Joyce on National Deliverance.
The View from 1907 Trieste

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Trieste is waking rawly: raw sunlight over its huddled brown-tiled roofs, testudoform; a multitude of prostrate bugs await a national deliverance. (GJ 8)

In 1907 Trieste Joyce accepted two invitations to publicly expound on Ireland. The first came from one of his better-known students, Roberto Prezioso, who asked him to write for Il Piccolo della Sera. As Ellmann put it, perhaps slightly over-reading Prezioso’s intentions, the Italian editor of Il Piccolo della Sera wanted Joyce “to do a series of articles on the evils of empire as found in Ireland. The Piccolo’s readers could be depended upon to see the parallel with the evils of empire as found in Trieste” (Ellmann 255). Joyce must have been pleased to be asked to write leading articles in the space so often occupied by two of his favourite Italians, Arturo Labriola and Guglielmo Ferrero, and to be guaranteed front-page exposure in the midst of an important election campaign being fought on issues of Irredentism and Socialism. The second invitation was from Attilio Tamaro, who asked Joyce to give three public lectures on matters Irish at the Università Popolare of which he was secretary! Both invitations appear to have been at least partially stage-managed by Alessandro Francini Bruni in an attempt to get Joyce back on his feet in Trieste after his disastrous spell in Rome.

In making the history of the Irish struggle against England a dominant feature of his articles and lectures, Joyce cannot but have been aware of the parallels between Ireland and Trieste – both having known centuries of colonial rule at the hands of the British and Austro-Hungarian
empires respectively. Furthermore, in giving such a negative depiction of
the Catholic Church’s role in Ireland, Joyce may also have been aware that
the Church had also played a powerful role in Trieste’s fate as it was such
a staunch supporter of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire that Triestine
Irredentists referred to that empire as “Il Santo Impero Romano” and
“L’Impero Vaticanasco”. If Joyce was not initially conscious of these
parallels, Tamaro and his fellow Irredentists would not have been long
about filling him in on them.

Declan Kiberd has commented that “Ireland did not have a good past
so it invented a better one”\(^2\), and if the same was true for Trieste, as it was,
then the foremost architect of its history was Tamaro. He and his fellow
Irredentist propagandists offered a falsified history which they justified as
a means to their end of being united with Italy. Theirs was a history in
black and white which was hard to refute because Trieste itself had so lit-
tle written history to counter it:

The liberal Nationalist party, through its publicists, through a conscious and
methodical falsification of the history of Trieste, completely annulled the city’s
history, identifying it with that of the “Italian nation”. The Liberal nationalists
tended to reconstruct the Unity of Trieste through the cancellation and the elimin-
ation of the “other”. (Negrelli 291)

Like the Irish nationalists, the Irredentists often turned a blind eye to
the complexities of the past in order to present a mythical vision of it
which they hoped to recreate in the future. In Trieste, as in Ireland, history
was not only a “nightmare”, but one which was used to trigger reaction in
the present and was presented as a closed narrative with a foregone con-
clusion. In Ulysses Joyce would later hold up to scrutiny this type of
history and would stress the importance of the present day – Bloomsday
1904 – and of the individual on that particular day – Leopold Bloom – out-
cast because he did not have all the cards necessary to be considered part
of the cause and reminiscent of Italo Svevo, forgotten in Trieste because
his texts were not Italian enough to be useful to the Irredentist cultural pro-
paganda of that town.

For this reason Trieste contributed to Joyce’s sense of history by pro-
viding another teleological master-narrative similar to that promoted by
Irish nationalism. Trieste’s visionary history trapped people, bound the
Triestines to one outlook and excluded everything which challenged it. In Trieste, as in Ireland, history was an obsession:

Another typically recurring position was a historiographical hyper-awareness ... Triestine intellectuals ... because of the thinness of the history at their shoulders, being too closely linked to it and having too much faith in it – often show themselves to be lacking in elegance and freedom with regard to their past. Nietzsche’s famous pages on contemporary man being overcome, overwhelmed by historical memory and by a historicity which stops him from freeing himself from the past, apply well to this city and to this intellectual group without a history. The fact that history is, in the case of Trieste, so poor and short, makes the reflection on that same past, the compulsion to wear the masks of the past, to use the Nietzschean terminology, all the more intense and obsessive. (Magris 402)

In Trieste Joyce could sense this obsession with the past which was eating away at the cosmopolitan heart of the city in favour of an all-Italian, ultra-Italian future. Joyce would never accept this use of history in Trieste having already rejected similar versions of it in Ireland.

