love. It is on this conception that the play is built and it is, furthermore, through this conception of love that betrayal comes to play such a central role. For if love is precisely the acceptance of a kind of radical doubt—a radical epistemic anxiety—then what better way for Joyce to dramatize the difficulty of this love than through the fear of betrayal, which is, by its nature, a fear of the “significant other” *as* significantly other. Richard’s “suspicious nature,” as Robert describes it, is not then paranoia in any simple sense. While he is indeed gripped by anxiety and fear, this manifests itself not in delusions and irrationality, but rather in a kind of extreme rationality; a logic that is so structurally sound as to be straightjacketed. The distinction may be slight, but in *Exiles*, it is key.

“Paranoia” has in recent years been shown to have been a constitutive feature of modernist writing and, indeed, modernity itself. David Trotter has argued that modernist experimentation can be understood as a paranoid response to an imagined persecution. The lack of a legitimating authority drives a sense of persecution (the sense that the modernist artist is maliciously underappreciated) that in turn promotes the establishment of a mode of writing that insists on the expertise of the writer as a form of symbolic capital. Since this writing is so resistant to general appreciation, a vicious circle is formed.¹⁹¹ More recently, John Farrell has traced an older, longer history of paranoia from the middle ages through to the eighteenth century, arguing for the pervasiveness of paranoid psychology in the literary heroes of modernity.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ As previously cited: “All these persons . . . are suffering during the action” (Mays, 343).

¹⁹¹ David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

¹⁹² John Farrell, *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

And, building on this work, David Spurr has produced a comparative study of the paranoid forms of Joyce and Kafka. Joyce's work, he says, is "the function of a relation between himself and the world perceived as essentially antagonistic."¹⁹³ I have argued in this thesis against this psychologization of Joyce as it crucially undervalues the degree of ironic self-awareness built into his literary creations. However, there is a great deal of utility in holding on to the psychiatric definition of paranoia as a psychological disorder in which the self is given an exaggerated relation to the world so that seemingly inconsequential events are folded into an internally coherent narrative of extreme persecution. This paranoia is commonly manifested in the form of delusions of grandeur, in which the individual posits their own importance to the wider world and interprets all sensory data as indicative of this fact. While Joyce certainly had a tendency towards such self-aggrandizement, the real value of this terminology is that it can help reveal Joyce's interest in the possibilities of mindsets that we might call paranoiac as artistically generative. Stephen's exile and Richard's exaggerated sensitivity to the possibility of betrayal allow for analyses and dramatic situations that are inaccessible to "normal" psychologies. This is paranoia as a generative rather than degenerative mentality, as a kind of healthy psychosis.

Love, in Richard's terms, in contrast to Robert's insistence on "bestial" "possession," is characterized by the desire to know a (significant) other utterly and the counteractive realization that such knowledge is impossible.¹⁹⁴ Just as, in Spinoza's terms, the pain of jealousy comes from the extreme contrast between the ideal and the degraded, the pain of love comes from the contrast between two sets of

¹⁹³ David Spurr, "Paranoid Modernism in Joyce and Kafka," *Journal of Modern Literature* 34.2 (2011), 179.

¹⁹⁴ I have coined the term "(significant) other" in order to provide some clear distinction between the many "others" we encounter. Otherness, being a property of our interaction with the world, does not alter from one other to another. But it is clearly necessary when discussing amatory betrayal to indicate the different stake one has in this other's *particular* otherness. For Joyce (and this is made explicit in *Exiles*), the disciple is also a special kind of other. This is perhaps true also of the nation, language, and, particularly, the loving mother. All these things require a commitment founded on faith, the danger of which is represented, at least in my account, by the risk of betrayal. Faith is necessarily uncertain (certain things require no faith) and betrayal is Joyce's master motif for exposing its nature.

apparent absolutes: perfect knowledge / complete unity; and unbridgeable separateness / the isolation of the mind/soul. Richard's concern over the possibility of such a connection is indicated partially by his varied terminology. He talks repeatedly of his "soul" (*E*, 73) and of Bertha's "heart" (*E*, 44), not to mention his "mind" and "thoughts," but he also uses the more material "brain" (*E*, 37). The question is not just what love is, but where it happens; in the body, as Robert suggests, or in the soul, as Richard hopes?

The key to understanding Richard's conception of love as "paranoia" lies in his description of it as a "wound of doubt" (*E*, 73). The thematic argument between body and mind that occupies the play is brought into a kind of balance here, as the physical is used to describe the spiritual; the unknown and therefore unexperienced is realized as a direct experience. As Richard says, more fully, "I have wounded my soul for you—a deep wound of doubt that can never be healed" (*E*, 73). Though Richard claims to understand love in practical terms—"wishing [another] well" is something you *do* rather than something you *are*—he is actually concerned primarily with the "dignity" and "integrity" of the soul. This is no small distinction in the play, not least because Richard's mysticism is contrasted directly and simply with Richard's physicality in one of the earliest entries in Joyce's *Exiles* notes.

Richard – an automystic
Robert – an automobile
(Mays, 342)

This separation is obviously suggestive in several ways,¹⁹⁵ but most directly it marks Richard out, from the earliest point of his conception as a character, as concerned with an ontological reality that is not reducible to simple practical terms. In conceiving of himself and others in this way—as interacting on a plane of existence not directly accessible through the normal worldly senses—Richard shifts the core question at the heart of the love relationship into a domain over which standard epistemologies have no hold. The question is, simply put, "is the other as I conceive her to be?" But within this simple question are contained profound anxieties about the nature and possibility of reciprocal relationships. Anxieties that are, for Joyce, best understood, illustrated, and dramatized through the exploration of the language and

¹⁹⁵ Not least in its indication that each man represents one of two distinct forms/manifestations of modernity: the mechanical and spiritual.

structure of betrayal. With its multiple manifestations of betrayal and uncertainty, *Exiles* is not, as Joyce was keen to stress, simply a play about adultery. Rather, as Joseph Voelker has put it, it “explores the world's inscrutability through the metaphor of sexual betrayal.”¹⁹⁶

The key to Richard's attention to betrayal is his awareness of the paucity of “evidence” for true reciprocity. In his study, *Adultery in the Novel*, Tony Tanner has noted the stress in most dramatizations of adultery on “the wrong kind of evidence.” That is to say, in focusing on a handkerchief, Othello believes he can prove or disprove Desdemona's “virtue.” But virtue is an internal feature that is, by its nature, intangible.¹⁹⁷ While the displacement of concern for something intangible to something tangible is, perhaps, only natural, it is nevertheless problematic in that it allows for a kind of perverse over-signification.¹⁹⁸ In *Othello*, the fate (and history) of a handkerchief becomes the fate of a relationship. While for the reader/audience, this may appear to be a particularly powerful form of metaphorical association, for the character the process is unconscious and thus the ontological shift—from virtuous to vile—appears wholly “real.”¹⁹⁹ While the problem is epistemological—it is a matter of evidence—it presents itself as indicating a profound ontological shift, as if it were tangible evidence of the intangible (human nature), the “nature,” most importantly, of the (significant) other in *relation* to the self.

While Joyce consciously moves away from the “sensationalism” of *Othello* in *Exiles*—its horrified violence—the structure of the drama of (adulterous) betrayal as primarily a negotiation between epistemological and ontological concerns is too central to be abandoned altogether. The key shift from what has gone before it—and perhaps the primary novelty of this play and, to an extent, Joyce's entire oeuvre—comes in the conscious abandonment of any standard of proof. While Othello, for example, is “surprised” by the revelation of Desdemona's (apparent) infidelity,²⁰⁰ Richard is already prepared for an infidelity that has not occurred—that perhaps will

¹⁹⁶ Voelker, “The Beastly Incertitudes,” 504.

¹⁹⁷ Tanner, *Adultery*, 40-41.

¹⁹⁸ I discuss this in slightly greater detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

¹⁹⁹ That is to say, *not* conscious. No connection with Freud is implied.

²⁰⁰ This is, as Tanner rightly points out, another of the defining characteristics of the literature of adultery. See, particularly: Tanner, *Adultery*, 41.

not occur—by his hyper-sensitivity to the epistemological problems built into reciprocal relationships. Richard is the master with “faith in the disciple who will betray him,” the soon-to-be-betrayed who carries on, fully cognizant of his future, having no other satisfactory choice (*E*, 24). Richard’s declaration is a pointed barb at Robert, who claims to have “the faith of a disciple in his master,” but it is also an acknowledgement of Richard’s wider conviction that betrayal is always already expected, since, for the artist hero, it is always inevitable.

Richard’s pursuit of spiritual union—“to be united with you in body and soul in utter nakedness”—is as hopeful as it is anxious (*E*, 73). As Richard asks Robert, “[h]ave you the luminous certitude that yours is the brain in contact with which [Bertha]²⁰¹ must think and understand?” (*E*, 37). In the context of their discussion, the question is not merely “can you know that she loves you?” Rather, the question is “can you be sure that your two spirits are united in perfect, uncorrupted necessity?” “Are you he with whom she *must* be united?” Beyond all practical concerns, Richard craves a love that commits fully in such a way that neither individual is fully possible without the other. And it is precisely this commitment, or, to use Stanislaus’s word, “dedication,” that is key in Joyce’s understanding here. Richard’s “wound” is another way of expressing the spiritual commitment he has made. As Stephen fears commitment to Ireland since it would leave him exposed to spiritual harm (usually expressed physically), Richard is similarly wary of exposing his soul in such a way. Yet the major shift between *Portrait* and *Exiles* is that while Stephen eventually succeeds in evading commitment to anything other than his own soul, Richard *has* willingly, knowingly exposed his soul to Bertha. The language Richard uses to describe this state—“nakedness”; “darkness”; “doubt”—is also the language of exposure and insecurity. It is the status of the committed soul as unsupported, rather than cushioned, by love that motivates Richard’s thoughts, both in his anxiety and in his eventual epiphany.

Given this conception, it is perhaps easier to understand Richard’s behaviour in *Exiles*. In contrast to Robert, “spiritual facts . . . exist and are real for Richard” and (Mays, 345), as such, his concern with Bertha’s fidelity is not primarily a concern with the act that might mark her infidelity (the physical act, envisaged as the “sensational” coupling of ideal and grossly bodily), but with the “evidence” it might

²⁰¹ Richard is talking about Bertha, but it may as well be any lover.

provide about the state of her soul; and, perhaps more importantly, the state of his own soul, which is wrapped up with it. Having no sensory access to the “spiritual facts” he is so invested in (he cannot “read in [Bertha’s] heart”), Richard is forced to make determinations from evidence that is necessarily of the “wrong kind.” This is how we should read Richard’s apparent attempts to push Bertha into Robert’s arms; as an unsuccessful but concerted attempt to cheat the logic that drives his anxieties. Since negative evidence (i.e. a lack of evidence of Bertha’s “betrayal”) is unsatisfying, Richard attempts to create a kind of “positive-negative” evidence (to coin a term). In encouraging Bertha to pursue her feelings for Robert to their conclusion (whatever it may be), Richard hopes to prove that she is, once all limitation is set aside, true to him. Each prompt from Richard is then another, greater test, as he attempts to remove all barriers between Bertha and Robert (and any other men she might like) so that she may pass or fail uninhibited by any pressure, societal or otherwise.

Richard is still labouring against, rather than accepting, what Janine Utell refers to as “the pain that lies at the core of love.” Simply put, this pain comes from the realization that “the otherness of the beloved” is absolute, that “[n]o matter how much of a union” two lovers “achieve, they can never overcome the fact of their otherness to each other, the separateness that exists even in love: [the] ultimate and entire strangeness” of the (significant) other.²⁰² For Utell, this fits into a broader account of what she reads as Joyce’s gradual acknowledgement in his fiction of the need to accept the radical otherness of the other. Her decision to call this acceptance “marital love” is perplexing and unhelpful given Joyce’s clear antagonism towards traditional legal union,²⁰³ but the central contention that Joyce is heavily pre-occupied with the problem of the (significant) other’s otherness (the “beloved other” in Utell’s terms) is, essentially, what I have argued for throughout this chapter and in this thesis as a whole. Where we perhaps digress most clearly is, first, in my contention that this radical anxiety is a feature of all relationships where any kind of commitment

²⁰² Utell, *James Joyce and the Revolt of Love*, 28-29.

²⁰³ The clearest account of Joyce’s awareness of the limitations of marriage is still probably Richard Brown’s *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), where, for example, he describes Joyce’s depiction of “the inadequacy of the matrimonial formulation of the sexual relationship” (35).

(“dedication”) is required, however small; and, second, my contention that the structure of betrayal is fundamental to Joyce’s understanding of this problem. Neither Utell, nor those who share her interest in an “Ethical” Joyce make serious reference to the functioning of betrayal in this respect.²⁰⁴

The “twoness” of relationships—what Richard Brown describes as Joyce’s “presentation of individuals as *fundamentally* separate from each other”²⁰⁵—is a necessary condition for (sexual and emotional) betrayal as, for a betrayal to take place, there must be an independent and ultimately inscrutable *other* to enact that betrayal. Equally, however, the potency of this form of betrayal lies also in the ceaseless tension between separation and unification it enables; the experienced faith that “oneness” can be manifested between two individuals through the sexual/emotional relationship and the equally experienced certainty that such oneness is impossible. The tension between these two realizations powers *Exiles*, but it powers in a different way the standoffish independence of Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. While Richard constructs himself on many of the same principles of forced detachment that Stephen does, he is, in a sense, already in the position that Stephen sought to avoid.

The first of several tactics Richard establishes in an attempt to cheat or escape from the logic he has discovered, is based on the spiritual paradigm that motivates his anxieties. Richard privileges a form of non-contingence that is, ultimately, impossible. In this formation, any kind of influence over the (significant) other is deemed to be pernicious in that it is only in a state of complete “freedom” that the actions of that other can be considered valuable. To put it another way, the evidential quality of the (significant) other’s actions—e.g. *not* sleeping with another person—ceases to have value, since it has been, in a sense, corrupted. Richard is attempting, essentially, to make inaction signify in a way that it cannot. This is, partly, why Richard is so committed to an apparently ethical refusal to limit Bertha’s “freedom.” Bertha, not wishing to hurt Richard, implores him: “my God, tell me what you wish

²⁰⁴ I have other concerns with both Utell’s account and, in many similar respects, that of Christopher Devault in *Joyce’s Love Stories* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). I will take up some specific examples later in this chapter and in my discussion of the Bloom’s marital life in the final chapter of this thesis.

²⁰⁵ Brown, *Joyce and Sexuality*, 35. My italics.

me to do?” As Bertha has what we might call a “common”²⁰⁶ understanding of love and monogamy, she sees no contradiction in amending her behaviour to avoid pain to her lover. But for Richard, who yearns for the confirmation of spiritual necessity (non-contingent love), even this kind of influence is fatal. What (the fear of) betrayal elucidates is a fundamental metaphysical awareness of the dangers of contingency; no matter how secure a relationship is, while it is based on grounds that can shift, they may indeed shift at any moment. Richard’s (hopeless) desire for a paradigmatic love is also the (hopeless) desire for absolute security. In his heightened state of anxiety, the mere structural possibility of betrayal is intolerable.

The *only* kind of love that might offer this security would be some form of unconditional love. While in *Ulysses*, Stephen attributes this quality to “*amor matris*: subjective and objective genitive” (*U*, 2.126), in *Exiles* the mother’s love (and love for the mother) is deeply problematic. She stands to remind the reader both of Richard’s heroism (the price he must pay for his principles) and how “unnatural” he is, how incapable of the easy, natural love common to all people: Bertha says to Richard, “I never heard of any human being that did not love the mother that brought him into the world, except you” (*E*, 29). Richard’s mother, with her “cold blighted love,” demands that certain conditions be satisfied, even as her love remains unconditional. This is a form of love to be “fought against” rather than accepted (or reciprocated).²⁰⁷ Whether or not motivated by the unsatisfactory nature of his relationship with his mother,²⁰⁸ Richard requires then a form of love that asks nothing

²⁰⁶ No word sits quite right here and, though “common” contains largely unhelpful class connotations, it avoids the judgemental overtones of “normal” and “regular.” The point being—and it is a point that is important to the dynamic of the play—that Bertha has an everyday, perhaps naive, understanding of love that is constantly challenged by Richard’s endless, anxious theorizing.

²⁰⁷ I do not want to discuss this at any length here, as it is better suited to the discussion of “*amor matris*” I undertake in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that while the two mothers differ fundamentally—one “turns aside,” the other is turned aside from—the result is much the same: a sense of guilt that the love proffered could not be returned in kind.

²⁰⁸ If I were to provide a psychoanalytical reading of Richard’s paranoia, I might suggest that his anxieties about love come from what he perceives to be his mother’s failure to love him. I would argue, perhaps, that Richard’s search for a love without conditions is an attempt to

of him except that he give himself wholly. As Richard explains to Bertha, who asks him “why will you not defend me?”:

I cannot, dear. [*Struggling with himself.*] Your own heart will tell you.
[*He seizes both her hands.*] I have a wild delight in my soul, Bertha, as I look at you. I see you as you are yourself. That I came first in your life or before him then – that may be nothing to you. You may be his more than mine.
(*E*, 46)

The meaning is ambiguous: is this a test by which Bertha may prove that Richard’s primacy is meaningful to her, or a test by which she may discover it for herself? The stress however is on contingency, on the radical stripping away of both those things that emerge from chance and circumstance (the “coming before”) and all those things built on that foundation: affection, pity, the gradual tying together of lives and responsibilities that for many defines marital love. Essentially, for Richard, “what ifs” become intolerable reminders of the contingency of the monogamous bond. To reduce this effect, he forces Bertha into a state where she is “abandoned spiritually . . . [Her soul] is [that] of a woman left naked and alone that it may come to an understanding of its own nature” [Mays, 344]. More importantly for Richard, this spiritual abandonment may allow him to come to know its nature.

The obvious ethical, social, and political aspects of *Exiles*’s championing of the difficulties of “free love” over the apparent securities of socially sanctioned marriage can be seen then to collapse back into a perverse concern for the security marriage is supposed to provide. In *Exiles*, marriage proper instead becomes a place of insecurity; adultery is a product of, rather than an external challenge to, marriage. In Richard’s scheme, the restriction of freedom renders the value of the marriage void, since it represents an artificial and unsatisfactory preservation of the structure of monogamous love, without providing any guarantees that the love will continue to inhabit the structure. This means that readings of *Exiles* that seek to emphasize its radical social politics—its attempt, for example, to forge “a new ethics” of “constant individual rights to choose one’s partner according to actual feelings . . . in defiance

replace the unsatisfactory love provided by his mother. But while this is perfectly plausible as a reading of *Exiles*, it fails to account for this same concern in Joyce’s other fiction.

of bourgeois rules”²⁰⁹—tend to overplay Joyce’s commitment to social reform and to underplay *Exiles*’s commitment to a far more intensely psychological and spiritual investigation of the philosophical possibility of knowing the other.

“He longs to be delivered”: Betrayal as deliverance from doubt / innocence

In order to do the ideas in Richard’s position justice, I have so far discussed his motivations as if his response to metaphysical crisis were straightforward and uncomplicated, even if strange and difficult. But Joyce—indeed, Richard—is entirely conscious of the complex, messy motivations that drive the mannered action of the play. These competing motivations are similarly sourced in the same response to radical anxieties about the (significant) other. For if the logic of Richard’s anxieties is accepted, there are only two true releases from the metaphysical uncertainty he experiences. The first is the “luminous certitude” Richard has lost and cannot again retain, an ecstatic but unsustainable state, characterized as an awareness of the (significant) other’s non-contingent acceptance of the self, and of the shared spiritual unity that follows from this.²¹⁰ This confirmation is powerful but only temporary, since it relies on a state of mind rather than any “evidence” that might sustain it. The second release, though painful, is a far more powerful form of deliverance, being the *confirmation* of those anxieties in the form of a measurable betrayal.²¹¹ As such, while betrayal is to be feared for the damage it threatens, it is also perversely appealing, since it offers a way to ease the constant metaphysical tension at the heart of the love relationship. Robert appears to grasp some of this in Richard’s behaviour; as he says to Bertha:

²⁰⁹ Giuseppina Restivo, “From *Exiles* to *Ulysses*: The Influence of Three Italian Authors on Joyce—Giacosa, Praga, Oriani,” in *Anglo-American Modernity and the Mediterranean: Milan, 29-30 September 2005*, ed. Caroline Patey, Giovanni Cianci, and Francesco Cuojati (Milan: Cisalpino, 2006), 135.

²¹⁰ I would say unattainable since, logically, it is. But Richard has experienced it, even if this was a form of happy delusion.

²¹¹ There may be some value in adopting a quasi-Lacanian language here. Much as “desire” for a specific object merely soothes temporarily the unsatisfiable “Desire” at the core of one’s being (that is, desire *itself*, without any object), the confirmation that betrayal provides is a specific deliverance from the non-specific anxiety at the core of social being.

