## "Cityful Passing Away": Joyce's Version of Mutability Contrasted with Mangan's "The World's Changes"

### **ANNE MACCARTHY**

#### Abstract

James Joyce admired James Clarence Mangan and was familiar with his work. This paper will contrast their attitudes to the passing of time with particular reference to Mangan's translation of Friedrich Rückert's "Chidher" which is entitled "The World's Changes." A similar view of mutability is found in a passage from the "Lestrygonians" episode in *Ulysses*. The possibility that Joyce was influenced by Mangan's poem in writing the latter will be discussed. Finally, the paper will end with a contrast of both writers' treatment of mortality and immortality.

In "Lestrygonians" Bloom's lunch-time meditation leads him to some depressing reflections on the passing of time "Since I fed the birds five minutes. Three hundred kicked the bucket. Other three hundred born, washing the blood off, all are washed in the blood of the lamb, bawling maaaaa" (U 8.480-483). The reference to the Lamb of God, washing away sins with his blood, reminds us that Bloom is the New Messiah as well as being the immortal Ahausuer, the Wandering Jew. The

Messiah was prefigured in the Old Testament by Elijah, the prophet, to whom there are many references throughout *Ulysses*, including in "Lestrygonians." Bloom's cyclical view of time, emphasising the repetition of the same in different (the three hundred dead are replaced by three hundred born) has biblical resonances. So, in this episode, we have Bloom who can be identified with the immortal Messiah/Elijah/Ahasuer, deliberating on the passing of time whilst looking at the busy city life surrounding him. In Friedrich Rückert's "Chidher" and James Clarence Mangan's translation of this poem, "The World's Changes," the same place is visited after a long span of time and the changes it has undergone are described. It is the same place but strikingly different due to the passing of time, thus reminding us of Bloom's reflections in "Lestrygonians":

Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that. Landlord never dies they say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to guit. They buy the place up with gold and still they have all the gold. Swindle in it somewhere. Piled up in cities, worn away age after age. Pyramids in sand. Built on bread and onions. Slaves. Chinese wall. Babylon. Big stones left. Round towers. Rest rubble. ierrybuilt, suburbs. mushroom houses, built of breeze. Shelter for the night.

No one is anything. (U 8.484-493)

The predominant idea here is that nothing stays constant even in the same place. In fact, change becomes more apparent when it occurs there. Richard Ellmann writes that Joyce was "interested in variation and sameness in space, in the cubist

method of establishing differing relations among aspects of a single thing, and he would ask Beckett to do some research for him in the possible permutations of an object." In the passage quoted above, a progression can be detected in the description of mutability from the more tangible appearances of a city, "houses," "bricks" and so on, to a more negative view of urban living in the mention of swindling, of gold piled up but "worn away age after age" to the city of Babylon, the slaves building the Chinese wall, and "sprawling suburbs" or "jerry-built," badly-constructed dwellings, "shelter, for the night." This portrayal of decay leads one to conclude that Joyce consulted both Rückert's "Chidher" and Mangan's translation, especially the last. Mangan adds an extra verse to his translation, not found in the original, in which he also depicts the decadence of modern city life.

According to Ellmann, Joyce owned C. P. Meehan's edition of Mangan's prose and poetry, Essays in Prose and Verse, in which "The World's Changes" is included, although it does not appear in John Mitchel's much better-known edition, Poems of James Clarence Mangan. This does, however, contain six other translations from Rückert. Joyce held onto Meehan's edition for eighteen years as Ellmann's inventory and the signature, "Jas A Joyce 1902," show.<sup>2</sup> Rückert's "Chidher" becomes the "Shadow" in Mangan's version, a Father Time who visits the same spot every thousand years but finds it transformed every time he sees it. Mangan's poem deals with a longer period of time, the "Shadow" revisits the same place every thousand years, instead of every five hundred in Rückert's original. Mangan, in dealing with a longer span of time, emphasises the immensity of time in comparison to humanity's fleeting presence, as does Joyce in the passage I have just quoted from "Lestrygonians." Mangan, as we saw, wrote on original verse for his translation of Rückert's "Chidher." Time is described there as bringing decadence, hopelessness, it is an "insatiable monster" for the Irish poet, as it has been for the Wandering Jew, who has been cursed with living eternally. In this way, Mangan shows his

disbelief in the nineteenth-century view that history is an account of human advances. With the addition of the last verse. the translation becomes a criticism of the ideals of scientific progress so predominant in the work of Macaulay and attacked by Mangan's friend, the revolutionary John Mitchel.<sup>3</sup> So. Rückert's original meditation on the mutability of life and of humans' inability to comprehend the immeasurability of time is transformed, by the translator, into a comment on the present: "A city again,/But peopled by pale mechanical men,/With workhouses filled, and prisons, and marts,/And faces that spake exanimate hearts." These "pale mechanical men" remind us of Bloom who feels "no-one is anything." An improvement in the livelihood of the English has meant starvation and emigration in Ireland, the people become nobodies within the colonial machinery of the Empire, as Mangan writes: "All changes have checquered Mortality's lot;/But this is the darkest for Knowledge and Truth/Are but golden gates to the Temple of Sorrow!"<sup>5</sup> The increase in scientific knowledge in the nineteenth century has not brought improvement but, instead, colonial exploitation to Ireland. In fact, Mangan had already condemned British imperialism in his story, "An Extraordinary Adventure in the Shades," written seven years before, in 1833. The Dublin of Joyce's time, its poverty that Bloom portrays with such vivid detail, were evidence of the same colonial ills brought about by the exploitation that began before Mangan's time and was found in Dublin during the Famine, when this poem was composed.