But before looking at Joyce’s version of Irish history, it is worthwhile to look at Tamaro’s version of Trieste’s. Joyce may well have found inspiration for the “Cyclops” episode of Ulysses in Tamaro’s biased Italy’s Great War and Her National Aspirations (1917). The second chapter, entitled “Italian Martyrology in the Unredeemed Provinces since 1866”, was especially hyperbolic:

None of the numerous peoples of which the Austro-Hungarian Empire is composed has been harassed and martyred more than the Italians. ... The aim was to destroy them. ... In this way Austria-Hungary hoped ... to change those lands which were Italian by origin, by history, by tradition, by civilization, by language, by geographic laws, into German and Slav lands. (Tamaro 37)

He went on to complain about:

the notorious decrees of Hohenlohe against the Italianism of Trieste, the brutal contempt for Italian national sentiment, the deliberate and systematic destruction of the Italian race within the confines of the Empire. The calvary of Italianism in the unredeemed lands is known to all the civilized world ... (Tamaro 40)
Giulio Caprin expressed things similarly in his *Trieste e l'Italia* (1915) which Joyce kept in his Trieste library: “In this way, (Austria) thought of reaching its goal. To destroy Trieste’s Italianity without, naturally, destroying Trieste: to do it in a such a way that the city’s nationalism would die, but that the city would live, prosper and flower as a city of the Empire for the Empire, that the Italian would die and be reborn Austrian. A difficult miracle even for the apostolic violence of Austria” (Caprin 11).

Joyce later sprinkled echoes of this one-dimensional, exaggerated treatment of the themes of martyrdom, dispossession and colonizaton in the thoughts of the Citizen.

— We’ll put force against force, says the citizen. We have our greater Ireland beyond the sea. They were driven out of house and home in the black ‘47. Their mudcabin and their shielings by the roadside were laid low by the batteringram and the Times rubbed its hands and told the whitelivered Saxon that there would soon be as few Irish in Ireland as redskins in America. *(U 12. 1364-1369)*

Ironically, from an Irish point of view, to make his case stronger, Tamaro quotes from the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston’s condemnation of Austria: “Austrian atrocities in Galicia, in Italy, in Hungary, in Transylvania are only to be equalled by the proceedings of the negro race in Africa [...] The Austrian Government knows no method of administration but what consists in flogging, imprisoning, and shooting [...] The Austrians know no argument but force...” (Tamaro 41). The Citizen accuses the British of enforcing their rule with similar methods when he talks of “a young lad brought out, howling for his ma, and they tie him down on a buttend of a gun. [...] Then he was telling us the master at arms comes along with a long cane and he draws out and he flogs the bloody backside off of the poor lad till he yells meila murder”. *(U 12. 1335-1337)*

Tamaro wrote *Italy’s Great War* during the War, which he spent, like Joyce, in Zurich. If it sketched the broad parameters of his approach, his earlier and more important book, *L’Adriatico – Golfo d’Italia. L’italianità di Trieste* (1915) rooted his beliefs more firmly. In that book he described Trieste’s fate in almost biblical terms, writing that “The dedication to Austria in 1382 is the original sin of Triestine history” (135). He read the history of Trieste as a continuing struggle against the Austrians to put right this fatal error, this monstrous betrayal which the city fathers had com-
mitted. In the lecture Joyce delivered for Tamaro, “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages”, Joyce sees Ireland’s past in a similar light. At the origin of both colonies lay the sullied hand of a betrayer. As Emer Nolan has written: “He (Joyce) insists that the Anglo-Norman invasion (the originary ‘English’ occupation of Ireland, in nationalist mythography) was instigated by an Irish King, and that the Act of Union was legislated by an Irish parliament” (Nolan 129). Just as Trieste had condemned itself through its dedication to Austria, so too had Ireland through its initial invitation to an English King and its later abolition of the Irish parliament.

According to Tamaro in *L’Adriatico – Golfo d’Italia*, the development of Trieste as an emporium and the subsequent arrival of foreigners threatened the Italian identity of the city, especially in the nineteenth century. He was particularly upset by what he considered the tyrannous Austrian policy of encouraging Slavs to move to Trieste and summarily dismissed the Slav civilization:

It remains to be noted that the Slavs who immigrated into Julian Venetia have not succeeded in forming even an elementary civilization of their own ... they have no civilization as they have no history. On the other hand the Italians of the Julian Region may pride themselves on a most noble history, both as regards their splendid municipal record and their contribution of soldiers, statesmen, artists and scientists to the greatness of Venice and Italy. [...] There is only one type of civilization in Julian Venetia, namely the Italian, which holds exclusive and glorious sway. (109-110)

A clear if rather ironic echo of these words and sentiments is to be found in the Citizen’s remarks in “Cyclops”:

– Their syphilisation, you mean, says the citizen. To hell with them! The curse of a goodfornothing God light sideways on the bloody thicklugged sons of whores’ gets! No music and no art and no literature worthy of the name. Any civilisation they have they stole from us. Tongue-tied sons of bastards’ ghosts. (*U* 12. 1197-1201)

While the Slavs in Trieste were written off as being without culture, Tamaro recognised that the Austrians were less easily dismissed:

The hatred against the Germans is deep-rooted and of ancient date in Julian Venetia,
and acquired more strength and bitterness where they sought to establish their rule by barbarous violence, namely in Trieste. The town, which was taken by the Austrians in 1382 by means of an ably devised stratagem, vainly attempted to rebel in 1384; there was another uprising in 1468, but the results were disastrous. (103)

By the time Joyce had settled in the city, this tug-of-war between Italy and Austria was reaching its climax. Rarely was an occasion lost by the Irredentists to stir up pro-Italian sentiment. They controlled an astonishing array of cultural, sporting, and political associations each of which did its bit to keep the Italian sentiment strong. Where did Joyce stand in the middle of all this? By and large, where he always stood, in the middle, without adopting an easily definable stance, happy to teach a wide range of students from both groups. Part of him must have sympathized with the Irredentist urge, but on the other hand he was less than convinced that Trieste would be better off under Italy than it was under Austria, whose political will had made it prosper.

The tax collector’s an imbecile who’s always bothering me. [...] The purse-snatcher is the government of Vienna, and maybe tomorrow will be the government of Rome; but Vienna, Rome, or London, for me all governments are the same – pirates. (Ellmann 216)

By the time Herbert Gorman came to write his biography he could quote Joyce’s affectionate remarks about “old Auster and Hungrig” (FW 467. 27-28):

I cannot begin to give you the flavour of the old Austrian Empire. It was a ramshackle affair but it was charming, gay, and I experienced more kindnesses in Trieste than ever before or since in my life. ...Times past cannot return but I wish they were back. (Gorman 143)

Apart from the nostalgia for the gentler world that was pre-war Europe, there is a sense that even early on, Joyce felt that the end was near for the Austrian Empire which was, when compared to its British equivalent, indeed ramshackle. The references to the Austrian Empire in Ulysses give substance to this thesis and show that Joyce, from a relatively early date, was doubtful that this fragile empire would survive. But Joyce was
also well aware of the negative side of the Austrian authorities, and places a clear image of the brutal side of Austrian rule in “Ithaca” when Bloom thinks of Milly’s “blond ancestry” and links it to “a violation, Herr Hauptmann Hainau, Austrian army, proximate, a hallucination, lieutenant Mulvey, British navy” (U 17. 868-870)⁴, thus providing another Austrian-British parallel. Several scholars have linked this reference to the blond “Hauptmann Julius von Haynau” (1786-1853)⁵ – a notoriously violent Austrian general. Joyce probably found out about Haynau from the Irredentists as he was one of their chief hate-figures. He would have had to look no further than Tamaro’s history, in which the author quoted Haynau as saying:

I employed the extreme arguments of war, giving orders that no more prisoners should be taken, that all combatants found with arms in their hands should be slaughtered, and that all houses from which resistance was offered should be burned and razed to the ground. (334)

By the turn of the century, Austria’s methods had become less bloodthirsty and with hindsight may even seem somewhat feeble when compared to the propaganda machine that worked against them in Trieste. Il Piccolo, which at the time sold over 100,000 copies per issue, was the public face of that machine and played a vital role in keeping the city Italian. As a result it was involved in constant battles with the Austrian authorities, as Tamaro reports:

The press was treated worse than any other: indeed it was the most powerful enemy of the government whose reaction was justified, but the fight carried out by the press was superb. These were the years of the rich Piccolo (edited with witty and subtle diplomatic art by Roberto Prezioso), of the poor Indipendente which represented, on their own, the aim of the vast majority of the people. Being incapable of understanding the simple truth of the national phenomenon, the Austrian government blamed the newspapers for the hostility of the citizens, and so it happened that in a report of the Austrian government in Trieste, it was said that between Trieste and Austria there was only one obstacle: Il Piccolo. The more the government denied the freedom of the press the more the public held the press dear. (L’Adriatico, 449)

It should be remembered that Joyce wrote not for Il Piccolo but for
the less important *Il Piccolo della Sera*, which could also boast a long history of success, dating from 1886, but which had a less openly political agenda. Carrying less local news, it kept its readers up to date on events in Italy, included reports on international politics, fashion, culture, gossip, serialised versions of popular novels, and cartoons. *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. A couple of articles printed around the time of Joyce’s serve as examples of the kind of press Ireland received in *Il Piccolo della Sera*.

On 11 May 1907, in an article entitled “A Half Measure for Ireland”, a columnist called Fabian wrote about the Home Rule bill as “the least satisfying from the liberal point of view”. He criticised it for conceding too little to Ireland, and allowed ample space to John Redmond’s views: “The history of the British government in Ireland has been, for the last hundred years, a history of famine, misery, insurrection and depopulation. But even if it had been good rather than bad and if it had brought about material progress for Ireland, the nationalists would continue to be equally dissatisfied, because they believe that not even a good government is better than an autonomous government”. In another article on 28 May, the British government was chided about “the Irish question which has come back to haunt them (when was it ever dealt with in depth?)” On the same day the paper wrote of the tense situation in Ireland and pointed out that Irish indignation at the Home Rule Bill had caused the British to withdraw it.