[T]here is no harm. . . . He does not know yet what I feel. He has left us alone here at night, at this hour, because he longs to know it – he longs to be delivered.

(*E*, 54)

This “long[ing] to be delivered” manifests then in Richard’s desire for resolution. He wishes to see Bertha and Robert come together in an embrace that, in confirming the object of his fear, will do away with that fear.

Richard craves also the release that is to be found in a masochistic form of utter humiliation, which shares a similar but counterbalancing dynamic of release. I will not go into this at any length here, since Joyce deals with this in greater detail in *Ulysses*. But while there the masochistic tendency is built into his unusual everyman, Bloom, the seductive power of betrayal in *Exiles* is seen as emerging directly from the specific psychology of the artist hero. Richard’s desire to be “betrayed . . . secretly, meanly, craftily” is not simply a subconscious craving that could be explained away clinically. That is to say, it plays a role in his self-analysis that is partly conscious. For his desire to be betrayed is consciously a desire for renewal and release from the immense pressures of his heightened spiritual ethics. Unlike Stephen, who craves betrayal for its capacity to confirm his value as hero and poet, Richard wishes for the destruction of his own heightened existence: “to be dishonoured for ever in love and in lust, to be . . . for ever a shameful creature and to build up my soul again out of the ruins of shame.” Richard’s ceaseless pursuit of spiritual perfection, dignity, and freedom is difficult, unnatural, and psychologically taxing. In pursuing his own perfectability, Richard must also confront his own imperfection. Thus adulterous betrayal, in its most extreme, “sensational,” form offers a release from the pressures this discrepancy brings. The confirmation of his wretchedness would relieve Richard of the burden of his potential perfection.

“Steal you could not . . . nor take by violence”: (Dis)possession as self-defence

It may appear that we have moved away somewhat from betrayal in these discussions of spiritual connection. For, indeed, how is betrayal possible when everything takes place in the open and nothing is off limits? Betrayal implies that a covenant or agreement has been broken, that a deceit has been carried out, and that harm has been done by one who is trusted to one who trusted. Robert could well claim to have been betrayed by Bertha, who in his mind has been “informing” on him

to Richard (betraying his trust); one of the few direct references to betrayal in the play comes when Bertha reacts unhappily to Richard's having confronted Robert. She assumes that Robert will have reacted, to use the term I have above, in the "common" way: "He hates me. He believes I made a fool of him – betrayed him." Richard similarly does claim to have been betrayed by Robert, his "disciple," in several ways. But on what grounds would Richard be able to claim he had been betrayed by Bertha?²¹² As Bertha says to Richard: "There is one person in all this who is not a fool. And that is you. I am though. And [Robert] is" (*E*, 45). Given the history of adultery in literature, this cognizance is significant. As Richard Brown has commented, Richard's position is "not one of ignorance, compromise, comedy and victimization but one where high principles and a degree of heroism may be attained."²¹³ This stands in stark contrast to Charles Bovary, say, who Joyce cites in his notes as the cause of an esthetic shift of "the centre of sympathy . . . from the lover or fancyman to the husband or cuckold." This "change is utilised in *Exiles*" to give Richard's "spiritual revolt . . . some chance of fighting before the public a drawn battle" (Mays, 344-45).²¹⁴ Joyce may be right that "public" affection had shifted from the Don Giovannis of literature to the Bovarys—something he plays on in *Ulysses*

²¹² Vicki Mahaffey provides an excellent gloss of the ways that each of the characters betray each of the others: Mahaffey, "Joyce's Shorter Works," 202-04. Mahaffey makes perceptive connections between this web of betrayal and *Tristan & Isolde*, which clearly provided a contributory model for *Exiles*. As critics like Mahaffey have ably demonstrated what I take to be a more or less self-evident aspect of the play—to the extent that anyone betrays anyone, everyone betrays everyone—I have not taken the time to go through this in this chapter.

²¹³ Brown, *Joyce and Sexuality*, 18.

²¹⁴ For a brief account of Joyce's understanding of this change in audience affection in the context of shifting social "possibilities," see Richard Brown "Shifting Sexual Centres: Joyce and Flaubert" in "*Scribble*" 2: *Joyce et Flaubert*, ed. Claude Jacquet and André Topia (Paris: Minard, 1990), 65-84. For an alternative account of this shift in the nineteenth-century English novel, see Barbara Leckie, *Culture and Adultery: The Novel, the Newspaper, and the Law, 1857-1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). She suggests, summatively, that "[o]ne encounters fantasies of adulterous desire replaced by fantasies of spectacular surveillance as the novels in the English tradition, again and again, choose to approach adultery not from the perspective of a character involved in adultery, but rather from the perspective of the betrayed party" (9).

with great success—but Richard’s dour hyperawareness and Bovary’s comic ignorance in the face of increasingly irresistible evidence elicit fundamentally differing responses. As Scarlett Baron has commented, “Joyce wished to make Richard impressive rather than likeable . . . an object of awed respect rather than sympathy.”²¹⁵

Richard is aware of most of what goes on and manipulates the other characters into action. This is not to say that Richard knows whether Bertha has slept with Robert or not. As John MacNicholas displayed with convincing comprehensiveness in 1973, both the audience of *Exiles* and Richard himself are, due to Joyce’s refusal to disclose certain information, unable to establish what has happened between Robert and Bertha.²¹⁶ Joseph Voelker has commented, with some exasperation, that “[t]he play goes to absurd lengths to keep us in the dark. Even Robert and Bertha do not seem to know what has gone on between them.”²¹⁷ This preservation of doubt is of course crucial to the play’s workings, since its logic insists that doubt is unavoidable. The play is unsatisfyingly static,²¹⁸ denying the audience the traditional resolution provided by the literature of adultery.²¹⁹ The audience may well desire the same release that Richard does—deliverance from doubt through the confirmation of adultery—but such release is denied, as it is denied to Richard. But the question remains, if Bertha *has* slept with Robert, would this act in any meaningful way constitute a betrayal?

Let us assume, then, that Bertha has slept with Robert. She has been sent to the house by Richard to find what is “in [her] heart,” encouraged to discount Richard’s feelings, and to do whatever she desires without thought to the pain it might cause him. Whatever she does, she does with Richard’s blessing, and with his prior

²¹⁵ Scarlett Baron, *Strandentwining Cable: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 124. Baron devotes a short chapter to the role of Flaubert in shaping Joyce’s descriptions of adultery, “Adultery and Sympathy in *Ulysses* and *Exiles*,” *Strandentwining Cable*, 107-32.

²¹⁶ John MacNicholas, “Joyce’s *Exiles*: The Argument for Doubt,” *JJQ* 11.1 (1973): 33-40.

²¹⁷ Voelker, “The Beastly Incertitudes.”

²¹⁸ MacNicholas similarly suggests that the play is “static” as a result of Joyce’s refusal to disclose certain information: “*Exiles*: An Argument for Doubt,” 38.

²¹⁹ For an account of the bourgeois operation of the literature of adultery and the type of resolution such texts generally provide, see Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel*.

knowledge. To put these points another way, there is no covenant to be broken and no need for treachery. Whatever harm Bertha's actions might produce, they cannot reasonably be described as a betrayal. I have described Richard's logic so far in terms of his desire for "evidence" and his secret longing for "release," but this situation is also the product of a refinement of the logic of betrayal to such a point that betrayal ceases to be possible. In *Portrait*, Stephen sees betrayal written into the structure of all relationships and manipulates this structure to drive his flight from Ireland. The absence of meaningful betrayal at the culmination of *Exiles* is a result of Richard's extension of this logic in an attempt to take the sting out of the betrayal he, sharing Stephen's analyses, anticipates everywhere.

The key to Richard's logic is found in a short discussion he has with his son, Archie, where, quite unmasked, he describes the logic of "giving."

Do you understand what it is to give a thing? . . . While you have a thing it can be taken from you. . . . But when you give it, you have given it. No robber can take it from you. [*He bends and presses his son's hand against his cheek.*] It is yours then for ever when you have given it. It will be yours always. That is to give.
(*E*, 25)

What Richard is describing to his son is a defensive posture. The pleasure of possession contains within it the corresponding fear of loss, a fear that is made all the more potent by the knowledge that another might seek to take possession by force. This forceful dispossession is seen as sharing its form (structure) with betrayal, since both require that victim/betrayed has his or her will counteracted, violently and stealthily.²²⁰ As the pleasure of love includes within it the fear of betrayal, the pleasure of possession includes within it the fear of dispossession. For this fear to be removed, the pleasure of possession must first be given up, willingly, so that that fear might have no object. Analogously, the pleasure of possession built into the love

²²⁰ I take these two terms from Richard's own discourse, but it is important to acknowledge that I use them here in the broadest sense. "Violence" does not mean merely physical violence, but emotional, epistemic, ontological, etc; by "stealth" I mean that the action is taken with explicit provision that the betrayed is unaware of it. This is important, because in the example of "the faith of the master in the disciple who will betray him," the betrayal remains a betrayal even though the master is seen to be fully cognizant of it in advance. The disciple's bad faith, his stealth, is decisive.

relationship (the satisfaction of monogamy, uniqueness, possession) must also be willingly sacrificed, so that the pain of betrayal has no hold. Robert suggests this possibility to Richard when he asks:

[T]here was danger for you too . . . was there not? . . . [I]f you had not spoken. If you had watched and waited on until . . . I had come to like her more and more . . . to love her. . . . I could have said only: . . . I love her and I will take her from you, however, because I love her.
(*E*, 36)

Richard's quick response—"Do you mean by stealth or violence?"—displays his transference of the principles of theft to the principles of "sensational" adulterous betrayal. "Steal you could not in my house because my doors were open: nor take by violence if there were no resistance" (*E*, 36). If the pain of adulterous betrayal is the pain of dispossession against one's will, then, Richard reasons, willing self-dispossession is the only way to avoid such pain altogether. To put it another way, his understanding of the mechanics (structure) of betrayal allow him to construct a defensive posture by which betrayal will itself be short-circuited.

This logic leads Richard to become fixated on theft. He erupts at Robert's desire to carry on wooing Bertha in secret, declaring him "A liar, a thief, and a fool! Quite clear! A common thief! . . . A thief—nothing else! But a fool also!" (*E*, 29). Richard's anger comes not from the fact of Robert's affection for Bertha, which he has encouraged, but that Robert's subterfuge should threaten to deny Richard the satisfaction of his cultivated immunity. It is only through owning and enacting his *own* dispossession that Richard might find some equanimity. But Richard is also responding with anger to Robert's attempts to convert his heroic non-conformance into a stock situation and him into a stock character: the "cuckold." Robert hesitates in naming Bertha to Richard, admitting that "I admire very much the personality of your...of...your wife." Haltingly, he attempts to restore conventional order to a situation that lacks it. As Jean-Michel Rabaté explains, Robert "prefers to place her and himself in the bourgeois situation of adultery, in which stock responses to typical situations allow people to go on playing a game, whilst he feels totally unsure of himself in Richard's mystical and perverse drama."²²¹

²²¹ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Joyce Upon the Void: The Genesis of Doubt* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).

“He’s lost in his philosophy”

The willing dispossession Richard practices is essentially an extension of the logic both Richard and Stephen engage in their refusal to commit to Ireland. Sensing the dangers of such commitment, in *Portrait* Stephen simply refuses it, consciously breaking ties where he finds them. Richard, fearing dispossession, refuses to possess in the first place. But Joyce’s depiction of the struggle of both men is deeply aware of the pretensions, conceits, and pitfalls of these positions. And in *Exiles* Joyce charts the impossibility of sustaining such an “unnatural” position. Richard’s refusal of possession and his hopeless pursuit of significant evidence of fidelity both fail to heal his “wound of doubt.” The question that has defined critical and lay responses to the play has perhaps always been to what extent we are supposed to accept Richard’s self-flagellation on its own terms. Much as debate about *Portrait* for many years hinged on whether we should read Joyce’s depiction of Stephen as earnest or ironic, *Exiles* has suffered from the perception that Joyce takes Richard more seriously than most of his readers. Various critics have set out their stall on this, placing the play somewhere on a continuum from dark comedy to earnest autobiography. For my part, I take Joyce’s constructive process to be roughly the same as that I described in the preceding chapter. Thoughts, feelings, actions undergo a process of “intellectualization” that makes them ripe for transmutation into art. Joyce once wrote, in reference to Ibsen’s *When We Dead Awaken*, that “the naked drama—either the perception of a great truth, or the opening up of a great question, or a great conflict which is almost independent of the conflicting actors, and has been and is of far-reaching importance—this is what rivets our attention.”²²² Joyce can’t be said to have modelled his play entirely on this reading of Ibsen—he was clearly invested in the construction of his characters—but in abandoning natural speech for mannered dialogue (there is barely a contraction in the play) and closely observed behaviour for outlandish and pretentious gesture, Joyce sets the exploration of the play’s central question ahead of, rather than in tandem with, the exploration of character.

But, though the balance is not struck as well as it is in *Portrait* (and certainly not as well as it is in *Ulysses*) Joyce does allow for criticism of his protagonist even as he demands that his motivations be understood (and accepted). Joyce can insist on

²²² James Joyce, “Ibsen’s New Drama,” *OCPW*, 45.

the relevance and value of Richard's tortured self-analysis even as he distances himself from it. For, ultimately, Richard's understanding of betrayal, his fear of the dedication that precedes it, and his secret longing for release, all represent the culmination of a line of thinking that Joyce began in *Dubliners* and continued through his non-fiction and then in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. They are these ideas taken to their limit. But the result is a character who is, to borrow Bertha's astute observation, "lost in his philosophy" (*E*, 50). Richard is the endpoint of a line of thinking that can only result in a form of paralysis as pernicious as that which he seeks to escape.

In this respect, Richard prepares for the revaluation of Stephen that occurs in *Ulysses* and, relatedly, for the revaluation of a paranoid artistic perspective. In *Portrait* betrayal offered a powerful dramatic structure through which commitment could be evaded without the sacrifice of dignity. To put it another way, Stephen could refuse the lure of heroism (which in his terms meant death), while preserving for himself a greater heroism in exile. Richard's focus on the logic of betrayal is destructive, however, turning in on itself in a narcissistic spiral of self-regard, self-examination, and self-justification. Joyce's description of Richard as an "*auto-mystic*" (italics mine) could not be more apt, since he is both subject and object of all his inquiries. The Stephen of *Portrait* is a willing manipulator of an anxious logic of dedication and betrayal that, while experienced deeply, is turned towards his own empowerment. His sense of himself as victim is also his sense of himself as victor.²²³ Richard, however, finds no meaningful mechanism with which to redirect his anxious energy, which instead begins to feed on itself. Doubt leads to doubt leads to doubt, *ad infinitum*, without reprieve. For relief is not to be found within the logic that has produced it. Richard realizes as much in the final pages of the play, as Bertha tries to reassure him about the events of the night before.

BERTHA

Do you not wish to know – about what happened last night?

RICHARD

That I will never know.

BERTHA

²²³ As I have argued already, it scarcely matters in this sense whether we view Stephen as deluded in his sense of personal mission, since the *Künstlerroman* establishes a narrative teleology that justifies these delusions.

I will tell you if you ask me.

RICHARD

You will tell me. But I will never know. Never in this world.

BERTHA

I will tell you the truth, Dick, as I always told you. I never lied to you.

RICHARD

[*Clenching his hands in the air, passionately.*] Yes, yes. The truth! But I will never know, I tell you.

(*E*, 65)

Adultery, rather than the cause of anxiety, is one expression of a more fundamental understanding of the impossibility of knowledge. In Richard, Joyce gives himself free rein to take these philosophical questions to their absolute limit, to test them against genuinely emotive human issues. Joyce's concern that the "critics" would fail to see how much his characters suffered was almost comically misplaced; the characters suffer and suffer and suffer. Yet the problem for the audience has always been whether this pain is, ultimately, necessary. Richard's anxieties may be the logical result of a chain of thinking that is irrefutable at every stage, but do these micro-concerns really add up to something as grandiose, as earth-shattering as this suggests? If Richard is, as Joseph Voelker puts it, "doubt personified," is the nature of that doubt too far removed from reasonable concern to merit the audience's attention and pity? The difficult stage history of the play and its relegation to the second tier of Joyce's canon would suggest it is. It is hard to pity Richard his pain, when it appears that he has worked so hard to produce it—it comes from nothing and moves towards nothing except its own continuation.

Richard would have done well to have heeded the words of the great sceptic David Hume who, while acknowledging that certainty of any reasonable kind was by necessity impossible, suggested that a functioning remnant of such certainty could be retained. This crumb, "is sufficient for our own purpose, either in philosophy or common life." Moreover, if reason alone does not prove sufficient to dispel the kind of all-encompassing incertitude that Richard suffers, "nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras." For nature makes such excessive speculations "so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them

any farther.”²²⁴ Joyce’s observation in his notes that “[a]ll Celtic philosophers seemed to have inclined towards incertitude or scepticism – Hume, Berkeley, Balfour, Bergson” suggests Richard’s place in this Celtic philosophical succession, but he is deprived the kind of worldliness that allowed those philosophers to negotiate a way of living.

Richard’s failure to reach Hume’s natural threshold is another example of how “unnatural” he is. And though this lack of nature is seen throughout Joyce’s earlier writings as a form of heroic liberation from common morality and self-defeating sentimentality, its problematic treatment in *Exiles* paves the way for a similar questioning in *Ulysses*, where Stephen’s similar contrivances are seen to fail him. Richard’s attempts to keep “himself heroically conscious by means of the self-induced agonies of incertitude” work ultimately to undermine the value of that form of heroism.²²⁵ In *Exiles*, the clearest marker of Joyce’s abandonment of radical doubt as a workable perspective is seen in the play’s most inscrutable moment. In the middle of an intense discussion between Robert and Richard, the voice of a “fisherwoman” enters in through the window, disrupting the close atmosphere of the play and puncturing its pretence. We can give meaning to this intrusion in a number of ways, by playing on the “herrings” she is selling—“red herrings” may suggest intentional misdirection on Robert’s part. Perhaps we may find in it a reference to Hamlet, who feigning madness, calls Polonius “a fishmonger” and, when Polonius corrects him, complains that he wishes he “were as honest as a fishmonger.”²²⁶ Both readings are feasible, involved as they are in matters of truth and deceit, adultery and betrayal. But perhaps it is better to think of this kind of reader process as itself a kind of red herring. We are drawn into Richard’s “paranoid” process, desperately working to force meaning on to any apparently random event, when the real effect of that voice is to disrupt the obsessive narcissism of the play. Perhaps this is a voice from the outside world sent to remind the audience how small, how excessively focused

²²⁴ Richard Ellmann discusses the role of Hume’s phenomenological scepticism to Stephen’s analyses in *Ulysses*. See: “*Ulysses*” on the Liffey (New York: OUP, 1972), 90-101. Joyce, he says, “must . . . have welcomed [Hume’s] attitude towards his own scepticism” (96). If so, it is an attitude he did not gift to Richard.

²²⁵ Voelker, “The Beastly Incertitudes,” 514.

²²⁶ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act II, scene 2, 172-74.

this depiction of human interaction is. The encyclopaedic inclusiveness of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* was perhaps made possible by the microscopic excesses of *Exiles*. For in taking the fundamental logic of betrayal and studying its most extreme tendencies, by addressing his “great question,” Joyce paved the way for an analytic and narrative process that was so much more inclusive—a process that was so much more human—than was possible in the character of Richard Rowan.

Chapter Five: Betrayal, Stagnation, and the Family Romantic in *Ulysses*

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man establishes its narrative centre almost immediately. There are no quibbles, no doubts about who the protagonist of this novel is or may be. So centred is the narration on this still nameless child (we are given a pseudonym, “baby tuckoo”) that it warps and bends to fit his mental shape.²²⁷ If we needed any more convincing that this character commanded the full attention of the narration, the text eschews lyrical wisdom and detailed description for “insights” of another sort altogether: “[w]hen you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold” (*P*, 5). Such banalities are justified because they help build a picture of the budding artist and, as such, they contribute to the clarity of subject and purpose provided by the novel’s teleologically suggestive title. There is a certainty in these first few pages that in this young man we have the “artist” in whom this novel finds its subject and, as such, that his fate is at the centre of our concern. The flight from Ireland at the end of the novel is, in a sense, anticipated at its beginning.