In the original stanza in Mangan's translation, the "Shadow" is told that the world has not changed in the last thousand years: "What was Life ever but/Conflict and Change?/From the ages of eld/Hath affliction been widening its range." Misery has given humanity the gift of prophecy, as the "Shadow" in Mangan's original stanza is more foresighted than in the preceding ones. However, this knowledge only brings an awareness of corruption as "the beautiful youth/Of the earth" has vanished. Mangan is possibly contemplating

Dublin in the last stanza and Dublin was, of course, both the part of Ireland which both best reflected English influence and also the effects of modernisation. This rejection of the modern, then, is anticipating later twentieth-century attempts to make Ireland a "Godly society" by protecting it from foreign influence. As a matter of fact, one of the "big stones" Bloom mentions are "Round Towers," symbols *par excellence* of an Irish Christian past, the "island of saints and scholars," used to justify Ireland's status as the representative of moral purity in modern times. All that surrounds it, the low-quality buildings of contemporary Dublin, are "rubble." It appears that for Bloom too the Irish Christian past is of more value than progressive modernity.

"The World's Changes" is not simply an English translation of Rückert's poem, but it draws out its relevance to Ireland, introducing a negative view of the passing of time, taken up by Joyce to give a description of a poverty-stricken city, with "Kerwan's mushroom houses, built of breeze," dwelling places for the poor who need "shelter for the night," rather than a home. Even closer to Mangan's description of social injustice is Bloom's meditation on the fact that some will always be rich but others poor: "they buy the place up with gold and still they have all the gold. Swindle in it somewhere," going on to describe the destitution in the city. Who "they" are is not clear but the line certainly echoes Mangan's poignant description of life in colonial Dublin.

In Rückert's "Chidher," and in Mangan's 1840-translation, the limitless power of time is contemplated as is the fact that the space occupied by humans and the buildings they erect there are inevitably transformed throughout the ages. Bloom's gloomy view of time as an anticipation of what follows this episode seems to justify Ellmann's idea that "time and space, once so firm and masterful, begin to crumble, and both continuity and contiguity are repudiated." Bloom wandering through Dublin before lunch mentally recreates the drifting of humanity through time and echoes "Chidher" in Rückert's poem and the equivalent "Shadow" in Mangan's translation,

whose wanderings take them to the same place after a long interval. The main idea in all three works is that human life is nothing in comparison to the immensity of time.

The Gothic "Shadow" is one of Mangan's original contributions to the poem. In a translation of the poem made six years after Mangan's in 1846, the author, Charles T. Brooks, whilst advising us that Rückert's title is "Chidher," retitles it "The Wandering Jew." The mysterious figure who visits the same place every five hundred years thus becomes Ahausuer. Carl Jung, in *Psychology of the Unconscious*, refers to the similarities between both Chidher, who is equivalent to Elijah in Islam, and the Wandering Jew:

Although the stories about Ahasver cannot be traced back any earlier than the thirteenth century, the oral tradition can reach back considerably further, and it is not an impossibility that a bridge to the Orient exists. There is the parallel figure of Chidr, or "al Chadir," the "ever-youthful Chidher" celebrated in song by Rueckert. The legend is purely Islamitic.

He later comments on a passage from Matthew where "Christ stands on the same plane as Elias, without being identified with him, although the people consider him as Elias. The ascension places Christ as identical with Elias." He adds that "there are passable bridges from Christ by way of Elias to Chidher and Ahasuerus." This, for Jung, is due to their immortality. In Chapter Five of the *Psychology of the Unconscious*, he writes that heroes such as Dionysus, Hercules, Christ, etc., "are nearly always wanderers," which is, for him, "a psychologically clear symbolism. The wandering is a representation of longing, of the ever-restless desire, which nowhere finds its object, for, unknown to itself, it seeks the lost mother." At the beginning of this essay I spoke of Bloom being identified with the Messiah/Elijah/Ahasuer. Even though Brooks' translation of

Rückert's "Chidher" as Ahausuer contrasts with the more literal "ever-youthful Chidher," he was not so far off the mark, if we keep Jung's ideas in mind. In a note to the other version of Rückert's "Chidher," Mangan draws attention to both the immortality of "Khidder" or "Chidher" and the fact that he is also known as Elias when he writes the following: "Khidder is, I believe, the prophet Elias, whom the Persians or the Arabs, or both for what I know, believe to revisit the earth from time to time, and journey about in various directions, for the purpose of ascertaining whether mankind have filled up the measure of their sins, or whether the judgment of the world can yet be postponed a little longer." Obviously, the witness of the immensity of time and the profound changes it causes throughout the ages has to be immortal. Bloom, in being identified with the immortal Messiah, Elijah or the Wandering Jew, fulfils this requisite and his contemplation of the ravages of time in Dublin acquires an added reverberation due to this.