In giving Ireland prominent coverage *Il Piccolo della Sera* was also serving its own needs by drawing regular attention to a situation which paralleled Trieste’s. Again an unwanted foreign empire was exposed for its neglect of a subject people. So, in accepting the invitation to write for *Il Piccolo della Sera*, Joyce was also accepting the risk of being seen to conform to a political agenda, and indeed his socialist friends were said to be dismayed when he accepted this opportunity. But *Il Piccolo della Sera*’s agenda was also partly his own: for all her faults, much of the blame for Ireland’s predicament lay at Britain’s door. In a sense his articles can be read as an attempt to set the record straight, to explain his country to the Triestines, and by so doing, by criticising another foreign
Empire and the Catholic church, what harm that he was lending a hand to
the newspaper’s cause? In a letter to Stanislaus from Rome, in partial sup-
port of Griffith’s programme, Joyce had written:

A great deal of his programme perhaps is absurd but at least it tries to inaugurate
some commercial life for Ireland and to tell you the truth once or twice in Trieste
I felt myself humiliated when I heard the little Galatti girl sneering at my impover-
ished country. (Letters II, 167)

Practically everywhere he looked Joyce would have read of Ireland
as a place of poverty, famine and insurrection, “a country”, as he put it in
“Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages”, “destined to be the everlasting cari-
cature of the serious world” (CW 167) and so he aimed at introducing his
Triestine readership to the art, literature and mystery of his country as well
as to the tragedy of its politics.

The fact that Joyce wrote a couple of articles in such a politically
important newspaper about Ireland’s situation should not necessarily lead
one to believe (as some critics would have us believe) that Joyce’s writ-
ing are written from the point of view of a nationalist, a republican, “a colonial subject of an oppressive empire” (Cheng, blurb), a colonized vic-
tim of the evils of empire, of the European empires. Using selective
decontextualised quotations from Joyce’s articles in Il Piccolo della Sera,
Declan Kiberd asserts that “Joyce has too often been portrayed as a
cosmopolitan humanist with an aversion to militant Irish nationalism”
(Kiberd 335) thus implying that Joyce, far from being averse to militant
Irish nationalism, was actually fond of it. As we shall see, a detailed read-
ing of the articles contradicts this view. It should also be clearly underli-
ned that neither Il Piccolo nor Il Piccolo della Sera ever advocated physi-
cal force against the Austrians but proposed instead a methodical building up
of Irredentist sentiment that would render the city, de facto, Italian. So
Joyce’s mere association with this newspaper does not reinforce any
claims that see him in favour of the physical force theories. Further select-
ive quotations are taken by other critics in an attempt to use the articles
as an ideological basis upon which to read or reduce Ulysses to being a
“text of Irish independence” (Duffy 18), “a representation of the dis-
courses and regimes of colonial power being attacked by counterhegemonic
strategies that were either modelled on the oppressor’s discourses or were
only beginning to be enunciated in other forms” (21). Stanislaus’s comment in My Brother’s Keeper about Joyce’s writing for the Daily Express should be read as a salutary reminder of Joyce’s independence:

Through Lady Gregory’s influence Jim obtained a promise from E.V. Longworth of the Daily Express of books to review for the paper’s literary page. [...] The Daily Express was conservative and pro-English, but my brother gave no thought to the politics of the newspaper, because knowing himself he knew that he would never alter a comma in what he wanted to say either to suit the editor’s views or flatter his patroness. (191) [my emphasis].

There is no reason to suggest that Joyce had become any more flexible by 1907, even by that early age he was already a national rather than a nationalist writer, struggling to come to terms with “the problem of my race” by using “all the means of an elastic art to delineate it” (Letters I, 118). In writing for Il Piccolo della Sera and in paralleling the Irish and the Triestine situations he was drawing connections between Ireland and another Western European reality with which it had much in common. Surely this European dimension in Joyce’s journalism (but also in his creative writings) is being overlooked at the moment in the fashionable eagerness to present the Irish historical background in Third World terms. Problems of race are not exclusively the property of post-colonial writers nor are they always a question of periphery versus centre. In the most European of cities, Trieste, (both centre and periphery), these were very live issues – not only seen in colonial terms but in terms of a clash between three competing cultures, the Italian, Slav, and German, or, to put it in Guglielmo Ferrero’s terms, between old and young Europe. For this reason, Trieste was the ideal location for Joyce to go about what Richard Kearney has described as his aim to “blend a fidelity to his local origins with a counter-fidelity to the culture of the continent” (Kearney 116) and his journalism is a first step in this direction.

Joyce chose “the turbid drama of Fenianism” as the topic for his first article (22 March 1907) in Il Piccolo della Sera, using the recent death of John O’Leary as the focus for his comments. Stanislaus Joyce remembers the circumstances of the article in his Triestine diary:

Jim was waiting for me in the Viola. He had had a long conversation with P
(Prezioso), and while talking about the ignorance that existed about Ireland on the continent, Jim had taken up that evening’s issue of the Piccolo della Sera and pointed out that even in the report of John O’Leary’s death, his name had been mutilated as almost to be unrecognisable, and P had asked him to write an article for him on Fenianism.