By contrast, for all that *Ulysses* is expressly a return to the story of Stephen Dedalus—it begins, after all, with three or so episodes (the equivalent of a long short story) that centre on him and his movements—the certainty of subject and purpose that we find in *Portrait* appears to have disappeared. Indeed, while *Portrait* opens (and closes) expressly and dramatically on the figure of Stephen Dedalus, *Ulysses* opens on another figure entirely. It is “[s]tately, plump Buck Mulligan” who comes “from the stairhead,” Buck Mulligan who quotes the Latin Mass, and Buck Mulligan who fills the first few pages of the novel with his presence. Stephen is not named until the second page of *Portrait*, but Mulligan is named in the first line of *Ulysses*. The comparison seems playfully and suggestively self-conscious. As the “moocow [came] down along the road,” so Buck “came from the stairhead,” but while the moocow’s importance is immediately folded into Stephen’s narrative—he “met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . . He [Stephen] was baby tuckoo”—Buck emerges into an empty kitchen, filling it with his rambunctious presence. He calls Stephen swiftly, naming him “Kinch.” Where *Portrait* handed the narrative

²²⁷ This technique was of course identified by Hugh Kenner under the colourful moniker “The Uncle Charles Principle” in *Joyce’s Voices* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 15-39.

immediately over to Stephen, *Ulysses* resists this transference. Stephen is named, but Buck is active, filling the space of the kitchen and the space of the page with his speech and his movements. Stephen, the central subject of *Portrait* narrative, is briefly transfigured into “Kinch,” the secondary subject of Buck’s story. It is not just that Mulligan is more entertaining than Stephen, but that he demands to be made the centre of attention and activity. He demands, in essence, to be made the centre of the novel that is about to unfold. The reader of *Portrait* last saw Stephen heading willingly into glorious exile, confidently predicting a future of achievement and discovery, announcing his determination to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (*P*, 213). His “weapons”—“silence, exile, and cunning”—appear to have given way. Stephen is sullen and quiet, but not quite silent—he is not goaded into speech until the second page (*U*, 1.48). If Stephen is an exile, where is he exiled from and to? He lives now within walking distance of most of the houses in which he has ever lived. Cunning he may be, but it does not appear to have done him any great service. *Portrait* ended with a new beginning (a going forth), but *Ulysses* appears to begin with an ending, a final look at where Stephen has “ended up.” If Stephen’s new beginning was indeed a false one, the text seems to suggest, perhaps Buck could be the source of a new, less embattled narrative?

Of course, as *Ulysses* unfolds, we are drawn back into Stephen’s narrative. If nothing else, the privilege of internal monologue assures us of Stephen’s narrative centrality; Stephen’s thoughts and feelings quite literally shape the language and structure of the events depicted. But this initial uncertainty over Stephen’s centrality has already raised a question that the first episodes of *Ulysses* set about answering: what has happened to Stephen between the end of *Portrait* and the beginning of *Ulysses*? How does he differ and why? The most basic question—why is Stephen still in Dublin?—is also a much larger one—(why) has he failed to fulfil his own predictions of artistic greatness and heroic exile?

As we read the opening episodes, we can piece together some of the necessary information: Stephen was called back from Paris because of his mother’s fatal illness; her subsequent death and his refusal to pray at her bedside in the final days has left him guilt-ridden and ideologically conflicted; he is poor, in debt to many of his friends and acquaintances, but earns a small wage teaching at a private school. He cannot, perhaps, afford to strike out once again for the continent. It is clear from the off, however, that his unsatisfactory situation is not the result, ultimately, of financial

or other practical considerations, even if for Stephen “the problem is to get money” (*U*, 1.497). Joyce certainly put weight on these practical matters, singling out Ibsen’s failure to depict the financial realities of his characters as a mark of his, ultimately unsatisfying, “heroics.”²²⁸ But Stephen’s clearly spendthrift habits are ample evidence that Stephen could gather together enough money for a ticket to the continent if he so desired. Stephen’s problem is, rather, psychological. His calm, disdainful superiority has given way to irritation, resentment, bitterness. Whereas previously he has had an assuredness in his own destiny that transformed the many indignities he felt in his life into a necessary stage in his overcoming, he now seems to “suffer” them as an inescapable aspect of the life he must lead, a life that does not redeem or give meaning to these indignities. His enigmatical retorts now seem to be a way of living in the flawed world he finds about him, rather than a way of talking himself beyond it.

As Stephen walks along Sandymount strand, he looks back with some shame on the grandiosities of his youth.

Reading two pages apiece of seven books every night, eh? I was young. You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hurray! No-one saw: tell no-one. Books you were going to write with letters for titles. Have you read his F? O yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful. O yes, W. Remember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. Pico della Mirandola like. Ay, very like a whale.

(*U*, 3.136-144)

This is resentment turned inwards at a former self. We might be tempted to praise this rejection of formerly cherished absurdities as a welcome sign of maturity in Stephen, who, in resigning himself to a less grand future, might prepare himself for a more achievable one. But such a redeployment (perhaps a recalibration) of ambition when faced with reality requires a sense of the comic potential of such dissonance. If this perspective is comic, it is comedy with the sting left in. There is nothing wry in

²²⁸ As he says to Stanislaus: “Absolute realism is impossible, of course. That we all know. But it’s quite enough that Ibsen has omitted all question of finance from his thirteen dramas.” 16 May 1907, qtd in *JJ*, 266-267.

Stephen's observance of his past foolishness. Rather, he summons forth past selves only so as to rebuke them for believing so forcefully in a future that has not come to pass. Implicit in this process is Stephen's rebuke to himself as he walks along the strand; in bringing forth specifically those versions of himself that were most ambitious, most hopeful, and most certain, he reminds himself bitterly of how hopeless, conflicted, and uncertain he has now become.

As readers of *Portrait*, we can see just how much has been lost in the intervening period between the two novels. Implicit in Stephen's rejection of his past hopefulness is a desire to rediscover an optimism that has been rendered, for the time being, psychologically impossible (for reasons the novel will gradually disclose). Stephen's pride is such that he would never yearn for ignorance, but in drawing up the image of a young man proudly imagining a future of recognition and adoration, he is lamenting not so much the ignorance of his past, but the debilitating self-awareness of the present. Stephen continues, "when one reads these strange pages of one long gone one feels that one is at one with one who once....." (*U*, 3.144-45). This past self is at once an "other" ("strange," "long gone") and a presence with which a kind of mystical communion is possible ("one is at one with one"). The possibility remains, tantalizingly close, that Stephen may be able to reconnect with a mental landscape in which, however delusionally, some harmony was attainable. Stephen's commitment to a clear-eyed acceptance of the true state of things—a rejection of hypocrisy and an embrace of acute self-knowledge—disallows any self-consoling white lies, yet in this moment we are made privy to the difficulty of this state of mind. It goes without saying that the grand (some would say grandiose) self-narrativization that Stephen achieved in *Portrait* is a preferable state of mind to the broken and resentful awareness Stephen has about his situation in the opening episodes of *Ulysses*. From early on, Joyce's clear intent in his writing was to expose the hypocrisy of his characters' actions and motivations. This is particularly clear in *Dubliners*, where we see the failures of Joyce's characters in ways that they cannot, or would not. Joyce's stated desire to "betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis many consider a city" is precisely a desire to expose the inner workings of a

representative range of characters to public view.²²⁹ Once exposed, these paralysing hypocrisies can no longer operate as they once did. But while such performances are viewed as dangerously self-deluding in *Dubliners*, *Portrait*, as I have argued, goes to some length to emphasize the positive, necessary role of often absurd self-narrativization. In this shabby, depressed image of Stephen, we have the embodiment of a question: are there worse things than fooling oneself? More importantly, Joyce is asking the reader to ponder whether Stephen's current struggles are, as in *Dubliners*, the result of the delusional behaviour he displays in *Portrait* or the result of his apparent clarity now?

The answer, I will argue in this chapter, is that Stephen has lost the ability to narrativize himself through moments of hardship towards a future overcoming. Whereas Joyce's *Dubliners* are paralysed by their delusions, which stop them facing and solving their problems head on, Stephen is paralysed by his *inability* to delude himself. The sense of teleological certainty present in *Portrait* is not merely missing in *Ulysses*, its absence is put forward as the key to a psychological question at the heart of Stephen's paralytic immobility. Stephen's narrative overcoming is now impossible, I will argue, because the narrative of betrayal he had relied on in *Portrait* has been fatally corrupted; it now merely feeds back into his self-recriminations. The tensions present throughout Stephen's narrativizations of betrayal and artistic exile—where the artist must betray his/her country in order to save it—are brought home to Stephen through the death of his mother, which provides a symbolic problem for Stephen that he cannot, at this time, overcome.

“The aunt thinks you killed your mother”: Stephen's defensive posture/ressentiment

The changes in Stephen are primarily the result of a breakdown in his ability to construct and maintain these narratives of flight, overcoming, and evasion. Stephen had constructed an efficient and effective psychological machine, capable of processing the mundane and ignoble details of his life and making them grand, heroic, and, through his awareness of paradigmatic predecessors, a part of the greater

²²⁹ Letter to Constantine Curran, *LI*, 55. For a discussion of “hemiplegia” as a term chosen with some precision, see: Jean Kane, “Imperial Pathologies: Medical Discourse and Drink in *Dubliners*' ‘Grace’,” *Literature and Medicine* 14.2 (1995): 191-209.

weave of history. The negative connotations of breaking with one community (perhaps, better, set of communities) are mitigated by a compensatory narrative built around the logic of betrayal. While Stephen still clearly retains the capacity to produce such narratives in *Ulysses*—his talent for imagining persecution remains intact—he can no longer sustain his credence for these self-aggrandizements. So, he still displays a dab hand at producing grand aphorisms—“I am the servant of two masters...” (*U*, 1.638), etc—but in constructing himself as a victim, he can no longer convert that victimhood into a form of active resistance.

This breakdown, I will contend, is traced in *Ulysses* back to the death of Stephen’s mother and the emotional fallout that results. This trauma creates a powerful counter-narrative that has short-circuited his ability to narrate his own position as heroic victim. This is not simply a matter of guilt or grief—though these do give this counter-narrative its power—but a structural matter of Stephen’s particular psychology, in which the reality of his mother’s death and his sense of complicity in it override his normal coping mechanisms. Stephen simply cannot move forward while his mother’s haunting presence continually invades his present, contaminating his thoughts with gross reminders of the price others must pay for his high-minded rejections. As Barry McRea puts it, the “mother’s (dead) body blocks all exits and delimits even the imaginative confines of the world of ‘Telemachus.’”²³⁰

The idea of the mother, which appears to have been on Stephen’s mind anyway, is introduced as a general concept early on by Buck, who appeals to Swinburne’s description of the sea as “a great sweet mother” (*U*, 1.77-8). In the face of Stephen’s glum silence, he repeats his insight twice—once as “our great sweet mother” and once as “our mighty mother” (*U*, 1.80; 1.85)—before attempting to coax Stephen from his silence with the callous declaration: “the aunt thinks you killed your mother” (*U*, 1.88). Stephen’s reply that “someone killed her” hardly reads as a straight refutation and is indicative of Stephen’s position; he is caught between blaming himself and blaming some generalized other. We presume the “someone” to be Stephen’s father, whose drunkenness and spendthrift habits drove the family into poverty. But Stephen’s vague designation leaves the question open to interpretation. More important is Stephen’s insistence on the possibility of blame even as he refuses

²³⁰ Barry McRea, *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce and Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 106.

to openly name a culprit. His mother died of a particularly unpleasant cancer; it is difficult to see how any person could rationally be held responsible for such a thing.

Stephen is of course grieving and can be forgiven for his response to Mulligan's prompting, but this insistence on the preservation of responsibility even where none exists speaks to a darker logic at work. Kevin Dettmar has suggested that what Buck describes as Stephen's "moody brooding" is in fact "a form of Nietzschean *ressentiment* . . . passe[d] off as mourning."²³¹ Set out primarily in the first essay of *On The Genealogy of Morals*, *ressentiment* (literally "resentment" in English) is seen as fundamental to the production of a "slave" morality.²³² It is, according to Max Scheler, "a self-poisoning of the mind . . . a lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which are . . . normal components of human nature." The morality produced as a result is based on deep-seated emotions of "revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract, and spite" even as they masquerade as a higher call to the right and good.²³³ *Ressentiment* is, Nietzsche suggests, further characterized as "reactive" rather than active or defensive and is made up of an "inversion of the value-positing eye . . . the need to view outward instead of back to oneself." Whereas "every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality . . . always first needs a hostile external world."²³⁴ To put it another way, the resentful self is always defined externally as a response to something rejected. As Gilles Deleuze glosses it, "*ressentiment* . . . wants sinners, people who are responsible. We can guess what the creature of *ressentiment* wants: he wants others to be evil, he needs others to be evil in order to be able to consider himself good."²³⁵ As such, its capacity to escape the discourses/morality it rejects are limited, since this form of rejection is entirely non-

²³¹ Kevin J. H. Dettmar, *The Illicit Joy of PostModernism: Reading Against the Grain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 135.

²³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kauffman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 24-56.

²³³ Max Scheler, *On Feeling, Valuing, and Knowing*, ed. Harold J. Bershady (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 117.

²³⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 36-37. This passage is in the "First Essay," section 10.

²³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzschean Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 1983), 119.

productive. It works to sustain itself as anger, and to buoy up a static (read paralytic) version of the self as wronged.

Deleuze further summarizes the characteristics of *ressentiment* as: “an inability to admire, respect, or love”; “passivity”; and “the imputation of wrongs, the distribution of responsibilities, perpetual accusation.”²³⁶ Dettmar claims, rather unhelpfully, that “the appropriateness of such a diagnosis to Stephen’s condition in ‘Telemachus’ is, I should hope, readily apparent.”²³⁷ Certainly, we can read these three things into much of Stephen’s behaviour in *Ulysses*, but reading them as symptoms of a pre-diagnosed condition serves to obscure both the complexity of their manifestation in Stephen’s specific psychology and the history of *ressentiment* that precedes it. In “diagnosing” *ressentiment* as the source of Stephen’s ailments, Dettmar assigns it wholly negative connotations. But were these characteristics—the assignation of all faults as outside the self, immobilizing anger, sensitivity to others’ ill-intentions—not, as I have argued, important catalysts to forward motion in *Portrait*? If they are the source of paralysis now, why were they not so previously? However ironically we may choose to read Joyce’s treatment of Stephen in *Portrait*, we do not read his character as unduly “passive.” While Dettmar sees Stephen’s “unspoken project” in *Ulysses* to be the “shaking of this *ressentiment*,” I rather suggest that it is the reader’s task to establish precisely what has changed to make this conglomeration of behaviours and mindsets suddenly so ineffective. If Stephen is now in the grip of a “slave” mentality, was he not so before?

Enda Duffy, the other main critic to make a strong case for a diagnosis of Stephen as riddled by *ressentiment*, suggests that part of the reason for Joyce’s move in *Ulysses* from Stephen to Bloom was his increasing disenchantment with the “self-satisfaction of the post-Enlightenment young male.” As such, “the vaunted independence of the artist, no longer sustained by any neoromantic ideology of genius, begins from the opening page of *Ulysses*, to congeal into a humbler mock-heroic *ressentiment*.”²³⁸ In other words, the change in Stephen from *Portrait* to *Ulysses* is really a change in Joyce, who abandons a commitment to the spiritual value of Stephen’s genius in favour of an embedded cultural potential depicted across

²³⁶ Deleuze, *Nietzschean Philosophy*, 117; 118.

²³⁷ Dettmar, *The Illicit Joyce*, 135.

²³⁸ Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern “Ulysses”*, 26-27.

the pages of *Ulysses*. Without following the main thrust of Duffy's argument, which seeks to establish a postcolonial context for Joyce's writing, it is possible to see in his reading an acknowledgement of my slightly different stress on the teleologic power of the *Künstlerroman*. For rather than vaguely gesturing to Joyce's loss of faith in the "genius" of the artist Stephen—which, correspondingly, requires that he wrote *Portrait* out of his full faith in that genius—I am suggesting that, having dramatized the contrivances and grandiose self-narrations through which Stephen escaped into exile, Joyce sought in *Ulysses* to find new dramatic potential in the breakdown of these grandiosities. Stephen is no more nor less a genius than he was in *Portrait*, but he, like the reader, is robbed of the narrative security that the *Künstlerroman* provides. If Stephen is now "passive," it is not because he "input[es] . . . wrongs," and "distribut[es] responsibilities," and "perpetually accus[es]," but because these attacks on the external world are now really attacks on his internal reality. Where in *Portrait* Stephen established a grand destiny and shaped his external world to fit, he now merely acknowledges the indignity of his situation, compares it to his once grand aspirations (and his still high sense of his potential value) and unleashes his disappointment against it.

An incomplete severance: The residual family romance

To understand this change in Stephen as something other than merely a shift in narrative expectation, we need to give more thought to the precise role his mother's gruesome death has in disrupting the self-narrativization he had relied on. Certainly, its visceral quality, its gory corporeality, is important; the more Stephen attempts to escape into philosophical speculation, the more his mother's decaying body insists on being seen, heard, and felt. The metaphorical connection that Mulligan makes between the sea and the mother initiates a haunting series of images that reappear throughout the book. Stephen connects the "dull green mass of liquid" held by the "ring of bay and skyline" (*U*, 1.107-108) with the "bowl of white china [that] had lay by her [his mother's] deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting" (*U*, 1.109-110). The contrasts between mind and body, "nature" and "freedom," and elevation and degradation run throughout Joyce's writing, but they are most acutely visible in the philosophical struggles of Stephen Dedalus and Richard Rowan. Here the contrast is

painful, the physical reality of his mother's decayed body disrupting and overriding the intangible value of philosophical conjecture.

But the physicality of Stephen's mother's image is as much a result as a cause of the specific breakdown in Stephen's self-narration. I described the development of betrayal as, partly, a way to initiate a break with the family (and, relatedly, the wider filial community) that avoided a sense of guilt and strengthened the very narrative that allows for the break. For all that Stephen distrusts the immediacy of the family bond—feeling rather the “mystical kinship of fosterage” (*P*, 98)—in *Portrait* he still felt that bond strongly enough that he needed the betrayal narrative to console its sundering. But in *Ulysses*, this sense of fosterage—the contingency of the family relationship—has been replaced with an acute sense of responsibility grounded in the haranguing image of his dead mother. And responsibility is precisely the word. For what the betrayal narrative allowed Stephen to construct was a rejection of his own filial responsibilities that, rather than manifested as a betrayal of his own, was seen as a necessary step towards the redemption of those who would betray him. That is to say, the filial, innate bonds of family, race, and nation are seen as being in bad faith, as demanding a form of spiritual exposure that was utterly dangerous to Stephen. In rejecting this exposure, however, Stephen was able to construct himself as a martyred hero, a metaphorical foreigner (in the way that Joyce constructs Parnell as literally foreign) and as a Moses, left forever outside the promised land to which he leads his people. In this, then, all the pain of severance is consoled.

In *Ulysses*, however, the bonds that Stephen so breezily casts off in *Portrait* return to stake their claim anew. For betrayal, as it is explored most clearly in *Exiles*, is concerned deeply with the possibility and advisability of connection. Joyce understands the language of connection in all its double-sidedness. “Ties,” “bonds,” “emotional holds”; this is the language of both support and constraint. This problem is all the more pressing for the artist—who, in Joyce's writing pursues (perhaps hopelessly) a form of freedom that is absolute—but it is also more navigable. In the figure of his mother, Stephen sees the ultimate metaphor of connection, since, while “paternity may be a legal fiction,” the mother is unique in creation for having a bond that is necessary and beyond doubt. The mother is associated therefore with a truth beyond fiction, the “one true thing in life.” In Joyce's fictional creations, which privilege the investigation of uncertainty, doubt, and intolerable epistemic vacuums, this is no small claim. The mother represents a connection that *cannot* be denied,

cannot be doubted. But, as we will see, this solidity becomes a problem rather than a comfort in *Ulysses*, for Stephen's entire effort has been put towards denying the primacy of that connection.

Stephen is haunted by the memory of his mother, transformed into an oppressive and malevolent "Ghoul! Chewer of corpses!" (*U*, 1.278). He dreams of her coming to him, decayed and gruesome, a distortion of the moment in which he refused to pray.

Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down.
(*U*, 1.273-276)

This event, his refusing to pray, is symbolic of his entire conduct to his mother, which is itself conflated with his wider attempt to sever the ties of family, nation, and religion. The death of his mother is the one event that his formerly effective psychic machinery cannot convert into an empowering narrative, since it merely circles back to this single, foundational act of betrayal. Stephen is being forced to relive a painful parody of those earlier betrayals, which were necessary to his personal development. Now, his development has stalled precisely because he is unable to move beyond this "agenbite of inwit: remorse of conscience." The sheer visceral horror of his mother's image, continuously returning to him, makes impossible Stephen's customary flights into self-indulgent and blinkered idealism. Such a departure from the realities of his (failed) obligations to his family, the ties that have helped form and sustain him, inevitably calls upon the recurrence of his mother's image, a mocking reminder of the costs of such flights. She becomes a synecdoche not only for Stephen's failed responsibilities to his family (his sisters feature similarly in *Ulysses*) but to his race and nation. Stephen's conviction that immersing himself in these ties will mean a fundamental imperilling of the self, a compromising of the very individuality he has worked so hard to sustain, forms itself into a powerful dichotomy. He sees two choices: complete and painful freedom or (creative, spiritual) death. When he pleads to his mother's image, "[I]et me be and let me live," he is really pleading for the capacity to forget the ties that she represents, to be completely free of a sense of the ethical responsibilities that threaten to tie him to Dublin and to his family.

On its simplest level, Stephen's ghoulish mother is merely a representation of this basic anxiety about separation. The gruesomeness of her death has made his healthy guilt about breaking the bond between them an unhealthy obsession. And, in essence, this is the role that Stephen's mother plays in *Ulysses*: she traps him in guilt without recourse to a workable compensatory narration. Her rotting corpse becomes a physical manifestation of the cost of separation and in so doing makes any clean separation impossible. Her death becomes for Stephen the *result* of the separation he has forced upon her, even though logically he cannot be responsible for it. On an altogether realistic level, we can understand Stephen's suffering as an unhappy conflation of the act of principled refusal with the act of filial separation.²³⁹ Indeed, his refusal to pray at his mother's bedside was *in his own mind* more or less consciously a display (performance) of this separation. In denying his mother's wishes, he denied also her power to control him and through her (more literally in this case) the power of his inherited responsibilities—to church and nation. His own role as betrayer—of the family bond—that lurked always in the narratives he told himself, is forced to the forefront by his mother's death, which becomes the most potent countersign to his attempts to narrate himself as victim. The separation he had sought out symbolically is achieved finally and irrevocably in death. That his mother's ghoulish image returns constantly to plague his thoughts throughout the day, is a reminder, ultimately, of the fact that the separation he sought is now permanent and irredeemable.

“I've lost the trick”

As the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that Stephen—self-aware, analytical—is capable of understanding the significance of his own behaviour. Just as we see him mourning, however bitterly, a more naive, but more happy former self, we see him also questioning his own compulsion towards severance as the solution to his problems. In “Circe,” Private Carr confronts Stephen with the rhetorical question: “how would it be governor, if I was to bash in your jaw?” (*U*, 1.4311). Stephen's answer, “very unpleasant,” is followed by the telling phrase: “Noble art of

²³⁹ We should remember that Freud describes the child's decision to go against the parent's wishes (at least what they imagine to be the parent's wishes) as a vital step in the family romance.

selfpretense” (*U*, 15.4313). The portmanteau is telling and seems, like so much in “Circe,” to refer to something beyond the confines of the action. “Pretence”—a false display or affectation, a simulation, a way of being that is false but compulsive—is combined with “self defence” to suggest that Stephen understands his own methods of battle as a form of self-imposed pretentiousness, a falsified self that allows him to avoid conflicts that are weighted against him, in favour of symbolic battles in which he has a chance.²⁴⁰ As Stephen says immediately afterwards: “Personally, I detest action” (*U*, 15.4313-14).²⁴¹ Locally, Stephen is asserting his pacifism, but for the entirety of the episode (indeed the day) he has been thinking about his mother, thinking about his Dublin paralysis, and thinking about what modes of escape are available to him. The rejection of heroics (read: martyrdom) found in Joyce’s non-fiction writing, and asserted by Stephen in *Portrait*, are carried through to *Ulysses* where Stephen wishes for a way to save “men from drowning” but fears his own entanglement in the water and slime that tug them down. His statement only a few lines later is telling: “My centre of gravity is displaced. I have forgotten the trick” (*U*, 15.4433-34). The “trick,” I argue, was precisely the process of compensatory self-narration he had practiced so successfully in *Portrait*. The “trick” was to view Irish betrayal as something done to him, not done by him. The “trick” was to make a break with the family and all the dangerous entanglements that these bonds bring with them.

Stephen’s conflation of the drowning man saved by Buck with his mother and, ultimately, his nation is effected in these drunken declarations. In “Proteus,” Stephen had lamented pathetically:

I want his life to be his, mine to be mine. A drowning man. His human eyes scream to me out of horror of his death. I . . . With him together down . . . I could not save her. Waters: bitter death: lost.

²⁴⁰ Compare with “the mimic warfare was no less ludicrous than unequal in a ground chosen to his disadvantage” (*SH*, 39).

²⁴¹ Breaking up Stephen’s short monologue as I have, I may have destroyed its strange and awkward cohesion. As is so often the case, the meaning is found as much in the gaps between the utterances as in the utterances themselves. Here it is together: “Very unpleasant. Noble art of selfpretense. Personally, I detest action.” Stephen’s speech here is more like internal monologue than external dialogue and, indeed, in his drunken state he appears to be using Carr primarily as a spur to his own thought.

(U, 3.327-30)

The man's death is figured symbolically as an immersion in community and family ties. The sea, already named by Mulligan as "our old sweet mother" maintains its metaphorical status as the symbol of "natural, biological destiny" that Stephen is desperate to evade.²⁴² To dive into the sea and pull out his metaphorical brother, would necessitate a form of absolute, if only temporary immersion in that community. Stephen's fear is that, rather than saving the man, he would merely drown with him. The language of *Portrait*, where family is associated with death and clouded sight, is resumed to argue against intervention—"I could not save her"—but it's not clear that Stephen convinces himself any more than he convinces the reader.

Nevertheless, we must take seriously Stephen's sense of responsibility towards his genealogical and racial family. In *Portrait*, this concern was already framed by the conviction that severance would prove redemptive. So, when Stephen's "youngest brother" begins to sing *Oft in the Stilly Night* and is joined "[o]ne by one" by "the others," Stephen does not join in with the singing. Rather, he "wait[s] for some moments, listening with pain of spirit to the overtone of weariness behind their frail fresh innocent voices" and then leaves. Stephen figures himself as an observer, outside their weariness, but, importantly, one who has access to their suffering as an *insider*. It is only because Stephen stands, perilously, on the cusp of immersion in their genealogical "choir of voices" ("one by one") that he is capable of hearing also the "endless reverberation of the choirs of endless children and [hear] in all the echoes an echo also of the recurring note of weariness and pain." Genealogy is seen as a pattern that ensures the continuation of suffering, but it is also a siren song, a "choir of voices" that begs Stephen to join his voice with the genealogically organized chorus. It is not that Stephen is completely unmoved by the pathetic state of his family (and by extension his nation), but that he feels this pull as necessarily dangerous. To submit himself to the community is to sacrifice the independence that might save them.

The narrative structure of betrayal allows for the depiction of severance as a necessary good and a necessary evil. It allows him to construct a life without the constrictions that come with responsibilities to others. But the problem with inherited ties is that, unlike friendship or politics, these are not elective relationships. Indeed,

²⁴² McCrea, *Company of Strangers*, 126.

the separation between filiation and affiliation is built on the principle that affiliative relationships come about through some form of chance or contingent event. The “amor matris: subjective and objective genitive” gains its power in *Ulysses* from the fact that it is entirely non-contingent. While in *Portrait* this love is seen as potentially suffocating (the desire to maintain the family bond is seen as an attempt to retard maturity), in *Ulysses* the haranguing image of Stephen’s mother is seen quite directly as suffocating (drowning) Stephen. The narrative of betrayal worked so well for Stephen because it allowed him to void the bonds between himself and others without actually requiring him to make any aggressive moves of his own. But in *Ulysses*, the resistance of his mother’s love to severance forces Stephen into the position of betrayer. His mother has provided him with an unconditional love, the proper response for this would be love in kind.

In refusing to pray at the bedside of his dying mother, Stephen had sought to achieve (perform) the final act of severance. It would have cost him little to bend his knee, even if the symbolic power of the act would have been clear. With this act, the final link between himself and his family should have been completed. And yet the reality of this final severance is perhaps more painful than Stephen could have expected. Barry McCrea has commented astutely on Stephen’s situation at the beginning of *Ulysses*.

The sadness and stasis that pervade the first two chapters of the Telemachiad carry a sense of both the imprisonment of genealogy and the devastating loss that leaving it behind entirely would entail.²⁴³

Stephen cannot move beyond the conviction that immersion in family and/or nation is equivalent to death, yet the severance he appeared to achieve in *Portrait* has been proven to be illusory and incomplete. Bernard Benstock has suggested that in *Portrait*, Stephen “is painfully sensitive to the price he must pay for such rare independence as he seeks for himself.”²⁴⁴ Yet it seems rather to be the case that Stephen is in fact hopelessly naive, believing as he does that a complete severance with the “natural” obligations of his birth could be painlessly and effectively achieved. *Ulysses*, rather than displaying a reversal in Joyce’s understanding of

²⁴³ McCrea, *Company of Strangers*, 117.

²⁴⁴ Bernard Benstock, *James Joyce: The Undiscovered Country* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), 44.

Stephen's heroic maturity, is in fact an investigation of the tensions left unspoken in that far more teleologically proscribed novel. Stephen's anguished cry for a world free of entanglement reads in *Ulysses*—one of the most entangled worlds in literature—as hopelessly naive: “I want his life to be his and mine to be mine.”

As Maud Ellmann has argued, somewhat more optimistically than I, *Ulysses* sees Stephen confronted with the basic fact of entanglement. “[t]he Stephen of *A Portrait of the Artist*, who longs to fly by nets, is superseded in *Ulysses* by a Stephen torn between the dream of flight and recognition of entanglement.”²⁴⁵ Entanglement is simply a function of the world, of human relationships. Throughout Joyce's writing, this acknowledgement has been countered by the notion that entanglement necessarily means the possibility (and in Ireland the certainty) of betrayal. In *Exiles*, Joyce investigated the possibility of a relationship that refused any burden of obligations, but found that, ultimately, this relationship ends either in near-unbearable existential torment or simply recreates the “normal” forms of amatory relationships—by which Joyce means the desire to “possess” and restrict—albeit in an acutely mannered and self-conscious way. Richard seeks a release and believes he has found it in his manipulation of the logic of betrayal, but he finds instead that he is, against all his wishes, a creature of socially constructed emotion, “passions”; he is “like all other men” (*E*, 44). If heroism remains alive in Joyce's works, it is in this hopeless battling against nature, against received obligations and structures of feeling. But, having taken this idea to its limit in *Exiles*, Joyce appears to move away from this construction in *Ulysses*, where Stephen's struggles with natural culture appear increasingly tiresome. I think we must maintain our sense of Stephen's suffering as potentially heroic, but, ultimately, it is valueless.

This failure of heroism comes, ultimately, because Stephen does not fully break free from the bonds of family and nation. He exists, as Maud Ellmann puts it, “torn between” flight and entanglement. Were he able to flounce off into the sunset with his notebook and pencil, we may believe his severance to be a form of laudable overcoming. But, whereas in *Portrait*, the whole narrative momentum is geared towards his flight, in *Ulysses* Joyce ties Stephen down with constant, tiring reminders of the relationships he betrays by abandoning his family to their misfortune. The sight

²⁴⁵ Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 1.

of his sister flicking through a French primer brings home to him the fact that while he may escape the self-destructive Irish forces he identifies, he must leave the rest of his family to suffer them. And yet, this was true also in *Portrait*,²⁴⁶ where the suffering of his race and family is converted into an even greater spur to exile. But, in *Ulysses*, the death of Stephen's mother—and the circumstances of her death—bring home to him the fact that had been suppressed throughout *Ulysses*; Stephen, despite his adoption of a manner, his exercising of a consolatory narrative of betrayal, and the construction of a rigorous intellectual framework to justify his actions, remains essentially human and retains essentially human needs. Stephen's suggestion to Cranly in *Portrait* that he does “not fear to be alone or . . . to leave whatever I have to leave” proves in the end to be false (*P*, 247). In *Portrait*, Stephen's insistence on a kind of posthuman overcoming, on his immunity to social expectations and biological drives, makes him appear as a kind of counter to the far less dynamic Mr. Duffy in “A Painful Case.” Both men pursue a kind of queer existence, detached from genealogy and reproduction, favouring obligations and ties formed volitionally and on pre-arranged terms, and yet Stephen's desire to “experience life” makes him far more appealing than the serious, ascetic, Duffy. Yet at the end of “A Painful Case” and the beginning of *Ulysses* we are left to consider that perhaps both men, despite their “wish for a superhuman existence” must, as a result of their “refusal to accept humanity,” “suffer the only too-human loneliness that haunts” them.²⁴⁷ Seamus Deane has suggested, in reference to *Portrait*, that “[a]lthough [Stephen] finds it impossible to experience the expected filial sentiments, his emotional repudiation is not enough to give him the release from parental origin that he craves.”²⁴⁸ But it might be more accurate to say that he feels his filial sentiments strongly, but through a distancing mechanism built around his sense of destiny and filtered through the narratives of betrayal he conceives to achieve them. Stephen's problem, ultimately, is that he feels too much, that his feelings overpower and short-circuit the only

²⁴⁶ As I suggested above, Stephen is more than capable of feeling the anguish of his young brothers and sisters, even where they do not (consciously, at any rate).

²⁴⁷ Bradley W. Buchanan, *Oedipus Against Freud*, 106. Buchanan is thinking only of Duffy and doesn't describe Stephen in this way.

²⁴⁸ Deane, *A Portrait of the Artist*, xx.

narratives he had available to produce the sundering he pursued as necessary and absolute.

Ulysses, essentially, catalogues Stephen's failure not only to sever completely his connection with the family, but his failure to replace that bond with something else. The child, who goes through the processes of the family romance generally recreates the family in a new form—by getting married, having children. Those who fail to reform the family in this near perfect way, will do so through the adoption of affiliative groups—friends, colleagues, etc. Barry McCrea has offered a convincing account of Joyce's attempt to replace genealogy with "random encounter" as the structuring force of the novel.²⁴⁹ Rather than fold Stephen back into the family (as the prodigal son) in pursuit of narrative satisfaction and the restitution of social order, *Ulysses* sees Stephen trying out a number of alternatives to genealogies, queer families that might replace the natural family as the structuring principle of Stephen's (narrative) life. But while it might be the case that "the shape and feel of *Ulysses* derive from the fact that Bloom, the randomly encountered alternative Jewish father, definitively trumps genealogy"—that, moreover, it is this relationship that "ends [Stephen's] narrative life"—it is not clear that Stephen himself experiences this relationship as, ultimately, redeeming. Yes, "Stephen has consciously rejected his identity as a natural father's son in favour, at least momentarily, of the possibilities unleashed by his encounter with Bloom," but what of the next day? Stephen leaves the Bloom's house and while their parting lacks the kind of distancing recrimination we see from Stephen elsewhere (Stephen does not feel the need to "sever" his relationship with Bloom as he walks out the door) this decision is nevertheless meaningful. Stephen does not shrug off the genetic family and take his place in a symbolically satisfying one, whether it is based on a "random encounter" or on an allusive mythical framework. Stephen may leave Merrion Square in a better mood than he entered nighttown, but Joyce's refusal to grant an ending that is narratively and thematically satisfying is a pointed indication that Stephen is still, ultimately, caught between commitment and severance. Does Bloom's queer family really offer Stephen an escape from the "nightmare of history" or is it merely an exchange of one family for another? Stephen's departure suggests he thinks of it in the latter terms.

²⁴⁹ McCrea, *Company of Strangers*.

Joyce/Stephen

Joyce's own experiences of his mother's slow death obviously provided him with a great deal of material for his depiction of Stephen here. But there is a specific area of difference that is particularly revealing. In a letter written to Nora on 29 August 1904—around six weeks into their courtship—Joyce opens up about his dissatisfaction with his home life (“a middle class affair ruined by spendthrift habits”) and the death of his mother, which was evidently still a painful subject for him. Joyce attributes his mother's death to three things: his father's “ill treatment, . . . years of trouble, and [his own] cynical frankness of conduct.” Joyce's sense of culpability is clear and apparently heartfelt. He recognizes, however absurdly, that his mother's death (at least the manner of it) is partially his responsibility. Comparatively, Stephen's “someone” remains ambiguous; he does not, as Joyce did, openly accept his own complicity (or rather feelings of complicity) in his mother's death, nor does he voice a direct accusation against his father, society in general, or God above. But Joyce also fits his own responsibility into a larger system of inherited responsibility that remains in keeping with the narratives of overcoming he relied upon at this time. In the same letter, Joyce immediately transforms his moment of emotional openness into a more typically rhetorical statement of intent: “I understood I was looking on the face of a victim and I cursed the system which made her a victim.”²⁵⁰ This move from negative introspection to positive declaration (“I cursed”) is typical of Joyce's capacity to recycle and redeploy negative psychic energies away from self-loathing and towards empowerment. More importantly, rather than a generalized resentment (like that he gives to Stephen), Joyce remains capable of narrating himself heroically in relation to his mother's death. The moment of apparently genuine feeling with which he begins the letter, gives way to an antagonistically constructed relationship between himself and the “system” that we can assume denotes Ireland, the Church, and the kind of lower middle-class (and falling) life he had led for the larger part of his life. The techniques of self-narration he makes available to Stephen in *Portrait* are shown in this moment to preserve their usefulness to him. In *Ulysses*, Stephen is not permitted this same capacity. We may assume that the act of refusal that motivates Stephen's guilty conscience retained similarly unpleasant connotations for Joyce, but while Stephen cannot move beyond his own complicity (his own betrayal), Joyce

²⁵⁰ *SL*, 48.

manages to justify this act once again as part of a wider overcoming that might redeem in some way his mother's death. "Joyce could not," suggests Joseph Valente, "refrain from betraying the law of his being without betraying his mother instead; he could not settle accounts with himself except by defaulting on the immense debt that was due her for her countless, vital exertions on his behalf."²⁵¹ There being no good outcome, Joyce was capable of taking the least bad and converting it into a new, consolatory formation. Joyce sees his mother as a victim to the very forces of inherited authority that he has set about escaping and, thus, it is only by seeing this escape from filial bonds through to its conclusion that he may justify the symbolically loaded act of refusal that he came to associate with her death.

²⁵¹ Valente, *James Joyce and the Problem of Justice*, 54.

Chapter Six: Betraying Bloom

In an episode of *Seinfeld* called “The Betrayal,” the title character Jerry sleeps with a woman his best friend George has been courting (rather unsuccessfully). “You betrayed me!” George complains.

JERRY: Alright, I admit it. I slept with Nina, but that’s all.

GEORGE: (Outraged) ‘That’s all’?! That’s everything! I don’t know what all the rest is for anyway!²⁵²

The joke is at George’s expense, playing on his chronic failure to get to grips with the intricacies of human relationships and his tendency to respond melodramatically to situations. His response here is, the writers beg us to observe, excessive to the point of comedy. But George’s outburst also raises some interesting questions about the precise relationship between sex and betrayal. Does the sexual act represent the betrayal itself or only its crystallization in physical form? Is the sexual act, as George suggests, “everything” *in and of itself* or is it in fact relatively meaningless, as Jerry suggests? And if it is everything, why is it so? What determines when a sexual act becomes also an act of betrayal? Is betrayal something that is appended to the sexual act or is it carried along and inside the act, ready to be revealed at the appropriate moment? Though Jerry may be guilty of betrayal, it seems, Nina is not. Though equally responsible for the *act* (the sex) that seems to have marked the betrayal (Jerry and Nina dive into each other’s arms with comically perfect synchronicity—no one can be said to have made the first move) Nina has not, apparently, done anything wrong. So why is Jerry alone held accountable? And why (and how) does this act constitute an act of betrayal?