In his article Joyce points to two Irish struggles: the first, that “of the Irish nation against the English government”; the second, “no less bitter, between the moderate patriots and the so-called party of physical force” (188). He then notes that any concessions from the English are “granted unwillingly” or “at the point of a bayonet” (188). Yet he is critical of the advocates of physical force who “preach the dogma of separatism” but know “that in view of England’s power armed revolt has now become an impossible dream” (189). Although he criticises the doomed “foolish” uprisings like Robert Emmet’s, he does not criticise violence per se. He supports the Fenianism of ’67 because it was a well-organised country-wide organisation which had a chance of success. The tragedy of it was that an informer betrayed the cause. Joyce terms subsequent violent actions as “crimes” even if he admits that they often managed to provoke some kind of legislative provision for Ireland.

Although by now, Joyce’s interest in socialism had waned, he still depicted these political happenings almost as a side-show to Ireland’s ongoing tragedy of poverty, starvation and death. He took issue with the nationalists of various shades, whom he saw as having little interest in building the nation, improving the lot of the people. “As a backdrop to this sad comedy is the spectacle of a population which diminishes year by year with mathematical regularity, of the uninterrupted emigration to the United States or Europe of Irishmen for whom the economic and intellectual conditions of their native land are unbearable” (190). Joyce counts himself among the emigrants and condemns Ireland for this and for fulfilling “what has hitherto been considered an impossible task – serving God and Mammon, letting herself be milked by England and yet increasing Peter’s pence”.

What is the answer? Joyce does not suggest one but does say that “it is impossible for a desperate and bloody doctrine like Fenianism to continue its existence” (191). At the same time he is sceptical about whether the Irish representatives in Westminster will deliver any substantial results.
Having dismissed these two possibilities, Joyce outlines Sinn Fein’s programme and concludes that “this last phase of Fenianism is perhaps the most formidable”. In the final part of the article, he might have endorsed Sinn Fein openly, or made some kind of prediction, but instead he returns to the haunting figure of O’Leary, “from a world which had disappeared”, and so the articles finishes, completing a characteristic Joycean circle which has surveyed the Irish situation and admitted its complexity, without showing a way out.

In his second article, “Home Rule Comes of Age” (19 May 1907) Joyce surveys a century of Anglo-Irish relations and the awful disappointments offered by history. His style is low-key, deflatory and totally in contrast to the kind of tone that might have been adopted by the Italian cultural nationalists or by their Irish counterparts such as D. P. Moran and company. No matter how great Joyce’s fascination with the Irish situation, the piece shows that he neither had faith in, nor wished to serve, the Irish cause. So what is offered is an entry into the inconclusive “nightmare” of Irish history. Joyce, the journalist/artist, consciously sticks his pen into the spokes of history, into the standard temporal trajectory of most nationalist historical narratives. He leaves the reader under no illusion about his doubts that the future is going to bring what the past has so long promised but failed to deliver and provides a succinct survey of the present situation in his native land, giving a clear if harsh image of the Irish. He takes advantage of the fact that he can provide an insider’s view (an anecdotal, involved and personalised reportage that readers would not have found in the international dispatches), yet not be judged for it by the insiders themselves.

The article begins by evoking the promise of an historic moment – 1886 – when Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill, and explains the devastating shock felt in the aftermath of this moment of hope, a disappointment, a betrayal which reached its lowest point in “the moral assassination of Parnell” and was prolonged for a further twenty-one years of procrastination over the same Home Rule Bill. Joyce expresses his outrage at the deceit of the English liberals whose 1907 Bill, he maintains, is no better than that offered by “the imperialist Chamberlain” (194). But not even this watered-down Bill will be passed by the Lords and so Ireland will have to continue waiting. Joyce also turns his ire on the Catholic Church (“the priests and the priests’ pawns” who “broke Parnell’s heart
and hounded him into the grave" [P 133]), whose excesses he had recently
seen at close quarters in Rome. But more than anything Joyce sees the
Irish as victims of themselves, divided against one another, serving two
masters, God and Mammon. Worse again are the Irish political leaders,
who talk and agitate but manage little more than to line their own pockets.
Joyce had already written about this “degradation of politics to merely
pathetic gesturing or ineffectual manoeuvring” (Melchiori 38) in “Ivy
Day in the Committee Room”, which he wrote in 1905 in Trieste.