Of course, whatever its strengths, *Seinfeld* is no commentary on *Ulysses*. I strongly doubt that *Ulysses* was anywhere near their thoughts when the writers drafted this episode. But what this example offers, I think, is a neatly focused send-up both of the weight that tends to be placed on sex in determining and bounding love relationships (George’s “I don’t know what all the rest is for anyway!”) and of the vague and unspoken processes by which we construct sex as the great synecdoche for betrayal. For while the feeling of sexual betrayal is normalized to the point that it

²⁵² *Seinfeld*. Episode no. 164, first broadcast November 20 1997 by NBC. Directed by Andy Ackerman and Written by Peter Mehlman & David Mandel.

feels intensely “natural,” both Joyce and *Seinfeld* share, to a differing degree, an interest in the mechanisms that construct and empower betrayal. More importantly, perhaps, this example neatly emphasizes the fundamental role of the contract in betrayals of all kinds. Though sex is here the ultimate synecdoche for betrayal, as I have said, the betrayal resides in the failure of a friendship. Jerry, George is suggesting, has broken an unwritten agreement, something along the lines of “as my friend, you will not sleep with any women in whom I have a stated interest.” The emotional investment in betrayal that *Seinfeld* mocks and Joyce investigates so deeply²⁵³ is really an investment in the ability of human relationships to function. George struggles to vocalize his distress at this apparent breach of contract (hard to vocalize something that is so built into the social fabric—an ambiguous, unspoken foundation for social interaction) and eventually gives in altogether. But unlike George, Joyce’s characters are generally not only able to expose the social contracts at the heart of personal relationships, but to understand them well enough to be able to twist and manipulate their structure. Stephen Dedalus externalizes his own constitutional distrust (some would say paranoia) into an overriding historical force; in understanding the logic by which this force operates, he learns how best to escape its effects. Richard Rowan, similarly, understands the logic of betrayal to such a fine degree that he cannot but see its logic as proof of its inevitability; unlike Stephen, he seeks to rob betrayal of its emotional power not by sidestepping its force, but by giving in more fully to the logic that guides it—he tries to give “freely” that which betrayal seeks to take by force. In escaping into the apparently dispassionate logic of betrayal, both Stephen and Richard lose track of the complex nature of the contracts that they produce (and that produce them). In *Ulysses*, however, Joyce’s analyses become increasingly nuanced and the exact nature of the contract between husband and wife, betrayer and betrayed, begins to break down. The beguiling clarity of the logic Stephen and Richard provide is replaced with a less instantaneously emotive, but more lingeringly prosaic ambiguity as Bloom and Molly struggle to position themselves in relation to a logical structure that should be clear. Even though the sexual act that marks the betrayal has certainly occurred (Joycean betrayals usually occur in a hypothetical future) *Ulysses* is predominately concerned with resisting and

²⁵³ Joyce also mocks it, I think, though for him this mode is but one response among many.

problematizing rather than embracing the logic that propels so much of Joyce's previous writing.

(Sexual) betrayal

While adulterous or sexual betrayal shares a number of core features with the other forms of betrayal I have discussed in this thesis, it differs in an important and perplexing sense. If an informant gives up the location of a rebel soldier, s/he brings about, more or less directly, the imprisonment or even death of the one s/he "betrays." The same can be said of the betrayals that Stephen fears: being trapped in a life of slavish mediocrity or being hounded to his death (spiritual and physical) by a baying mob made up of his countrymen. Even if the damage is not immediately apparent, it is certainly measurable. Whatever the emotional, epistemic, or ontological damage brought about by the betrayal itself, there is a corresponding, material damage (death, exile, poverty) that persists regardless of how I view or designate the "betrayal" that brings it about. But this is not necessarily the case with sexual betrayal. If I never have any knowledge of my wife's adultery then it has not harmed me. At all.

There are two levels to betrayal in Joyce's treatments of it. The first is material—the measurable consequences of an act perpetrated by a trusted other. The second is ontological—the act of betrayal brings into question the natures of both the informant and the informed upon / the "adulteress" and the cuckold.²⁵⁴ But the informer generally only initiates a radical reordering of their own ontological status—from friend to enemy, trusted to untrustable, loved to loathed. The informed upon, certainly, is put into a tailspin of epistemic doubt—all relationships are ripe for

²⁵⁴ One may wish to think of Joyce's depiction of betrayal as having three levels: material, ontological, and epistemological. One may, alternatively, wish to do away with the ontological level altogether in favour of the epistemological. Indeed, my own discussion of *Exiles* stresses the central importance of doubt and the impossibility of true and complete knowledge of the other and the other's nature. This is, I argue, the fundamental theoretical driving force (the central question) behind the play. But, since the problem is really "how can I know the ontological status of an other?" I have simplified the question here. Accepting the central problem of knowledge implicit in any Joycean relationship, the question remains, "am I and my significant other fundamentally different in consequence of the act of betrayal?" This move away from epistemology, though by no means total and by all means qualified, is, I will show, a major part of the move Joyce makes between *Exiles* and *Ulysses*.

reconsideration—and the *volte-face* in the status of his/her relationship with the informer calls into doubt any meaning taken from that relationship. But, for the wronged and innocent party, there is generally very little reorientation necessary to explain the wrongs that have been done to them. To put it in one of Joyce's favoured contexts, the puzzle is to explain Tim Healy's betrayal, not Parnell's "betrayedness." The betrayed gains in nobility and stature as martyr simply by being betrayed—further analysis is not really necessary.²⁵⁵ But sexual betrayal offers an ontological problem of a different kind. A man, definable in any number of ways specific to his complex lifestyle, becomes suddenly and (usually) without his knowledge simply "cuckold." The grammar of this is important: Molly *is* an "adulteress" and Bloom *is* a "cuckold." Language seeks to bring about or enunciate a more or less fundamental change in the *nature* of the person described. Perhaps this is why Bloom's watch stops "about the time" (*U*, 13.985) Bloom becomes a cuckold. Bloom offers the strange thesis that perhaps there is some "magnetic influence" (*U*, 13.984-45) that might explain the interrelation between the failure of marital fidelity and the failure of his watch. But if Bloom's explanation is odd, it isn't any more so than the explanation the reader happily accepts, that in this fictional world, there is a symbolic significance in the sexual act powerful enough to stop a watch. Joyce's little joke is, perhaps, to provide us with a "real" (real within the narrative world) marker of the moment when Bloom's ontological status shifts. As Bloom's watch breaks, he becomes a cuckold; as Bloom becomes a cuckold, his watch breaks. The absurd solidity of the ontological status of cuckold—it is something one suddenly *is* rather than thinks, says, or does—is brought into focus by the absurd solidity of an otherwise implausible real-world effect.

While Joyce plays with the grand sexual betrayals of history—the "faithless wi[ves]" and women "no better than [they] should be" that Mr. Deasy lists (*U*, 2.390-95)—digging up and redeploying their emotional (tragic and comic) potential, his interest is always guided by a powerful structuring mind. Betrayal is always theorized and investigated, rather than merely recorded, in Joyce's writing. Betrayal is necessarily a function of relationships—one must be betrayed by someone, (usually) with or for someone else. In *Exiles*, Joyce ponders the logical consequences of this structure, envisioning the difficulties that arise once the fear of betrayal takes root.

Betrayal ceases to be occasional and specific, instead becoming an inevitable consequence of any (apparently) meaningful human relationship. Indeed, the possibility of betrayal becomes, perversely, the very marker of a meaningful relationship: the risk of betrayal indicates that an exchange of power and trust has occurred. But, as *Exiles* near-exhaustively dramatizes, this exchange can only be known one-way. There is no way to *know* that the other whom you have given the power to harm you is similarly exposed, nor can you know that they have accepted your exchange in good faith. For Richard Rowan, the unachievable paradigm of absolute honesty, absolute exposure of one mind/soul to another, spawns an *already imagined* betrayal. Joyce dramatizes a kind of radical exposure to doubt that drives Richard to an extreme solution. Since he cannot *know* that he has not or will not be betrayed—and this uncertainty is unbearable—he seeks to set himself outside of the structure of betrayal altogether, seeking a form of certainty that might be less painful. Richard effectively reasons that, since betrayal requires that something be done against one's will, then betrayal can be robbed of its power if the thing that would be taken is instead given freely. There may be pain, he reasons, but it is pain he can withstand more easily than the uncertain “wound of doubt.”

Bloom is confronted with a problem of quite a different kind to Richard Rowan: he knows as a matter of certainty that his wife is about to commit adultery, to cuckold him, even if he holds out fleeting hope that she will not go through with it. While Richard is plagued by doubt, Bloom is plagued by certainty, spending much of his day seeking distraction from Molly's infidelity. This cataloguing of distraction itself represents a marked shift from the extended theorizing that characterizes *Exiles*, which is built, stiflingly, on focused, intense navel-gazing that leads, ultimately, to nothing having “happened”—no action, only a change of perspective that is itself not entirely convincing. Bloom, contrarily, is constantly on the move and, though he does his fair share of navel-gazing (sometimes literally), his thoughts constantly interact with the complex, messy world around him. Whereas *Exiles* isolates betrayal to better understand its structure, *Ulysses* does the opposite, restoring the concept of betrayal to an embedded state within the complex lived experiences of Leopold and Molly Bloom. While in *Exiles* the shout of a woman selling fish in the street is a jarring reminder of a world beyond “philosophy,” it is the natural background noise of *Ulysses*. The simple structure of sexual betrayal (the sexual act marks the betrayal) is bombarded with complicating details that not only contextualize it (and therefore

blunt its sting) but undermine the certainty of these structural roles. Unlike the play that Molly jeers for its unflattering portrayal of an adulterous woman, *Ulysses* refuses (literally) to let the “wronged” man have the final word. But even if it did, the several hundred pages that precede Molly’s soliloquy work to resist and reshape the accepted structure of cuckoldry: betrayer/betrayed, wrongdoer/wronged, victimizer/victim. This last binary, as we will see, is particularly relevant here, as Joyce, rather than manoeuvre Molly into the position of victim through careful rhetorical, narrative, or emotive manipulations, seeks instead to destabilize this binary within Bloom and Molly’s relationship.

It is important that, from the first pages of “Calypso,” we are never really in doubt that Molly will go through with her plans to sleep with Boylan. For all the parallels with *The Odyssey*, it is fairly clear that this Penelope will not resist her suitors. Her half-hearted attempts to conceal Boylan’s letter do not even convince us that she is at all shy or reticent about her intended adultery. Without reading back from what we learn of her character in “Penelope,” her sure, confident, domineering indolence in “Calypso” is carefully crafted by Joyce as a contrast with the quiet hand-wringing of Bloom. Molly knows what she wants and is not ashamed to seek it out. We can imagine (even hope as Bloom does, if we are so invested) that some chance event will prevent Boylan from getting to Molly in time for their tryst, but even this wishful thinking does not change the main drive of the novel. While as readers we may find gratification in a foiled affair, there are always other days and other men. More than even Stephen’s forlorn, unconscious search for a father, *Ulysses* is driven by Bloom’s meandering return to the marriage bed. And the question that fills his mind and motivates his wandering is not “*will* my marriage bed be spoilt?” but “what does this spoliation mean?” What is the true significance of the sexual act Molly has/will engage in? How does it affect or define their marriage? Molly commits an act of “infidelity” in the most prosaic sense, but *Ulysses* never allows this simplicity to stand unconsidered. While the sexual act necessarily retains its immediate, emblematic power—a single, definitive act is so much easier to process than a thousand smaller infidelities—*Ulysses* develops upon Joyce’s theorizations in *Exiles* to pose questions about what it truly means to be (un)faithful. Perhaps more startlingly, however, Joyce also begins to question the *value* of such fidelity.

Faith in nighttown

Perhaps the most important episode in Joyce's reorientation of the betrayer/betrayed relationship is "Circe." From the first, it announces its concern with falsehoods of various kinds. The red-light district is a place built on falsehood: prostitutes displaying false affection—"Wait, my love" (*U*, 15.11)—and their customers hiding themselves from view, disguising their true identity, or, in the case of the priest Bella Cohen describes, acting out forbidden carnal desires that they must keep hidden in their daily life. Bloom, similarly, lies throughout the episode. As well as playing a variety of roles as he performs in one situation after another, he concocts an elaborate lie to account to Kelleher for his presence in nighttown.

I was just visiting an old friend of mine there, Virag, you don't know him (poor fellow, he's laid up for the past week) and we had a liquor together and I was just making my way home ...
(*U*, 15.4873-76)

To help defuse the situation after Stephen's outburst in the brothel and his subsequent run-in with Private Carr, Bloom attempts to exaggerate Stephen's importance by suggesting to Bella Cohen that he is "nephew of the vicechancellor" (*U*, 15.4299) before promoting him further, addressing him loudly in front of the crowd as "professor" (*U*, 15.4434). But Joyce hints repeatedly that there are other, more subtle falsehoods at work, that, in fact, the episode is built around these falsehoods. We are warned in the very first lines that there are "*red and green will-o'-the-wisps and danger signals*" (*U*, 15.2-3), while the sections of the episode recounting most obviously "real" events continually return to themes of faithlessness, adultery, and dishonesty. In one of the apparently unreal moments, Stephen and Lynch pass Edy Boardman as she describes a rich and seedy web of affairs.

And says the one: I seen you up Faithful place with your squarepusher, the greaser off the railway, in his cometobed hat. Did you, says I. That's not for you to say, says I. You never seen me in the mantrap with a married highlander, says I. The likes of her! Stag that one is! Stubborn as a mule! And her walking with two fellows the one time, Kilbride, the enginedriver, and lancecorporal Oliphant.
(*U*, 15.91-96)

"Faithful place" provides an ironically appropriate setting for a story of intrigue within intrigue and adultery upon adultery. Bloom, for his part, passes "gallant Nelson's image" (*U*, 15.145)—or the "onehanded adulterer" (*U*, 7.1018) as Stephen

describes him during his recitation of the “*parable of the plums*”—before colliding with Tommy Caffrey and checking the contents of his pockets—“*watchfob, pocketbookpocket, pursepoke, sweets of sin, potatosoap*” (*U*, 15.242-43)—thinking to himself that he must “beware of pickpockets. Old thieves dodge. Collide. Then snatch your purse” (*U*, 15.245-46). There is no innocence in “Circe,” as if everything has been tainted by the implicit falsehood in Molly’s adultery. A rambunctious child could be a pickpocket, a flashing, ethereal light is there to draw you to your death, and even “Faithful place” is the site of multiple displays of faithlessness.

Some of this effect can be put down to Bloom’s state of mind. He has had some success putting Molly out of his thoughts all day, transferring his barely suppressed feelings into any number of potential schemes for public improvement, as well as disparate meditations on science, philosophy, literature, music, and history. Some of these reflections carry along the emotional residue of the situation, allowing Bloom to work out, even if not appease, his feelings in small chunks. Take for instance his meaningful mistake regarding *La ci darem la mano*, the song from *Don Giovanni* that Molly is due to sing with J. J. O’Molloy. The song choice is appropriate, as it marks Don Giovanni’s seduction of Zerlina. Zerlina’s reply to Don Giovanni’s offer is “I should like to, yet I shouldn’t” expressing a more ambiguous desire than the one Bloom constructs with his misremembered “*Voglio e non vorrei*” or “I want to, but I shouldn’t.”²⁵⁶ The difference is subtle but important and provides Molly, who we later find has sung this song with Boylan, with a far greater certainty of purpose than Zerlina. While Zerlina’s conditional “I should” is appropriately tentative—she is ultimately prevented or “saved” by the intervention of Donna Elvira—Molly is much more of an “I want” kind of woman. This song comes into Bloom’s head throughout the day, marking for him Molly’s final preparations for Boylan. Having been briefly disturbed by a sighting of Blazes in the street, Bloom thinks of Molly at “twenty past eleven. Up. Mrs Fleming is in to clean. Doing her hair, humming. *Voglio e non vorrei*. . . . Looking at the tips of her hairs to see if they are split. *Mi trema un poco il*” (*U*, 6.237-39). The song allows him some relief from the potentially distressing image of his wife beautifying herself for another lover. While both containing and suppressing the potential meaning of this song in relation to his situation, he focuses

²⁵⁶ Translation taken from Vernon Hall, “Joyce’s use of Da Ponte and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*,” *PMLA* 66.2 (1951), 79.

in on Molly's voice thinking: "Beautiful on that *tre* her voice is: weeping tone. A thrush. A throstle. There is a word throstle that expresses that" (*U*, 6.239-41).

This is Bloom's tactic throughout the day. Rather than discharge emotion in angry or unhappy ejaculations, he simply forces himself to think about absorbing but unimportant matters. He does not allow his distress to build beyond a certain point. But that does not mean that his subconscious mind is not working away, attempting to sort through his conflicting feelings. This misremembered song continues to appear not because Bloom has failed to see its importance, but precisely because he has, even if this awareness does not register consciously. We see this in "Circe" when the apparition of "Mrs Marion" appears. In response to her knowing recitation of a line from *la ci darem la mano*, Bloom pleads "Are you sure about that *voglio*? I mean the pronunciati..." (*U*, 15.351-54). The question refers back to his concern in "Calypso" that she may mispronounce the word "voglio," which doesn't appear in the song anyway (*U*, 4.327). Bloom's rapid clarification is revealing. This is not really a question about pronunciation, its meaning is surprisingly literal: "are you sure about that 'I want to'?" Or "are you sure you want to?" In "Circe" where the subconscious comes to the fore and is free of the daytime restrictions Bloom sets upon it, this question can be asked more straightforwardly than it has been. Bloom's question is essentially are you sure you want to sleep with Boylan/Don Giovanni?

The "*voglio*" example is indicative of the general operation of the "Circe" episode. While most of the preceding episodes have given us the tender pathos of Bloom's evasions (psychological and physical) as he goes about his day, "Circe" is what happens when the suppressed, overlooked, and half-imagined contents of his subconscious mind are unleashed, with all the raw inconsistency, paradox, juvenility, and absurdity that this entails. As such, it offers a perfect opportunity to examine the effects of Molly's adultery on Bloom's psychology. Before going on to do this however, some discussion must be had about the nature of these "hallucinations" or "fantasies" as they are generally known (occasionally they are described as "dream sequences"), and a note of caution sounded about their presumed connection to Bloom's (drunken) mind. While it will be clear that it is fundamental to my argument that the fantastic events of "Circe" are by and large rooted in Bloom's (and to a lesser extent in Stephen's) psychology, the connection between the two is, I think, more problematic than is usually acknowledged. For both "hallucination" and "fantasy" misrepresent the textual reality of "Circe" in important ways. For "hallucination" I

take to mean an imagined construction that interacts with or writes over the “real,” observable world of the senses. Like a mirage, it is generally a trick of the mind that interferes with the information being gathered by the senses. Stephen, we can see, is suffering from hallucinations, in that what he sees (his mother) is a particular, psychologically-charged imaginary object, *added* to the world that he shares with those around him; this point is important. While only Stephen can see his mother, she is not a part of the real world, his interaction with that image occurs in the real, shared world of the brothel. Time does not stop and the text does not move inward into Stephen’s imagination, detached from the events outside his head. The clearest proof of this is that when Stephen responds to his mother’s ghoulish image, he does so in words that the “whores” can hear, even if they cannot interpret them; he swings his ashplant in the “real” world, not in the world of his fantasy.

Bloom, conversely, does not hallucinate at all. The whores, Stephen and his friends, and the people on the street (*as they are*) never interact with Bloom’s fantastical digressions. These go on for so long—tens of pages at a time—that any naive assumptions we might have had about the shared synchronicity of these events (that the fantastic events of “Circe” occur in Bloom’s head, while the mundane events of the brothel continue outside it) are difficult to sustain. Even if we accept that time in the imagination can pass more quickly than in the real world—perhaps that events occur in compressed form in the mind, only to be unpacked upon later consideration—we must accept that the text of “Circe” is responsible for this unpacking. We do not skip in and out of Bloom’s head, but are treated to a display that is *constructed* by the text.²⁵⁷ While it is occasionally difficult to draw any hard distinctions between the brothel and Bloom’s projected fantasies, there is nevertheless no slippage between the two; Bloom does not, as Stephen does, confuse reality and unreality, despite the inhabitants of the brothel regularly playing a role in his unreal projections. Bloom’s negotiations with Bella Cohen are not observably affected by his supposed experiences with Bello. Indeed, there is little to suggest that Bloom remembers any of the things that we presume occur in his head. While in “Ithaca,” for example, there are several references to thoughts and memories that also come up in “Circe,” there is no sense that Bloom is *remembering* the “events” of

²⁵⁷ Obviously, everything is a construction of the text, but the distinction here between a semi-naturalistic, semi-realistic textual practice and the one I am outlining is important.

“Circe” as he potters about his house at the end of the night. For example, he thinks back to 1886, when he “was occupied with the problem of the quadrature of the circle” (*U*, 17.1071) but this does not lead him to recall Virag’s absurd image reminding him of his intentions to “devote an entire year to the study of the religious problem and the summer months of 1886 to square that circle and win that million” (*U*, 15.2399-401).²⁵⁸ One would think that had this slightly mocking, guilt-inducing paternal image really appeared to Bloom in the detail that he does in “Circe,” then some memory of this would have spilt over into “Ithaca.” Instead, all we have are echoes of trains of thought, some of them rooted primarily in “Circe” and others part of a longer series of repeating anxieties. Interestingly, in Bloom’s “recapitulat[ion]” of his day, his visit to the brothel gives little hint of the fantastical events we read about: “the visit to the disorderly house of Mrs. Bella Cohen, 82 Tyrone Street, lower, and subsequent brawl and chance medley in Beaver Street” (15.2054-56). The “disorder” is a cute textual joke, but does not give any sense of Bloom’s conscious awareness of quite how disorderly the episode was for the reader. While it makes sense that Bloom’s list would focus on the literal “events” of his day, if his imagination had been as active in that passage as it appears, wouldn’t it have merited some mention?