Joyce’s third article, “Ireland at the Bar” (16 September 1907), was
the strongest piece yet on what he termed the “snarled” Irish question.
Once more, Joyce was trying to make Ireland’s case in Europe and this
time “the title positions Joyce himself as a certain kind of advocate, a
legalist rather than a propagandist” (Valente 46). The article begins by
describing the trial of a poor old man, Myles Joyce, for the Maamtrasna
murders. Myles Joyce was a native Irish speaker with absolutely no know-
ledge of English. Despite this, the trial was carried out in English and
although he was patently innocent, he did not have the language to defend
himself and was condemned to be hanged. Joyce recreates the court scene
carefully and emotively and means for his readers to see the story as a
metaphor for the relationship between England and Ireland. If any guilt is
to be attributed, it is to English justice, or rather the lack of it. England has
utterly failed (and never really tried) to understand Ireland properly, yet it
continues to brutally condemn it.

The figure of this dumbfounded old man, a remnant of a civilization not ours, deaf
and dumb before his judge, is a symbol of the Irish nation at the bar of public opin-
on. (CW 197)

Joseph Valente summed up Joyce’s methods up succinctly when he wrote:

“Ireland at the Bar” works an analogy between the plight of a Gaelic tribal patri-
arch, Myles Joyce, on trial in a British court of law and the place of Ireland itself
making its case for nationhood in the court of European public opinion. The
emphasis on justice in this essay is particularly significant because, unlike other
rhetorical dominants he might have selected, it allows Joyce to explore not only
the patent abuses of English law in the Myles Joyce trial, but also the hidden com-
plexities of the Irish themselves in the affair. (Valente 46)
Public opinion in Europe was largely controlled by the English journalists and Ireland could not make her voice heard in the world except through their biased filter. Through them Ireland was as poorly represented as Myles Joyce. Joyce complained that there was no talk of Ireland “except when uprisings break out, like those which made the telegraph hop these last few days” (198).

Joyce would have seen several articles in Il Piccolo della Sera in August and September on the Belfast riots and the agrarian violence which would have given him reason to be unhappy with how Ireland was reported. A look at just one proves his point; on 6 August 1907, Il Piccolo della Sera published an article entitled “Ireland in Ferment – the Police Strike”:

... Above all we have a serious re-emergence of agrarian violence in the west. The moonlighters go about at night under the light of the moon committing all sorts of acts of vandalism in the pastures, hunting and driving the beasts off in all directions. [...] The members of the Land league organise groups which, armed with shotguns, sticks and knives, either go about intimidating anyone who rents the pastures; or go around the country knocking down sheds, setting fire to hay barns, cutting down trees and letting the stock loose.

Reading pieces like this, Joyce had ample reason to write that “Skimming over the dispatches from London [...] the public conceives of the Irish as Highwaymen with distorted faces, roaming the night with the object of taking the hide of every Unionist” (198).

Joyce identifies two familiar obstacles to progress for Ireland – England and the Church – in this article in which, as he puts it, he aims “to make a modest correction of facts”. He is consciously setting out to counter the British gloss on Irish affairs and quietly chiding Il Piccolo della Sera (and by extension the rest of the European press) for too often giving only the British side of the story. Joyce attempts to point to some of the causes of nationalism, to issues like poverty and starvation and thus he counters Fabian’s all-too-limited perspective: “Twenty-eight years ago, seeing themselves reduced to misery by the brutalities of the large landholders, they refused to pay their land rents and obtained from Gladstone remedies and reforms. Today seeing pastures full of well fed cattle while an eighth of the population lacks means of subsistence, they drive the cattle from the farms” (199). Joyce also seeks to contradict
Fabian’s view (and the stereotype used by the English) of the Irish as a violent race by claiming that “there is less crime in Ireland than in any other country in Europe” (200).

Joyce did not write another article on Ireland for *Il Piccolo della Sera* until 1909. Are we to conclude from this that the first three did not deliver what the paper had been looking for? Because even if Ireland was of limited interest, the paper continued to publish wire reports and leading articles by Fabian on the subject. Would the Triestine Irredentists have approved of what Joyce wrote or could his articles have been read as much as a criticism as an endorsement of their agenda and methods? Ellmann contends that Joyce’s criticism of the Irish diminished the propaganda value of the articles. However Joyce’s declared subject in his article on Fenianism – “the struggle of the Irish Nation against the British Government” – would, by extension, have been read as that of the Triestine “nation” against the Austrian Government. Furthermore, Joyce did make various comments which would have been appreciated by the Liberal-Nationalists as they faced into an election. In focussing on and criticising the endless divisions within the Irish nationalist movement, he was putting the Triestine Irredentists, who for the most part were united into a genuine mass movement, into a good light. Joyce’s condemnation of hopeless acts of physical force could also have been read as an admonition to the more fanatical Irredentist element in Trieste, while his criticism of the Catholic church would have been appreciated by the anti-clerical Irredentists. Finally, the criticisms that Joyce made about the Irish Parliamentary Party as a bunch of bankrupts who lined their own pockets while the country lived in poverty could not be applied to their Triestine counterparts, who had used Irredentism (perhaps cynically, but successfully nonetheless) as a bargaining blank from which to wrest as much for Trieste from Austria as possible.

But it is hard to imagine that Joyce set out to please the Irredentists or the Liberal party, for which he probably had little time. No, Joyce kept to his own agenda. It was firstly a personal one and secondly a national one. His lectures and articles are his response to the hurt he felt at the hands of the aforementioned Galatti girl and also, in a more general sense, his response to what Arthur Griffith was trying to do. Both the aim and the content of the articles confirm once again how close many of Joyce’s positions were to those being expressed by Griffith in the *United Irishman* and
Sinn Féin, which he regularly received in Trieste. Given that Joyce felt that Ireland was at a crossroads when he wrote in 1906: “Either Sinn Féin or Imperialism will conquer the present Ireland” (Letters II, 187), he had to take sides. He found that there were enough elements in Griffith’s policies to allow him to tentatively support Sinn Féin, because “it put its trust in neither priest nor politician” (Manganiello 120). Like Joyce, Griffith was contemptuous of the Irish Party in Westminster, attacked (at least sporadically) the Vatican and wanted to set up an Irish consular service to give voice to Irish feelings, thoughts and aspirations, to explain Ireland to the world. This is what Joyce attempted in Trieste. In writing the articles and giving the lectures Joyce was also setting out to counter the anti-Irish propaganda that made its way into the Italian papers from London.

In his multi-faceted roles of unofficial Irish consul and part-time Irish sales representative (selling a considerable amount of Irish tweed shipped to him by the Dublin Woollen Mills), Joyce was being patriotic on his own terms. A letter from Charles Joyce to Stanislaus explains Joyce’s attitude and gives a sense of the importance he placed upon these activities. Jim replied that he was probably the only Irishman who wrote leading articles for the Italian press and that all his articles in Il Piccolo were about Ireland and the Irish people. He said that he was the first to introduce Irish tweeds into Austria although that business was not in the least in his own line. (Letters II, 316)

Joyce’s lectures in the Università Popolare can be read as an extension of this constructive nationalism. The title of his first talk was “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” and for the event the Berlitz School closed early on 27 April. His lecture provides a rich survey of Ireland, its history and culture. Firstly Joyce explained why the Irish referred to their country as the island of Saints and Sages. In pointed contrast to the Revival view, he foregrounded the role played by early Irish Catholicism in forming the Irish and by extension the European mind. He described the ancient times “when the island was a true focus of sanctity and intellect, spreading throughout the continent a culture and a vitalizing energy” (154).

Joyce keeps emphasizing that Ireland’s links over these centuries were not with Britain but with Europe and lauds Irishmen like Columbanus for carrying their learning abroad. He gives a vivid picture of ancient Ireland as a centre of learning, “an immense seminary, where
scholars gathered from the different countries of Europe” and describes the Irish as “a civilization that had decayed and almost disappeared before the first Greek historian took his pen in hand” (156).

Having given ample space to this golden age, Joyce enters the darker period of Irish history commenting that “anyone who reads the history of the three centuries that precede the coming of the English must have a strong stomach, because the internecine strife, and the conflicts with the Danes and the Norwegians, the black foreigners and the white foreigners, as they were called, follow each other so continuously and ferociously that they make this entire era a veritable slaughterhouse” (159). But eventually all these invaders were assimilated and even in these troubled times “Ireland had the honour of producing three great heresiarchs: John Duns Scotus, Macarius and Vergilius” (160).

These Irish scholars, who reached out to Europe and left their mark there, were significant for Joyce because, more than any Irish writer before him, he was embarking on a literary adventure that was utterly European. When he came to write Ulysses and Finnegans Wake Joyce would consciously and effectively reconnect Ireland with Europe and attempt to circumvent the narrow English-Irish stalemate which had existed since the English invasion the event which effectively led to Ireland being cut off from Europe. Joyce also charts the rise of “a new Celtic race [...] compounded of the old Celtic stock and the Scandinavian, Anglo-Irish, and Norman races” all of whom “made common cause against the English aggression, with the Protestant inhabitants (who had become Hibernis Hiberniores, more Irish than the Irish themselves)” (161) and presents this amalgam of peoples as “the Irish Race” remembering how an Irish M. P. rebuked a colleague “for being a descendant of a Cromwellian settler. His rebuke provoked a general laugh in the press, for, to tell the truth, to exclude from the present nation all who are descended from foreign families would be impossible and to deny the name of patriot to all those who are not of Irish stock would be to deny it to almost all the heroes of the modern movement” (162). Indeed, Joyce goes further, in an appeal for a tolerance that was as necessary in Trieste as it was in Ireland, by pointing out that Irish civilization “is a vast fabric, in which the most diverse elements are mingled” (165).