Rather than assume, then, that “Circe” operates at one remove from a fairly straightforward psychological realism, dramatizing Bloom’s fantasies as they occur to him, would it not be better and more accurate to think of them as constructions? Perhaps a better word would be “projection,” since it captures both the cinematic quality of this section of text and suggests the degree to which these fantastic passages extrapolate from the material at their base. Derek Attridge has suggested the term “pararealism” to describe a style that is deeply realist in form but decidedly not in content. Attridge suggests that rather than attempt to find the logical key that allows us to categorize all the different types of event in “Circe,” we should “accept what typography and tone tell us, that in just the same way as Zoe pulls her slip free

²⁵⁸ Other examples include: Bloom remembering past discussions with Owen Goldberg and Cecil Turnbull (*U*, 17.48) and the “Halcyon Days” of which they formed a part (*U*, 15.3325-29); the scheme for a hydroelectric plant at Poulaphouca (*U*, 17.713) and its appearance as a waterfall (*U*, 15.3299). In neither case is there any acknowledgement of the events of “Circe” affecting the way they appear in “Ithaca.”

or Kitty Ricketts smoothes her eyebrows, Lipoti Virag slides out of the chimney flue.”²⁵⁹ Following this general approach, I suggest that, rather than be tempted by the lure of a too-faithful psychological realism, is it not better to figure the relationship between thought and text in “Circe” in much the same way that we do “Oxen of the Sun”? or “Ithaca”? As highly-stylized extrapolations from the more mundane trains of thought that have filled Bloom’s mind throughout the day?

This complex, ambiguous relationship presents a problem for my reading of “Circe.” It would be far easier to treat it as an extended, broken up “dream sequence” and analyse Bloom’s psychic machinery accordingly. But a more nuanced connection is needed, one that roots these projections in the reality of Bloom’s subconscious and conscious thoughts and anxieties, without reducing the result to simple wish-fulfilment or nightmare. The Bloom that participates in these projections is himself a fantastical projection of the “real world” Bloom we have so far encountered (we can hardly read this Bloom’s behaviour as straightforwardly realistic). “Circe” makes available Bloom’s psychic machinery not by revealing his private fantasies per se, but by constructing a fictive, farcical play built on his anxieties, desires, and aspirations. The “narrator” (if such a term makes sense in “Circe”) effectively adds an increasingly uncontrolled side-commentary to the psychologically realistic Bloom hidden beneath the style of “Circe.” Though this play is not in any meaningful sense happening *to* Bloom, it is at all points limited and driven by the contents of his conscious, semi-conscious, and subconscious mind. As such, it is no more nor less valid as a measure of Bloom’s mind than the catechismal style of “Ithaca.”

Bloom betrays

Molly’s adultery, in one way or another, obviously plays a major role in “Circe.” Given the sheer range and number of allusions and references to it in the episode (not to mention the novel as a whole) I can hardly offer a reading of every moment in the text, but will select certain rich and significant examples to elucidate discussion. The *Don Giovanni* motif offers one such rich structure through which Joyce is able to explore the issue of adultery and betrayal as it affects Bloom. The

²⁵⁹ Derek Attridge, “‘Pararealism’ in ‘Circe,’” in *European Joyce Studies 22: Joycean Unions; Post Millennial Essays from East to West*, ed. R. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Mecsnober (New York: Rodopi, 2013), 125.

crossovers are fairly obvious and, at first sight, unsubtle. Bloom is Masetto, helpless to thwart the larger-than-life Boylan/Don Giovanni from having his way with his wife/fiancée Molly/Zerlina. These correspondences are easy enough to make and add a pleasing note of operatic melodrama to this otherwise unexplosive love triangle. But, as Vernon Hall showed as early as 1951, Joyce is not satisfied with such a one-dimensional allusion. “He recognises that in the love drama one man can play different parts at different times—even simultaneously.”²⁶⁰ While Bloom occupies the space and inherits the narrative baggage of Masetto when he is brought into contact, figuratively, with Boylan and Molly, he adopts the guise of the Don when thinking about his flirtations with Martha Clifford, whose faux-innocence matches Zerlina well; it isn’t hard to imagine her responding to Bloom’s “*la ci darem la mano*” with a “*vorrei e non vorrei*.” But at times Bloom is also the possessive and paternal *Commendatore*, concerned about the advances of the mysterious Bannon towards his daughter Milly. Bannon is aligned with Blazes and, therefore, Don Giovanni through Boylan’s signature tune, “Those Lovely Seaside Girls.”

Don Giovanni becomes an archetypal structure, a schema through which the relationships in *Ulysses* can be re-oriented. Joyce exploits and explores this structure, manoeuvring it around to test all its possibilities. In the opera, the structure is relatively clear: Don Giovanni is the loveable but immoral cad, Masetto the unfortunate but unexciting victim, and Zerlina the near-adulteress whose virtue is almost won all too easily. But in “Circe” Joyce explores the possibilities of Bloom as something far more complex than merely a Masetto. Playing, at various times, all the roles, he is, as Beaufoy declares, “Leading a quadruple existence!” (*U*, 15.853).²⁶¹ The point is not that Bloom is particularly unmoored, particularly diffuse in his character, but that in *Ulysses* Joyce is not interested in working through a particular construction in isolation (as in *Exiles*). Joyce moves towards a more polyphonic enunciation of these themes, in which the structural, allusive positions are given free rein to shift and move. While, for my purposes, the shift from *Portrait* to *Ulysses* can

²⁶⁰ Hall, “Joyce’s use of Da Ponte and Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*,” 79.

²⁶¹ Of course, Bloom plays many other roles in “Circe” and elsewhere—not least a parody of Parnell. But while I am giving this particular allusion artificial importance here, it is because it represents a fair example of Joyce’s practice in *Ulysses* of working over betrayal (here, adultery) from all sides.

be described in terms of a move away from Joyce's interest in the way Stephen constructs his position as "betrayed" towards the failures of that position, the move from *Exiles* to *Ulysses* can be described as a loss of interest in the single, fixed structure; *Exiles*, for all that it worries at the problem of betrayal, does so without seriously questioning the fixity of the triptych structure: Richard (betrayed)-Bertha (betraying lover)-Robert (betraying friend). All of the questioning and worrying occurs within the confines of this structure, leaving no space for the kinds of playful positional uncertainty that characterizes *Ulysses*.

Bloom is the great vehicle for Joyce's opening out of betrayal. While both Stephen in *Portrait* and Richard in *Exiles* are driven inward by their anticipation of betrayal, each man's interiority manifests only briefly in self-questioning. Stephen turns towards notions of historical inevitability and race consciousness to explain his victimhood; Richard similarly externalizes his paranoia into the inevitable result of a structure that he did not create and cannot move beyond. Bloom is different. His experience of adultery drives him inward, but rather than produce binding justifications for his position, he questions both the value (and justice) of his own suffering and the fixity of his position as victim. When Bloom plays out his fantasies of "dongiovannism" (*U*, 9.458) with an imagined Mrs Breen in "Circe" it allows him to extricate himself temporarily from his position as cuckold and victim—he has just been reminded memorably of this by Marion's teasing apparition (*U*, 15.293-355). The scene unfolds with Bloom coy and flustered, caught "in the haunts of sin" (*U*, 15.395) and instructed to "account for yourself this very minute or woe betide you!" (*U*, 15.405): "(hurriedly) Not so loud my name. Whatever do you think of me? Don't give me away. Walls have ears" (*U*, 15.398-99). But this fear of exposure gives way gradually to a cautious flirtation, with Bloom either awkwardly formal—"Would you like me perhaps to embrace you for just a fraction of a second?" (*U*, 15.429)—or making use of *double entendres*—"square party," i.e. wife-swapping (*U*, 15.433)—and the kind of cloyingly suggestive language we find in the Martha Clifford letters—"you cruel naughty creature" (*U*, 15.559). Around midway through the scene, Bloom and Mrs Breen even act out their own seduction scene, with Bloom "slip[ping] on her finger a ruby ring" and reciting, "tenderly," "*Là ci darem la mano*" (*U*, 15.468-69). Mrs Breen responds, not as Zerlina does, but as Bloom imagines Molly to: "*Voglio e non*" (*U*, 15.473). But while this fantasy may allow Bloom a certain relief as he reminisces about a former flame, this whole scene seems to

revolve around Molly. The “*Voglio*” is Molly’s and cannot fail to raise the spectre of Boylan/Giovanni. Even before this, Bloom’s conversation with the imagined Mrs Breen has revolved around Molly. More than half of it is given over to a “retrospective arrangement” (*U*, 15.443), a shared memory that, while nominally about Mrs. Breen, cannot but keep adding irrelevant details about Molly.

As well as allowing Bloom to shift his position temporarily within the structure of adultery, this fantasy entertains Bloom’s desire for some sort of like-for-like vengeance—if Molly can commit adultery, so can he (with a married woman, matching in different ways both Boylan and Molly). But Mrs Breen’s sly threat that she will let Molly know about his supposed activities in nighttown—“O just wait till I see Molly” (*U*, 15.450)—merely reminds him of comments she has made in the past about wanting to visit nighttown in search of “the exotic” (*U*, 15.408). While in the past these remarks titillated him, they have of course now taken on a more unpleasant tone. And whatever desire for vengeance Bloom may have, once actually presented with the opportunity to “betray” Molly with the phantom Mrs Breen, he shies away from her suggestion that he “kiss the spot to make it well” (*U*, 15.488). When she proffers a “*pigeon kiss*” Bloom ignores her and rattles off a number of subject changes—Plumtrees potted meat, Mrs Bandmann Palmer’s *Leah*, and pigs’ feet—an ironic echo of his habit of distracting himself from uncomfortable thoughts by moving through neutral topics. He has used this trick throughout the day.

If Bloom does wish to reciprocate Molly’s adultery, he lacks even the most basic conviction. His great worry throughout “Circe” is that anyone should think either that he has come to nighttown in search of a brothel or that he has been a roving Don Juan; several mock-court scenes take place in the episode, accusing Bloom of all kinds of debauchery. Rather than exploring in detail Bloom’s persecution complex here, there is value in thinking through the meaning of these scenes in relation to Bloom’s sense of himself as both betrayer and adulterer. Many of Bloom’s dark fantasies follow a similar pattern: some event from his past—several of them earlier in the day—is recalled by some absurd apparition who holds him to account on grossly exaggerated charges. So Gerty MacDowell, “*Leering . . . limps forward . . . and shows coyly her bloodied clout*” (*U*, 15.371-72). While Bloom’s earlier activities were morally ambiguous, here his and Gerty’s encounter, if you can call it that, is transfigured into a violent deflowering, all the more disturbing for the fact that Bloom does not even know her. While this ignorance was central to both

their purposes—allowing their imaginations free rein—here Gerty becomes an image of female inscrutability and changeability. Within a few lines she moves from haranguing Bloom—“You did that [gave her the “bloodied clout”]. I hate you for that” (*U*, 15.374-75)—to exclaiming: “Dirty married man! I love you for doing that to me” (*U*, 15.385).

Bloom’s affair with Gerty, though it had an obvious physical component, was mental. The whole thing takes place in the mind. Yet in “Circe” Bloom is confronted with increasingly troubling real-world consequences of actions he only imagined. Bloom’s fantasies force him to account (or better, force him to acknowledge his failure to account) for every aggressive, lecherous, and voyeuristic thought he has ever had. “The sins of your past are rising against you. Many. Hundreds” says Bello, before the sins themselves appear to chime out, “*in a medley of voices.*”

THE SINS OF THE PAST

He went through a form of clandestine marriage with at least one woman in the shadow of the Black church. Unspeakable messages he telephoned mentally to Miss Dunn at an address in D’Olier street while he presented himself indecently to the instrument in the callbox. By word and deed he frankly encouraged a nocturnal strumpet to deposit fecal and other matter in an unsanitary outhouse attached to empty premises. In five public conveniences he wrote pencilled messages offering his nuptial partner to all strongmembered males. And by the offensively smelling vitriol works did he not pass night after night by loving courting couples to see if and what and how much he could see? Did he not lie in bed, the gross boar, gloating over a nauseous fragment of wellused toilet paper presented to him by a nasty harlot, stimulated by gingerbread and a postal order? (*U*, 15.3025-40)

A strange list. Benign fantasies blown out of proportion (Bloom’s mental telephone) mingle with acts of plain voyeurism (passing by young courting couples) and two unsettling displays of coprophilia. It is unclear how much, if any, of this Bloom has actually done. At any rate, Bloom misses the point, protesting that he “only thought the half of the ...”; in “Circe,” where thought and deed are equivalent, the distinction is effectively meaningless. The boundary between fantasy and reality is eroded to the point that even the briefest thought that Bloom has had now might constitute a completed act.

Much of the effect and, one feels, the purpose of this is darkly comic; some of Bloom’s attempts to extricate himself from the ensuing confusions and

misunderstandings are hilarious. But “Circe” does not stop at the easy joke. The breakdown of this distinction is important in relation to Molly’s betrayal, for it poses an important question about the nature of her crime against Bloom. In *Exiles*, Richard’s problem was that he considered desire to be equivalent to action. As Dr Matthew O’Connor puts it in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, “For the lover, it is the night into which his beloved goes . . . that destroys his heart. . . . When she sleeps, is she not moving aside her leg for an unknown garrison?” But O’Connor goes on, “And what of our own sleep? We go to it no better—and betray her with the very virtue of our days.”²⁶² Richard is certainly destroyed in this way, but for Bloom his wife’s fantasies were always a source of potential titillation. The demand for knowledge that Bertha suffers in *Exiles*—being forced to tell Richard everything about her meetings with Robert—is enacted quite differently. Knowledge of private desires of this sort gains an erotic charge, empowering Molly and exciting Leopold, providing an economy of desires that can be traded and marshalled. But the move from fantasy to reality that Molly has enacted corrupts this system. In the past, fantasy has been fantasy alone, and Bloom could enjoy the flirtation with suffering that it allowed. But, as the ghoulish image of his mother now blocks Stephen’s personal fantasies of escape and overcoming, Boylan stands, temporarily, in the way of Bloom. He cannot even enjoy his own fantasy life without being knocked back by Boylan’s visage.

Part of the problem for Bloom is that in processing his wife’s adultery, he also has to contend with her choice of partner, a man who is in most respects his polar opposite. Where Bloom is old (for the purposes of this comparison), Boylan is young; where Bloom is quiet, Boylan is rambunctious; where Bloom thinks, Boylan acts (both in business and in love); where Bloom’s sexuality is problematic, polymorphous, and unfulfilling for his wife, Boylan is a vigorous lover with a large penis (a “tremendous big red brute of a thing”) and entirely straightforward urges (he and Molly have sex three or four times without complication).²⁶³ Of course, Bloom

²⁶² Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 87-88.

²⁶³ Margot Norris has questioned some of these characterizations, suggesting that the text is predisposed towards presenting a skewed and incomplete image—Blazes rather than Boylan. I agree with this argument on several points but my point here is specifically about how

isn't aware of the size of Boylan's penis but otherwise his sexual reputation rather precedes him. To be clear, it's not simply that Molly's adultery brings home to Bloom that he is old and sexually inadequate. Marriage, and monogamy more generally, tends to be built on an aspiration towards monogamous desire. The ideal is that one's lover loves one exclusively and wholly. In this sense, *any* extra-marital desire represents a failure of this monogamy. But in choosing Boylan, Molly has chosen an anti-Bloom, a negation of all Bloom's qualities and characteristics. When Bloom observes Boylan's "Bold hand," he is not merely identifying Boylan, he is identifying himself as not-bold. As such, Molly has chosen someone with an immense signifying potential; Boylan's innate "Blazesness" acts to destabilize and short-circuit Bloom's fantasy life.

The equivalence of desire and reality that "Circe" enables is not sustainable beyond the bounds of the episode. Even within its fantastic projections, the cracks already begin to appear. Bloom cannot, at this moment, get beyond the hard, immovable fact of his wife's physical adultery. The playful threat has become a taunting reality, transformed instantly by this single act. But the problem is not simply that a physical act has occurred—at least not exactly. Rather, the problem lies in Bloom's position relative to this physical act, which has placed him in a role that he has had no part in constructing. Boylan's hidden letter under the pillow, Molly's pretence that nothing is about to happen, these things mark Bloom as an *outsider* to the affair. The (insufficient) care taken to keep Bloom out of this new relationship (between Molly and Boylan) is itself a clear statement that it has nothing to do with Bloom. When Molly shares with Bloom her fantasies about men outside their marriage, she effectively brings these extra-marital desires *within* the marriage. For all that they may provide the couple with the thrill of illicit desire, they are swiftly and effectively normalized into the bourgeois structures of married love; illicit desire is transmuted into licit desire; dangerous extramarital urges are made into safe marital urges. So, while Molly's affair with Boylan is damaging to Bloom on an immediate, possessive, irrational level (animalistic jealousy), it is doubly damaging because it announces to him (on a level he is not capable of consciously acknowledging) that Molly's illicit desire is *truly* extramarital in that it seeks to exclude him completely.

Boylan presents himself to Bloom and how Bloom understands Boylan in comparison to himself. "Don't Call Him Blazes," *JJQ* 48.2 (2011): 229-249.

There is no place for him in it, except as negated and rejected, precisely as that which has no place in the affair. Molly's affair is so psychically harmful to Bloom not merely because this is reality rather than fantasy, but because Bloom cannot, for the great length of the novel, find any sustainable position from which to participate in it. More importantly, Molly has not *invited* him to participate in it.

Richard Rowan desperately tried to tame adultery by commanding its elements, but Bloom instead made a game of it, encouraging Molly to reveal her past affairs, demanding to know which men she liked, even suggesting that she'd like to go with them instead of, or in addition to, him. This allowed him to gain control over his anxieties as he could acknowledge the possibility of infidelity while safely raising the issue of his own inadequacies.²⁶⁴ Molly *might* go with other men as a way to get satisfactions that Bloom could not provide, but the performance of this possibility itself ensured him that these inadequacies would not in fact drive her to do so. The difference with Boylan, however, is not simply that this affair involves the physical consummation of what has, in the past, been fantasy—though this is a problem in much the same way as it is for Stephen: it cannot be undone. Rather, the problematic difference is that Bloom is not made a part of the process. How can he make a game out of Molly's infidelity when she herself is unwilling to play? If there is no play, then this is no game, and the consequences cannot be absorbed into the fantasy play of the past.

²⁶⁴ This model of behaviour is well described by Freud's description of his grandchild's "fort" "da" game. The child makes play out of a toy disappearing and reappearing, thereby modelling the distressing disappearance and reappearance of the mother. In controlling these disappearances and reappearances, the child enacts a form of empowerment that, by analogy, lessens the stress of parental absence. Bloom's method is much more direct than Freud's example and this is by no means an exact comparison, but the structural logic is similar.

Chapter Seven: Sexual betrayal in “Penelope”

The shift from fantasy to reality may seem simple enough to be not worth mentioning, even if it strikes one as strangely counter to “natural” emotional responses. But for Bloom it constitutes an earth-shattering alteration in his marital dynamic. It is clear from “Penelope” that in the past Molly has indulged Bloom’s eroticization of the possibility of marital infidelity, even if this has been more Bloom’s fantasy than her own. Bloom is described as the “great Suggester don Poldo de la Flora” because he likes to suggest sexual partners for Molly (*U*, 18.1427). While in the past it has always been hypothetical, it has nevertheless been one of the key characteristics of their sex life, such as it is.

doing that frigging drawing out the thing by the hour question and answer would you do this that and the other with the coalman yes with a bishop yes . . . encouraging him making him worse than he is who is in your mind now tell me who are you thinking of who is it tell me his name who tell me who the german Emperor is it yes imagine Im him think of him
(*U*, 18.88-93)

The differences between this intimate roleplaying and Molly’s adultery are obvious (one is fantasy, the other reality), but it is important to understand that Molly at least *considers* Bloom’s behaviour to be part of a wider pattern of desire. The dividing line between desire and action, fantasy and reality that “Circe” threatened to disrupt is as uncertain and imprecise for Molly as it was for Bloom. She has doubts, certainly, but it is clear that for the most part Molly feels that her actions are and were justified. While I don’t have any particular interest in making any determinations about the rights and wrongs of Molly’s affair, it is important to acknowledge the novel’s dynamic in this respect. After several hundred pages devoted to Bloom’s self-flagellation in which, past the opening scenes of the second part of the book, Molly is only voiced indirectly, Joyce ends the novel with an extended defence of Molly’s position. Except that it is not even a defence, as it refuses to acknowledge the validity of the charges the novel has made against her; Molly rejects, quite openly, the very name that social taboo (and literary history) has sought to put on her: “adulteress.” In doing so, “Penelope” continues to undermine the primacy of sex as the ultimate determinant of the marital relationship (at least Molly and Bloom’s), continuing the

work begun in “Circe” and bringing into focus the more meaningful problems at the heart of the Blooms’ marriage.