Joyce approves that “Ireland prides itself on being faithful body and soul to its national tradition” but chides it for being equally faithful “to the
Holy See” (162). Ireland essentially sold itself out to the Church and to the English as “the English came to Ireland at the repeated requests of a native King. Joyce admits that “a moral separation already exists between the two countries” (163). Although Joyce deplores those who “heap insults on England for her misdeeds”, he provides his strongest condemnation yet of British policy in Ireland linking England with Austria in the process, by pointing out that “her principal preoccupation was to keep the country divided” (166) – in a manner reminiscent of Austria-Hungary’s “Divide et Impera” policy. Having made this connection, his audience would have been pleased to hear him state that:

She was as cruel as she was cunning. Her weapons were, and still are, the battering-ram, the club, and the rope; and if Parnell was a thorn in the English side, it was primarily because when he was a boy in Wicklow he heard stories of the English ferocity from his nurse. A story that he himself told was about a peasant who had broken the penal laws and was seized at the order of a colonel, stripped, bound to a cart, and whipped by the troops. By the colonel’s orders, the whipping was administered on his abdomen in such a way that the miserable man died in atrocious pain, his intestines falling out onto the roadway. (166)

If this is the fate of the Irish in Ireland, Joyce sees more positively the fate of those who leave and notes that the Irishman found outside Ireland, “very often becomes a respected man” (171). Thus the Irish continue to leave a country whose “economic and intellectual conditions ... do not permit the development of individuality” (172) and as a result the country reaps no benefits from its sons, who achieve greatness in all sorts of fields – in foreign armies, as translators and writers. Unable to endorse the Irish revival, Joyce remains pessimistic: “I, at least, will never see that curtain go up, because I will have already gone home on the last train” (174).

He thinks this revival is a false start and is wry about the role of the Anglo-Irish in the revivalist attempt to resurrect a language and a culture they have spent hundreds of years trying to wipe out. Particularly in his second lecture on Mangan, Joyce revealed a position clearly at odds with Yeats’s, as Platt observes, in a slight overstatement of Joyce’s position:

For Yeats the nineteenth century marked the resurgence of a national culture; for Joyce it saw the final destruction of a native Irish culture. Yeats saw himself as the
In this second lecture which, for reasons unknown, he never actually delivered, Joyce termed Mangan “the most significant poet of the modern Celtic world and one of the most inspired singers that ever used the lyric form in any country” (175). Having briefly surveyed Ireland’s literature and stressed its European dimensions, Joyce focussed on Mangan and on the European elements in his poetry: “He knew well the Italian, Spanish, French and German languages and literatures, as well as those of England and Ireland, and it appears that he had some knowledge of oriental languages, probably some Sanskrit and Arabic” (178).

Just as Ireland’s day had not yet come, neither had Mangan’s, and Joyce did not hesitate in blaming his fellow-countrymen for this. “Mangan will be accepted by the Irish as their national poet on the day when the conflict will be decided between my native land and the foreign powers – Anglo-Saxon and Roman Catholic – and a new civilization will arise...” (179). In the meantime Joyce attempted to celebrate the diverse elements in Mangan’s poetry, his recording of injustice and tribulation: “No other poems are full, as those of Mangan, of misfortune nobly suffered, of devastation of soul so irreparable” (184). Ireland has betrayed men like Mangan. “Love of grief, despair, high-sounding threats – these are the great traditions of the race of James Clarence Mangan, and in that impoverished figure, thin and weakened, an hysterical nationalism receives its final justification” (186).

This admonition was as valid for Joyce’s Triestine audience as it was for the Irish, and Joyce’s piece on Mangan in many ways is a summary of his state of mind with regard to Ireland in 1907. He showed a central concern with the issue of justice on both a personal and a national level and seemed to endorse the idea of a moderate constructive nationalism. For Joyce, national deliverance cannot come as a reaction to a foreign power or because of a hatred of it but through an achieved understanding of one’s own race, a unity of purpose and a fundamental desire for justice. By now Joyce no longer saw nationalism as a purely Irish phenomenon and his lecture is another example of his conscious aim of placing Irish nationalism in a European context. In Trieste he would witness the inexorable rise of
an increasingly intolerant nationalism and he was already warning against it in these lectures, as he would later do in the pages of *Ulysses*. Seven more years would pass before he began that work, but already Joyce was combing the Irish historical and cultural landscape for his material and, where it suited him, combing that of Trieste with equal care.

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**Note, Notes, Anmerkungen**

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1. A key Irredentist campaigner, a leading member of the Liberal Nationalist party, a guiding light in the battles for an Italian-language university in Trieste, Tamaro was largely responsible for making the *Università Popolare* one of Trieste’s foremost channels for communicating Irredentist propaganda.

2. These comments were made by Declan Kiberd during a lecture delivered in Rome for AICI – The Italian-Irish Cultural Association on 20 January 1996.

3. Hohenlohe was the Austrian governor in Trieste in Joyce’s time and Joyce taught his children English.

4. Joyce may also have had in mind Luigi Haynau, an Austrian police agent based in Trieste.


6. A photocopy of Stanislaus Joyce Triestine “Book of Days” is kept as part of the Richard Ellmann Collection at the University of Tulsa.
Opere citate, Works Cited

Zitierte Literatur