Molly’s self-defence

Chief among the defences Joyce allows Molly to mount in “Penelope” is her (reasonable) conviction that Bloom has himself been sleeping with other women. This follows, as I have suggested, from her increasing suspicion about his interest in imagined adultery in their fantasy life, but is also grounded in several misreadings of Bloom’s behaviour. Molly is remarkably observant and feels that she understands Bloom completely, but the conclusions she draws from these observations are never quite right and create an interestingly dissonant picture when placed up against the novel we have been reading up until that point. Bloom’s actions and thoughts, which fill the pages of the novel, are put in dialogue with Molly’s interpretations of the events that have unfolded, producing, in the end, a complex and multi-perspectival image both of their marriage together and the events of the day that has just passed.

First among these conclusions is Molly’s conviction that Bloom “came somewhere” (*U*, 18.34) before returning home. Molly is, of course, right. For the reader, who has just exhaustively followed the thoughts and actions of Bloom throughout the day, there is a strange delight to be taken in Molly’s brusque and (nearly) accurate deductions. The readerly thrill available in these moments is like a parodic, inverted Sherlock Holmes story. While Holmes masterfully unravels a string of the most mundane and unpromising details to expose surprising and intimate truths—“you have just come from the train” or “I see you are a cellist”—Molly is working with the smallest of evidence—small details about Bloom’s general manner as he enters the bed—and combining it with what she *thinks* she already knows. While Holmes solves the crime *for* the reader, Molly mis-solves a series of non-crimes to which the reader is already privy. But, though the overall effect is quite different, Molly’s sensitivity is also reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus who can find in Cranly’s every look and gesture proof positive of the betrayal that is set to come.

This parade of detective work may not be very surprising. After all, Barbara Leckie has suggested that in the second half of the nineteenth century, the novel of adultery became increasingly concerned with a certain kind of epistemological question: has the “injured party” been wronged? With who? And can this be proven so that justice and punishment can be meted out accordingly? As such, the novel of

adultery really became a “domestic detective story” in which the thrill comes from the readers’ investment in exposing the wife’s infidelity to the purifying gaze of social justice.²⁶⁵ For most of *Ulysses*, this “domestic detective story” is never really given the space to get going; Bloom is always aware of what is about to happen and, as a result, so is the reader. The epistemological problem in the novel is never “has/will Molly commit adultery?” but “why?” In “Penelope” this situation is turned on its head. Molly, who by generic convention is the “wrongdoer,” is allowed to occupy the space generically preserved for the male “cuckold.” If the bulk of *Ulysses* has been concerned with Bloom as betrayed, it is suddenly more concerned with him as potential betrayer. A strange thing, given this is, for obvious reasons, the episode in which we hear most about Molly’s affair.

This is a remarkable turn of events: Bloom returns home to the bed his wife has soiled with her infidelity (literally²⁶⁶ and figuratively) and yet he, rather than Molly, is subject to suspicion and accusations of sexual impropriety. So, while Molly’s concerns about Bloom’s activities (as well as her conviction that these suspicions have as great or greater validity than the *certainty* of her own adultery) have an important realist value (they are important to the construction of a complete and complex character), Molly’s monologue also represents a series of quietly revolutionary criticisms of cultural responses to adultery. Adultery is almost always conceived and problematized as the *wife’s* adultery—a point stressed by Tony Tanner in *Adultery in the Novel* and Barbara Leckie in *Culture and Adultery*. While female adultery is seen to corrupt (adulterate) the marriage contract and, by analogy, the social contract as a whole, the effects of male extramarital activities are taken to be local and individual. Certainly, these men and these activities are regularly depicted as immoral, incorrigible, and unpleasant, but the social charge is rarely present in the way it is in female adultery. The punishments are never so inevitable nor so manifestly necessary for men as they are for women. One need only think of the broad canon of adulterous texts—*Tristan & Isolde*, *Lancelot and Guinevere*, *Othello*, *Madame Bovary*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, to name but a small sample—to see that the key feature they have in common is their focus on a married (or at least contracted to marry, i.e. engaged) woman and an unmarried man. This is true even in those stories

²⁶⁵ Leckie, *Culture and Adultery*, 14.

²⁶⁶ “theres the mark of his [Boylan’s] spunk on the clean sheet” (*U*, 18.1512).

where no adultery has taken place (e.g. *Othello*, *Coriolanus*). There are exceptions, certainly, but they do tend to prove the rule. The overpowering interest of these texts has always been in examining and fetishizing (fantasizing) the destruction of the marriage contract, and the simple fact is that the power to preserve this contract has historically been in the hands of the husband. A woman had little power to end a marriage, whether her husband kept a mistress (a semi-accepted practice of long-standing), visited prostitutes (morally shocking but socially innocuous), or fathered children outside the marriage. While marriage polices desire, sexual activity, and physical productivity, these prohibitions tend to be asymmetrical, the burden of observance and punishment falling most severely on women.

Rather than simply the result of some dark misogyny at the heart of male-dominated society, which sought to police women's bodies as possessions and women's sexuality as vulgar (though by all means this is most likely a partial explanation), this intensive focus on the wife as guardian of social stability is sourced in the nature of "contract." As Tanner has argued in some detail, "[f]or bourgeois society marriage is the all-subsuming, all-organizing, all-containing contract."²⁶⁷ Marriage organizes and legitimizes property (e.g. inheritance), people (it also allows non-family to become family), and passions, establishing the bourgeois family unit as the "natural" basis for a civil society. Marriage is, in essence, the great synecdoche for the social contract (much as sex is the great synecdoche for betrayal and marital failure in my account) and must be preserved against corruption. Male extramarital activities were more or less safely contained within a legal and social system in which a King, Lord, or head of a family could account for his extramarital offspring safely (if not entirely satisfactorily). If a mistress had a baby, it mattered relatively little, since this child would have only a minimal claim on any property, active only, if at all, in cases where there were no biological heirs produced by the lawful marriage. The child could be acknowledged or disavowed without dramatically effecting the contractual constitution of civil society. Contrarily, a wife's infidelity was not so easy to account for, since, as Stephen so aptly puts it, "paternity is a legal fiction." Female fidelity was so stringently enforced precisely because the system on which bourgeois society was based relied entirely on that fidelity. If the marriage contract could be broken with ease—if the restrictions/protections that aim to prevent such a breach are

²⁶⁷ Tanner, *Adultery*, 15.

so weak—then could not all the contracts on which civil society relies also be broken? The epistemological problem at the heart of *Exiles* is really a rather extreme and particular form of the epistemological problem at the heart of all organized society: how can I know the other's intention? If I cannot know the other, how can I be safe in their hands?

For these reasons, the novel of adultery never worked up sufficient concern at the *outcomes* of husbands' infidelities to make them the central feature of their narratives. Socially, *there were no outcomes*. But the radical interiority of *Ulysses* drives and is driven by a concern for the minutiae of thought and feeling. As such, Molly is given a voice not usually available to wives and is in a position to challenge the inequity in cultural representations of adultery. The social arguments that produce the taboo (sanctity of contract; certainty of parentage) are rejected and Molly's genuine sense of herself as cuckold is permitted space to ferment, quietly but surely building into a potent challenge, firstly, to Bloom's "passport to eternity"—a check to the beatification of Bloom—but also to the generic conventions that are blinded to female concerns about adultery by bourgeois systems of social ordering.²⁶⁸ Joyce consciously directs our sympathies towards Bloom—allowing him to give full voice to all his pain, uncertainty, and anxiety—and then gives Molly an uninterrupted "final word," as he puts it, in which to amend our incomplete understanding.²⁶⁹ We reach "Penelope" with hundreds of pages of sympathy for Bloom already built up, and quite possibly tens of thousands of pages of generic expectation telling us that, regardless of complexity, Molly is in the wrong.²⁷⁰ As such, it is remarkable that Joyce reverses the positions if not the logic of the "domestic detective story" by allowing the epistemological burden to fall instead into the hands of the "adulteress." The novel of adultery is always the story of the wife's extramarital relations,²⁷¹ but here it is Molly

²⁶⁸ "The last word (human, all too human) is left to Penelope. This is the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity." Letter to Frank Budgen, 28 February 1921 in Joyce, *SL*, 278.

²⁶⁹ Letter to Budgen, 28 February 1921.

²⁷⁰ I don't want to overstate this. I'm not suggesting that we reach "Penelope" baying for blood. I would imagine that very few readers feel this way. Our sympathy for Bloom has had plenty of time to percolate, not least because he has given a good deal of insight into the problems in his marriage that would lead Molly to "stray."

²⁷¹ The term "novel of adultery" always refers to adultery on the part of the wife.

who has all the questions. Bloom is certain, Molly is suspicious. Though she speaks as if she is certain, the flaws and inconsistencies in her reasoning reveal the underlying epistemic insecurity that drives her monologue. A detective who never leaves her bed, Molly weighs up claim and counterclaim, evidence and counter-evidence in order to settle to her own satisfaction the multi-layered question at the heart of all novels of adultery: “have I been betrayed?”

As I have already mentioned, Molly assumes that Bloom has achieved orgasm somewhere outside their marriage that very day. So far so correct. But she reaches this conclusion by delightfully dubious logic. The revelation that opens the episode can be seen to bring about all of the monologic discussion that follows: “Yes because he never did a thing like that before as to ask for his breakfast in bed” (*U*, 18.01-02). This deviation from marital habit poses a question that Molly is forced to answer. Bloom has done something different, unexpected, something that Molly cannot immediately account for with reference to the banal repetition of their shared life. So, thirty lines later, she comes up with her first answer: “yes he came somewhere I’m sure by his appetite” (*U*, 18.34). A strange suggestion. It’s not clear why Bloom requesting breakfast in bed the following morning need necessarily indicate his appetite at the time of the request, nor, if he’s hungry, why this can’t be the result of his late-night wanderings, which have kept him from home till well past midnight. Molly’s reasons for moving straight to sex as an explanation are fairly transparent, of course: she has her own adultery in mind and is keen to square things with Bloom by making their actions equivalent (Molly has already paved the way for this, thinking of the “smutty photo [Bloom] has” [*U*, 18.22]). It’s as if she reasons that if she has cuckolded Bloom, then he has done the same to her and on the same day. If she has betrayed him, then he has also betrayed her. Bloom’s return to the bed on which she cuckolded him only hours before, and his unusual request for breakfast, produces this complex mix of defiance, self-justification, and ethical questioning that we follow for the rest of the episode.

At times, the logic of Molly’s suspicions appears largely contingent on her own sense of ethical failure. When she feels anxiety building about her actions she is more likely to talk about Bloom’s infidelities; when she is flushed with self-confidence (railing against the social taboos that prevent women from enjoying sex) Bloom is less likely to appear as a factor in her decision. This is important as an indicator of the fragility and provisionality of Molly’s self-justifications, but our growing awareness

of this level of complexity should not, I think, completely undermine our sense of this process as at least mitigating in considering the ethics of her actions. If we wish to hold to the line that Bloom has been wronged here, then we are forced to confront the barrage of counter-arguments Molly provides, even if these arguments do not, ultimately, quite hold together. For Molly's reasoning is no simpler than Bloom's in this respect. As Bloom spends the day struggling to properly interpret Molly's adultery (is it a betrayal? Why?) so Molly struggles to properly interpret Bloom's behaviour and in so doing properly justify her own. Similarly, she shares Bloom's subtle problematizing of the connection between sex and infidelity, working away at the problem both by undermining the ultimate value of sex as a signifier and by teasing out the marital failures on Bloom's part that have precipitated her own sexual dalliance.

Molly's first thought is that he is having a *love* affair, but she dismisses this quickly, basing her conclusions once again on the disturbing effect of Bloom's request for breakfast: "love its not or hed be off his feed thinking of her" (*U*, 18.35-6). The effect is to remind us of the intimacy they share, her unparalleled, though somewhat scornful, knowledge of the ways Bloom loves, but we also receive another heavy dose of dramatic irony. Deciding that Bloom is not in love, she then wonders whether Bloom may have visited a brothel earlier that night ("one of those night women" [*U*, 18.36]), unaware that while Bloom has indeed visited a brothel, neither the intention nor the outcome of this visit are as she imagines. If not a prostitute, she thinks, then "its some little bitch or other he got in with somewhere or picked up on the sly" (*U*, 18.36-7). Molly's resentment here ("little bitch"; "on the sly") comes across as a bit rich, given her activities that day, but it at least makes clear that, first, she still has something invested in Bloom (even if it manifests itself here mainly as a righteous sense of ownership), and second, that she hasn't abandoned entirely a moral sense about adultery. She clearly feels that there *are* rights and wrongs in this matter and that, generally, she is more in the right than in the wrong. So, in order to establish her blamelessness,²⁷² Molly works to distance herself from comparatively

²⁷² Perhaps this is too strong a word; Molly is willing to accept that her behaviour is not perfect. What she is not willing to do is accept a subject position that is forced upon her: sinner—spiritual or social—or loose woman. Molly denies that a crime has been committed but mounts a defence just to make sure.

reprehensible versions of her own behaviour. Bloom's imagined liaisons must be either a seedy transaction (brothel), the product of some foolish weakness (Molly's anger at the imagined "other woman" is suggestive of her thoughts later about Bloom's susceptibility to women of low quality), the product of some wheedling, undignified activities on Bloom's part ("got in with somewhere"—one might think of Joyce's genuinely unscrupulous Corley in "Two Gallants"), or simply some quick, low tumble somewhere secretive ("picked up on the sly"). Indeed, it's as if Molly is *proud* to have committed adultery "out in the open," so to speak: in her own bed in the early afternoon.

We can see from the short passage in the previous paragraph (little more than twenty words) that Molly is not merely lashing out at Bloom for imagined wrongs, she is distancing herself from a number of practices, drawing a kind of negative portrait of herself by scrubbing out all the things that she *isn't*. It's not that she doesn't see *anything* questionable about adultery of any kind, it's that she is not willing to reduce her behaviour to a simple, loaded designation, "adulteress," with all the concomitant social sanctions that it implies. Tony Tanner, in his discussion of the marriage contract as the established order of bourgeois society, has suggested that adultery "points to an activity, not an identity." I think it's clear, however, that what Molly fears is precisely that "adulteress" will *become* her identity, that she will be erased and encompassed by this simple, derogatory term.²⁷³ Molly remembers with some venom the man—"thing" she calls him—who shouted out "adulteress" at the performance of a play she attended (*U*, 18.1516). But thinghood is precisely what Molly fears, to become a "thing devoid of indwelling determinants and thus *pliant* to the handling, shaping forces and figures around her. [To enter] the realm of interchangeable objects, which is the dehumanized, reified realm of the society and its prevailing currencies, financial and emotional."²⁷⁴ She is all too aware of the power of seemingly neutral language ("these big words" as Stephen says) to suppress

²⁷³ Tanner, *Adultery*, 12. This is not really in conflict with Tanner, since his point is that "adulteress" is not a meaningful social role in the way that "mother" and "wife" are. Moreover, one can be both wife and mother at the same time, though the degree to which one is one or the other is dependent on context. One cannot, in Tanner's terms, be both "adulteress" and "wife" at the same time, since the one negates or undermines the other.

²⁷⁴ Tanner, *Adultery*, 367.

complexity, to enforce taboo, and to overpower self-constructed identities. Once an “adulteress,” an object outside of functional, positive social identities, what does it matter what else you are? While Bloom’s intellectual journey led him to wonder whether adultery in the mind was any less grievous a sin than adultery in the flesh, Molly works from the opposite direction. She wants to denude the very word “adulteress” of its power and, if she can’t do that, to disconnect the socially prohibitive power of the word from the physical act itself. The question for Bloom is: does his extramarital desire make him an adulterer, albeit one who has not had extramarital sex? The question for Molly becomes: is it possible to have sex outside her marriage without being an adulteress?²⁷⁵ Both questions are, of course, part of Joyce’s larger one: what precisely constitutes a betrayal?

As I’ve shown, for her part, Molly has strong suspicions that Bloom has already broken their marriage vows by committing some very real, not at all metaphorical adultery of his own. If the marriage has already been broken from his side, what faith is there to break? This is not merely a matter of sex, for though she is initially certain that “its not love,” Molly seems to share Bloom’s awareness (even if only half-consciously) that sex is the sign of adultery rather than the thing itself. Molly does not “discover” Bloom’s affair and use that knowledge to then expose previously unacknowledged faults in their married life, rather it is the faults Molly acknowledges in their married life that drive her conviction that Bloom has found another woman. The metaphorical connection between adultery and the state of the marriage is so strong that Molly reads the connection in the other direction. Since marital dissatisfaction is a reasonable *explanation* for adultery, for Molly it almost becomes a sufficient rather than contributory cause of it: since there is dissatisfaction, there must be adultery. Obviously there is nothing very surprising about a woman in an unhappy

²⁷⁵ I use the word “adulteress” as if constantly surrounded by quotation marks. Some distinction needs to be made between male and female adultery, since this is key to understanding the uneven social taboos in place. Similarly, Molly’s awareness of the power of this particular word gives it a specific charge in this discussion. Using quotation marks at every instance is, however, tiresome and awkward, while I would like to have some distinction between my use of the word as a quotation from “Penelope” and my use of it more generally. Outside the context of this discussion, however, the word is unpleasant and unnecessary.

marriage wondering if her husband has “strayed,” but I think it is important to acknowledge Joyce’s dissection and amplification of this logic in “Penelope.”

Tony Tanner speaks at some length about the recurring theme of “suddenness” in the literature of adultery.²⁷⁶ As suspicion takes hold, the husband tends to go from happy to manic in the space of a few pages. Occasionally, and particularly in Shakespeare’s later works, this step is seen as tragically mistaken—Desdemona is as true a lover as ever she was—and these plays investigate the epistemic problems of marital trust. But oftentimes this suddenness is seen as epiphanic and revelatory. The husband’s awareness of adultery in a sense *changes* everything. That this language is primarily ontological rather than epistemological. It is not just that everything good in the marital relationship is cast into doubt (though this happens), but that there is an instantaneous alteration (adulteration) that changes the nature of the marriage and its participants. In *Ulysses*, this traditional revelatory narrative procession—from foolish, happy husband, unaware of the faults at the centre of his married life, to a man forlorn and fully cognisant—relies on the idea that the act of adultery is itself more a symbol of marital imperfection than it is marital imperfection in itself. Of course, the *crime* is the adultery—the breaking of contract—but the punishment meted out to the adulterous woman, and the powerful drama of anxiety that is built up around the husband’s doubts, are indicative of the deeper significance contained by the sexual act. Both Molly and Bloom are deprived of this suddenness. With Bloom, we are not privy to his moment of realization, only to the smaller act of revelation that occurs at the opening of “Calypso,” when Boylan’s letter arrives, effectively announcing that the affair will occur that day. With Molly, we are introduced to her mental processes at a point of relative certainty—“he came somewhere I’m *sure*”—even if the exact details remain to be established through a process of reasoning, abductive, inductive, and (falsely) deductive. In principle, we are exposed to the very moment of revelation, “yes because he never did a thing like that before”—in the logic of “Penelope,” Bloom’s breakfast request is as damning as the proverbial lipstick on the collar,²⁷⁷ the smoking gun in Molly’s solitary investigation—but we

²⁷⁶ Tanner, *Adultery*, 41.

²⁷⁷ Molly later decides that she will check Bloom’s shirt for lipstick in the morning: “first I’ll look at his shirt to see” (*U*, 18.1234-35).

experience none of the table-turning, earth-shattering, consequences that this revelation generally provokes.

One might argue that this is because the structure of the chapter precludes the sense of comparison usually afforded by the traditional narrative—a husband is deliriously (and deludedly) happy, discovers the dark truth, and is thereby robbed of all that made him happy in the first place. By entering Molly's thoughts at the very moment of revelation, we are deprived of a sense of the comparative contentedness that drives this narrative structure. But to what extent would this narrative even be possible in *Ulysses*? Had we been privy to the previous hour of Molly's thoughts, would we have been charmed by the quality and extent of her marital contentment? We'll never know, but we can at least say that Molly was not occupied with reveries of Desdemonic innocence or (Charles) Bovariesque delusions. Indeed, the time I have spent stressing the extent of Molly's self-justifications for her own adultery has also been spent stressing the degree to which Molly's dissatisfaction with her marriage is nothing new. In the majority of his writings, Joyce is drawn to literary confirmations of the inevitability of betrayal, intense, epiphanic, moments of earth-shattering realization portrayed and read as darkly necessary. But in *Ulysses* he works overtime to ensure that such a description of the Blooms' marital infidelities is impossible and unsustainable. Indeed, as I have suggested with Bloom, Joyce goes out of his way to deprive us of the various moments of realization he so successfully made use of in *Dubliners* (Gabriel Conroy for example), *Portrait*, and even *Exiles*. This is important, I contend, because of what it says about Joyce's dramatic shift (both a "big" shift and a shift in the nature of his drama), but it is also important for what it says about his treatment of the Blooms' marital problems here. Joyce was always drawn to the structures of things. While in traditional narratives adultery *reveals* the flaws in a marriage (reveals marital bliss to be an illusion), in *Ulysses*, marital dissatisfaction drives suspicion (and false certainty) about adultery (as well as driving adultery itself, of course). Joyce's understanding of the structure of adultery and marriage, the interrelation of its parts, allows him to reorient and redeploy it. So, as far as Molly is concerned, Bloom is an adulterer not because there is some particularly compelling (apparently irrefutable) piece of evidence to the fact, but because their marriage is already, in a sense, adulterated (corrupted, devalued, debased). The metaphorical, figurative adulteration of the marriage that, by generic convention, should have been

uncovered as an epiphanic *result* of literal, sexual adultery is here the *cause* of an assumed adultery (and, of course, *is* the cause of Molly's own actual adultery).

The case of Josie Powell/Breen

We can see this reverse metaphorical equivalence at work in a particularly charged way when Molly entertains the idea that Bloom might “get back in with” Josie Breen (née Powell), the woman from whom Molly effectively “won” Bloom's affections. We have already seen that Molly does have some legitimate reasons to think Bloom has been with other women: his past behaviour with the maid (*U*, 18.61-2; 18.72-5), his general interest in the erotic potential of adulterous activities (*U*, 18.88-103), his secretive letter-writing (*U*, 18.43), and, indeed, Molly's sense that “he couldn't possibly do without it that long” (*U*, 18.75). But while these possible infidelities offer general, unspecified challenges to Molly as wife and lover, the case of Josie Breen is quite different. Sex with a prostitute manifests itself more or less as a kind of general affront; it is disrespectful to Molly and the monogamous commitment encoded in the marriage contract, hurtful to her sense of sexual attractiveness, dishonest, underhanded, and generally unpleasant. But, barring what it says about her capacity to sexually satisfy her husband,²⁷⁸ Bloom visiting a prostitute signifies relatively little. I am certainly not suggesting that a husband visiting a prostitute is meaningless or of minor interest to his wife. Indeed, when Joyce, in a moment of bravado, admitted to Nora that he had visited a (perhaps several) prostitute(s) on one of his trips to Dublin, it initiated a short, but apparently explosive, crisis in their relationship. Joyce's apparently genuine surprise at Nora's reaction may indicate how lost he could be at this time in his own anti-marriage, anti-bourgeois, freedom-fetishizing theorizations. But coming through the other side of this affair strengthened their relationship, opening up the possibilities of sadomasochistic erotic play, spurring a new round of Joycean spiritual epistolary poetics, offering Joyce a necessary, corrective perspective—ideas have no consequence, actions do; his theoretical striving for absolute, unfettered freedom was theoretically sound but practically far too difficult and self-destructive to be worth the

²⁷⁸ Molly dulls this point slightly by referring over and over again to the incorrigible sexual appetite of men in general. If all men, by their nature, seek, even require, sex outside of marriage, then Molly's inability to “satisfy” Bloom is not a failure.

effort. I doubt, then, that Joyce's aim here is to proselytize for the freedom of husbands to visit prostitutes or advising wives simply to ignore such activity.²⁷⁹ But what he is doing in *Ulysses*—and what this personal event may later have helped him to do—is, if not to rob (adulterous) sex of its power to (over)signify, then at least to properly understand the structural, psychological, and social reasons for this (over)signification.

So, while sex with a prostitute would signify all kinds of things for Molly, Bloom's potential affair with Josie Breen is significant in a far more damaging way. A visit to a prostitute asserts conclusively that the marital relationship is incapable of fully satisfying and containing sexual desire. The husband looks outside the marriage because his desires are not being met quantitatively—his libido simply demands *more* sex than the marriage can or does provide—and/or qualitatively—his fantasies have progressed beyond the point that, for whatever reason, they can safely or satisfactorily be practised in the marital bed. Sex becomes, in a sense, detached from the other “stuff” of marriage, even if in practice this division is almost impossible to maintain. This detachment is of course painful, since marriage specifically, and monogamy generally, is built on the assumption that marriage can and must satisfy *all* desires. As such, it demands that the wife should, as Molly does, experience her husband's visit to a prostitute as a failure; an insufficiency in the marriage is, in these terms, an insufficiency also in the wife. Molly's angry assertions that “I suppose he thinks Im finished out and laid on the shelf” (*U*, 18.1021-22) and “I suppose Im nothing any more” (*U*, 18.1244) are indicative of her awareness of the specific nature of this challenge to her sexual potency and desirability. In this sense, sex maintains its synecdochic power to announce the insufficiency of the marital bond, to declare its adulteration, even as Molly becomes aware of the finer gradations of betrayal available to her. But, while Bloom's supposed visit(s?) to a prostitute announces all of this, this challenge to Molly is largely, perhaps exclusively, as a desirous (or not) body.

²⁷⁹ In a sense, he is doing precisely this, since a husband is “naturally” free to have sex with whomever he likes, but socially bound by contract. The distinction is between natural freedoms and social bonds. One trades some of the former for the security of the latter. The binding intrusiveness of that contract on personal freedoms is built more or less consciously into all social contract theory, but for Joyce it provides an ongoing provocation.

A *love* affair offers a different and more dangerous challenge. If Bloom has gone outside the marriage in search of *love*, then what is there in their marriage that remains exclusive and monogamous, beyond a series of codified economic and property arrangements? Bloom's pursuit of Josie would not only be an implicit acknowledgement of the failure of his marriage with Molly (a statement of insufficiency that is hurtful, but generalized), it would be a symbolic rejection of their entire marriage. For Josie is not just "some little bitch" Bloom's "got in with;" her symbolic potential is not even defined by her position as Molly's friend (her friendship would make it a double betrayal). Josie's signifying power, for Molly, lies in her position as the defeated competitor in the love game that culminated in Molly's marriage to Bloom. Bloom had shown interest in Josie—and Josie in Bloom—and Molly first had to win Bloom's affections from Josie in order to marry him. As such, a relationship between Bloom and Josie represents a great "what if?" an unfulfilled history that was wiped out by Molly's "victory." So, in imagining Bloom rekindling his relationship with Josie, Molly is also imagining him erasing the entirety of their marriage, restoring a neutered history (a love-relationship with Josie) and erasing a mistaken one (his marriage to Molly).

If this reading seems a little too strong (reading too much into too little), bear in mind that Molly has built this fantasy on nothing more than Bloom having mentioned (we presume) that he bumped into Josie earlier that day—Molly attributes Bloom's strange behaviour to his "meeting Josie Powell" (*U*, 18.169). This, combined with her general conviction that Bloom "came somewhere," produced this fantasy of a fantasy, this image of Bloom's desires built in accordance with and speaking to her own anxieties. For all that Molly worries about the "little bitch(es)"—those sexually virile young women willing to use their charms to wheedle money out of Bloom—with whom she cannot reasonably compete (not at least on the grounds of their imagined superiority), Molly's anxieties come to rest on a woman of the same age, who, by Molly's account, is more weathered by time and circumstance than she is herself. So, though she eventually dismisses the possibility that Bloom has returned to Josie—"hed never have the courage with a married woman" (*U*, 18.1253)—her monologue is plagued by its possibility and shaped by the concerns that drive that fantasy. Ultimately, Molly entertains this unconvincing thesis not because it is well-supported by evidence but because it best gives voice to, first, her own conception of her marriage as decayed and, second, her concomitant projections about Bloom's feelings

on the matter. Just as for Bloom, Molly's choice of Boylan as lover is especially damaging because Boylan is so *different* from Bloom (his "bold hand" is an implicit challenge to Bloom's quiet "womanly" gentility), Bloom's possible selection of Josie signifies a particular challenge to Molly that is not easily written off (by reference to the fact that she is "young still" for example [U, 18.1398]).

"You couldn't call him a husband"

I've focused so far mainly on the anxieties and turbulence adultery creates in *Ulysses*, but part of the development from *Exiles* to *Ulysses* is in Joyce's treatment of adultery as potentially generative. As Tanner has made more than clear, the literature of adultery has almost exclusively been concerned with the disruptive power of extra-marital relationships. Marriages *always* break down as a result of adultery, but it is often the case that families, kingdoms, and societies either break down with them, or survive only by enacting the harshest of punishments against the offending parties. While the adult Joyce never showed any sympathy with the kind of social policing implicit in much of this literature, it's clear from *Portrait* and *Exiles* that he was deeply interested in the emotional potential of these moments. The power of a simple sexual act to wreak devastation is, like betrayal more broadly, impossibly seductive to his rhetorical imagination. So, for Stephen to flee Dublin, he must first perform the role of husband/lover under threat from his close friend (Cranly) who must destroy him to attain his bride (E. C.). In *Exiles*, for all its self-conscious intellectualization, the central conviction is that the adulterous act is inherently and seductively powerful. Indeed, it is because Richard perceives infidelity to be a form of devastating betrayal that he goes to otherwise inexplicable lengths to tame and control all the adulterous urges that circulate within his marriage.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce moves away from this more or less po-faced obeisance to the emotive potential of betrayal in order to examine the potentially generative possibilities such moments afford. We have already seen that Bloom's response to Molly's affair deviates from the majority of Joyce's previous writing on betrayal in that he is so passive, so unwilling to define the event as betrayal in the heightened, melodramatic literary formations Joyce favoured. Whereas Stephen and Richard Rowan share complementary conceptions of the structural and historical inevitability of betrayal, Bloom resigns himself to a more extended mourning of the situation that has brought it about. So, while he pines for the world that has, in a sense, been

brought to an end by Molly's act, he is also far more prepared to consider the shape of the new world into which he is entering. He is prepared, further, to consider just how different this new world could and should be.

While King Mark or King Arthur are narratively and socially bound to enact righteous, tragic punishment upon their adulterous wives, the text of "Ithaca" actively foregrounds Bloom's choices, even when these choices appear falsely binary. So, as Bloom finally reaches home in the early hours of the morning, we discover that he does not have his keys. His options are laid out by the catechismal narrator simply: "To enter or not to enter. To knock or not to knock" (*U*, 17.80-83). The obvious allusion to Hamlet has its comic intention, of course, but it also captures the heightened quality of this moment and the episode that follows. Like Hamlet, Bloom is responding to an adulterous situation, a situation of betrayal (for Hamlet, multiple) that drives a moment of intense decision. The preceding events will find their resolution in the acts that follow Bloom's/Hamlet's respective decisions at these moments. As Hamlet stands in solitary thought he is faced with a defining binary—"to be or not to be"—the answer to which—the known indignities of life are preferable to the unknown horrors of death—determines the subsequent gruesome conclusion to the play. He presents himself with two options that are equally violent: to end his own life, or, ultimately, wreak destruction on all those around him. Bloom is presented with slightly different options—there is no talk of suicide, though his thoughts about his father's suicide throughout the day are suggestive²⁸⁰—in that his choices are activity or passivity; Bloom can enter or not enter, knock or not knock. He is not presented with any subtle gradations of action, no range of actions are available, he can simply either act or not act.

On the literal level, Bloom's quandary is whether to wake Molly and be forced to face her before he is mentally prepared to do so. But I think this early moment in the episode is immensely significant in that it lays out the process by which Bloom will deal with and understand his new position as cuckold. For while Hamlet presents himself with and accepts the binary restrictions of his rhetorical formation, Bloom

²⁸⁰ Bloom is clear on the causes for his father's suicide: depression caused by the death of Bloom's mother. By this logic, could Molly's adultery not represent a similar loss with similar consequences? There is no sense in *Ulysses* that Bloom is thinking seriously about taking his own life, but the spectre is certainly raised.

refuses to do so. He does not knock, but nor does he stand still, choosing instead to scale a wall and “enter” through the back door. The reader may smile at the lengths to which Bloom will go to avoid facing his wife (though a heavy dose of sympathy would also be appropriate), but what is perhaps less clear is the significance of this breakthrough in relation to the narrative structure of retribution built into the literature of adultery. Bloom *should* enter the house and *act* (violently, decisively). He *should* be the bearer of the law, righting wrongs and restoring balance. Action and action alone can satisfy the requirements of the form. But Bloom is the “new womanly man” with a “firm full masculine feminine passive active hand” (*U*, 17.289-90) and a “reluctan[ce] to shed human blood even when the end justifies the means” (*U*, 17.293). Joyce forms Bloom to be constitutionally caught between the binary ontological formations that guide such narrative progressions. When presented with a binary option, Bloom finds alternatives, a third way that allows him to navigate between two unsatisfying options.

While in the moment of his decision Bloom is simply seeking to avoid his wife, Joyce’s formation makes clear, I think, the significance of this capacity. Stephen, for instance, would be incapable of doing so. After all, as I’ve argued, Stephen’s departure from Dublin is effectively constructed, however artificially, as fight or flee. Vicki Mahaffey has commented on this tendency in Stephen’s character and in Joyce’s characters more widely: a constitutional inability to navigate creative solutions to apparently binary problems.²⁸¹ In my account so far, I have been thinking through this kind of issue largely in terms of these characters’ (and Joyce’s) commitment to the structural inevitability of betrayal, but I think Mahaffey’s insight picks up on some of the same issues in Joyce’s writing. With these in mind, one can see how revolutionary Bloom is: he refuses to accept the teleological narrative promptings that seek constantly to limit the range of endings available to him. Maud Ellmann has described Joyce recently as both “teleophobic” and “teleophilic,” as constructing narratives that drive powerfully towards conclusions that once they

²⁸¹ Mahaffey uses the example of the “Athy” riddle in *Portrait*. Stephen is unable to see “the other way you could ask it” because for all his (creative) intelligence, he is simply unable to move beyond the binary options he is offered. Vicki Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 58-59.

arrive are clouded in ambiguity.²⁸² But the teleophilia that drives *Portrait* does not drive *Ulysses*. While Stephen's decisions are based in his sense of himself as an artist in the making, Bloom constantly alludes to the literature of adultery without ever quite accepting its narrative conclusions.

Having had the whole day to reach a decision, "Ithaca" represents Bloom's final opportunity to review all available information before re-entering his now adulterated marital bed. The detachment of the catechismal style of the episode is perfectly suited to capturing the mental processes involved in their complexity. So, as Bloom wonders to himself whether it would be better if he simply slipped away that night, never to return, the narrative voice asks progressively more direct questions: "What considerations rendered departure not entirely undesirable?"; "What considerations rendered departure not irrational?"; "What considerations rendered departure desirable?" (*U*, 17.1958-72). Bloom's answers to these questions don't involve Boylan, but rather represent an at times fantastical (examples of desire detached from prosaic reality) but largely cogent, prosaic, and human analysis of the state of his marriage. While Molly's adultery is the unarguable immediate cause of these late night reflections, it is not the sexual act, ultimately, that drives his considerations but the state of a marriage brought home to him by this signifying act. Bloom wonders whether he'd be better off elsewhere because "constant cohabitation [has] impeded mutual toleration of personal defects"; because the first purpose of marriage, production of "offspring," is now "absurd" and anyway "impossible" (i.e. they are unable now to have full, penetrative sex, and if they were able they would not have children); and because the second purpose of marriage, caring for that offspring, is all but completed (Milly is more or less an adult and has moved away). Bloom's thoughts take a more whimsical turn as he imagines the "public advertisement"—"£5 reward, lost, stolen or strayed from his residence 7 Eccles street"—that would follow, but while his vision of himself as a kind of permanent but rootless Odysseus—"Everyman or Noman" (*U*, 17.2008), "Ever would he wander, selfcompelled" (*U*, 17.2013)—is seductively suggestive, its very idealistic impracticality is a marker of the speed with which Bloom moves from "reasons to leave" to "reasons to stay." By moving from realistic considerations to idle fantasy, Bloom also ceases to consider realistic courses of action.

²⁸² In a paper delivered at the 2012 James Joyce Symposium, Dublin.

It's important that the specific nature of Bloom's considerations here are taken into account, but my focus is on the generative possibilities that adulterous betrayal affords Bloom in the novel. Even though the adulterous act is constituted in such a way that it demands its place as the ultimate and overriding signifier, Bloom instead makes use of the question that Molly's adultery raises to evaluate the nature of their marriage on its merits. This means acknowledging its strengths and its faults. For Bloom, this begins simply with his physical fatigue—"the necessity for repose, obviating movement"—and "the anticipation of warmth (human) tempered with coolness (linen), obviating desire and rendering desirable" (*U*, 17.2031-33). The physical realities of a solid, shared bed trump the idealized fantasies of constant rootlessness that would replace them. Following his desire, Bloom moves upstairs entering "with circumspection . . . with solicitude . . . the bed of conception and of birth, of consummation of marriage and of breach of marriage, of sleep and of death" (*U*, 17.2113-21). On entering the bed he observes evidence of its use that day—"New clean bedlinen, additional odours, the presence of a human form, female, hers, the imprint of a human form, male, not his, some crumbs, some flakes of potted meat" (*U*, 17.2123-25)—and smiles to himself (even if only mentally) at the thought that "each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity" (*U*, 17.2127-31). The list that Bloom constructs in this "series" has no easily discernible internal consistency for though it includes some who have had some sort of sexual activity with Molly, it is really just a list of anyone for whom Molly has expressed some interest, anyone who has expressed an interest in Molly, and anyone who *may* in Bloom's estimation be one of these. These are perhaps merely Molly's "suitsors," but if so the suggestion that Boylan is merely the most recent of many suppresses the obvious difference—is Bloom suggesting that these are all the same? But if Bloom truly "defeats" the suitsors, then it is here, in this particularity-denying list, that he achieves the kind of superiority that he requires. The sexual act is made (relatively) meaningless, the marital demand for sexual virginity and purity is concomitantly denuded of its power as it is rendered a fiction, and, importantly, the "spiritual virginity" that Joyce studies so powerfully in "The Dead"—and perhaps more consciously in *Exiles*—is seen as equally absurd.

These realizations are perhaps pessimistic as much as they are realistic, but the tone continues to develop towards “equanimity” as the narrative voice interrogates Bloom’s feelings about Boylan. Bloom feels “envy, jealousy, abnegation, equanimity,” which breaks down to “more abnegation than jealousy, less envy than equanimity.” Bloom reasons further (and once again) against the pre-eminence of sex, asserting world-wide “animality,” “the frangibility of the hymen: the presupposed intangibility of the thing in itself” and concluding, finally and with “equanimity,” that the adulterous act is:

not so calamitous as a cataclysmic annihilation of the planet in consequence of a collision with a dark sun. As less reprehensible than theft, highway robbery, cruelty to children and animals, obtaining money under false pretences, forgery, embezzlement, misappropriation of public money, betrayal of public trust, malingering, mayhem, corruption of minors, criminal libel, blackmail, contempt of court, arson, treason, felony, mutiny on the high seas, trespass, burglary, jailbreaking, practice of unnatural vice, desertion from armed forces in the field, perjury, poaching, usury, intelligence with the king's enemies, impersonation, criminal assault, manslaughter, wilful and premeditated murder. . . . As more than inevitable, irreparable.
(*U*, 17.2180-94)

And with this reduction of sex to its animal physicality comes the activation of Bloom’s own sexual potency within an “approximate erection . . . a tentative revelation” the “visible [sign] of his antesatisfaction,” which gives way to the satisfaction of a resounding kiss on the “plump mellow yellow smellow melons of [Molly’s] rump, on each plump melonous hemisphere, in their mellow yellow furrow, with obscure prolonged provocative melonsmellonous osculation.” This reactivation of Bloom’s erotic connection with Molly is the sign of the wider acceptance he has achieved.

Coda

I began this thesis by claiming that betrayal had been for too many years the great *donnée* of Joycean criticism. The greatest shame of this state of affairs is that for Joyce betrayal was never allowed to ossify into too predictable, too repeatable a performance of already decided and already rehearsed narratives. He returned to it time and time (and time) again, not out of a pathological need to satisfy some personal demon; not because he lacked the sense, imagination, or energy to find another subject of for his art; he returned to betrayal because every time he did he found some new avenue to explore, some new structural dynamic with which to punish his characters. Betrayal was not separated from Joyce's other concerns and themes, but layered into the general weave of his works. By constructing and maintaining a static view of Joycean betrayal, criticism has for too many years deprived it of its capacity to surprise, beguile, and reveal.

In this thesis I have tried to restore a sense of narrative progression to Joyce's investigations into betrayal and, therefore, emphasize the degree to which Joycean betrayal was always shifting and changing. I am under no illusions that I have offered a full account of the many ways betrayal features in Joyce's writings. I hope, however, that I have provided a clearer vision of the ways that Joyce narrated with and through betrayal, the ways he exploited its logical simplicity and its (melo)drama, and the ways he reframed human relationships as a problem that could not be fully expressed without reference to betrayal. I hope, moreover, that the picture of Joyce I have given is of a conscious artist in control of the theme that he made most his own. Rather than the victim of an obsession that proved to be generative, Joyce took betrayal to its limits and made it play his tune.

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