Jung's book, The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual was in the Trieste library and Joyce came to know the psychologist when he got in touch with him due to his daughter's illness. Joyce could have come across Jung's equation of Chidher, Elijah and Ahasuer and the reference to Rückert's well-known poem, which would have led him back to Mangan's two translations of Rückert's "Chidher," preferring the one contained in Meehan's edition because it gave a view of time passing which suited his description of Dublin in decay. Joyce, however, also had easy access to Mangan's more faithful translation, "Khidder," published in 1845, in which the narrator is Chidher, as in the original. This poem was reprinted in. D. J. O'Donoghues' Poems of James Clarence Mangan in 1903. It contains urban descriptions reminding us of Joyce's portrayal of Dublin as in "The World's Changes," but the latter focuses attention more closely on the passing of time in its use of the "Shadow," or Father Time, as the figure who passes through the same place every thousand years. In fact, the poem underscores the destruction caused by time. The epigraph in "The World's

Changes" is taken from Disraeli's Contarini Fleming: "Contarini Fleming wrote merely Time." This strongly reminds us of "A DEADHAND (writes on the wall) Bloom is a cod" in "Circe" (U 15.1870-1871). According to Chuto et al.'s notes to "The World's Changes," in Disraeli's novel "several characters are gathered in a house in Jerusalem. Their host suggests that each of them 'should inscribe on a panel of the wall some sentence as a memorial of his sojourn.' The passage ends with Contarini Fleming writing 'Time' on the wall."<sup>14</sup> Weldon Thornton maintains that "deadhand writes on the wall" in *Ulysses* refers to "the handwriting on the wall of Belhazzar's palace in Daniel 5."15 This is an allusion to the following: "Belshazzar held a last great feast at which he saw a hand writing on a wall the following words in Aramaic: 'mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.' The prophet Daniel, interpreting the handwriting on the wall as God's judgment on the king, foretold the imminent destruction of the city," of Babylon; the same city causes Bloom to meditate on how only ruins are left of the world civilisations, "Babylon. Big stones left." It seems from Mangan's poem that the Last Judgement is at hand as a punishment rather than as an act of justice. Time brings destruction to all cities, to all the monuments of man's power on earth. In "Pompeii" (1847), written at the height of the Great Famine, the destruction of the Roman city expresses the terror of the Irish at what was understood as God's punishment. The poet asks if the devastation of "flood, fire, and earthquake" is in vain, asking if they are not reminders of the Last Judgement, "of scenes and images that shall be born/In living, naked might upon the Judgment Morn?" He continues to discuss the fragility of humankind: "when empires, worlds, go down/Time's wave to dissolution — when *they* bow/To Fate, let none ask where, but simply — what wert thou?", thus giving a moral dimension to the usual meditation on the mutability of human life. 18

The destructive effects of the passing of time are emphasised in "The World's Changes" with the same moral

dimension given to a decadent view of the present. However, in Mangan's translation as in the original, the ephemeral, that which humanity thinks is everlasting, does not disappear but simply changes at a rhythm that human beings cannot perceive. If the same place is seen from a larger perspective, time does not annihilate it, or if it does it is to regenerate and to renew it. Joyce had read a lot about a cyclical view of time and Ulysses demonstrates this. Time is not linear, not progressive but moving in changing cycles which repeat themselves. So time does not destroy but constantly renews creation. Existence is repeated again and again, time is a series of beginnings and endings. Change is not destructive but a renewal. A strange illustration of this is that Leopold Bloom is at times seen as Elijah but also as Rip Van Winkle, Washington Irving's character who falls asleep for twenty years and comes back to see the changes in his home, that is to say in a place that has not changed. The similarities to the theme treated by Mangan and Rückert are obvious. A figure outside of time can see the changes that have taken place over thousands of years just as Rip van Winkle returns unrecognized to assimilate those that have occurred in his homeplace after his long sleep of twenty years. In the same way as the personal space of the homeland can lend individuality to the members of the nation, so too personal time, a lifespan, can determine one's particularity. In Washington Irving's story, when Rip returns from his long sleep and sees his son, who is "a precise counterpart of himself," he doubts his "own identity, and whether he was himself or another man." So Rip loses his bearings, loses his sense of self, when he is taken away from the chronological perception of his life and self. So identity is not achieved chronologically but is something volatile and changeable. He can perceive himself only within the limits of his own mortality. Bloom, who has been identified with immortal individuals, such as the Wandering Jew, Elijah or Christ, takes on the identity of Rip van Winkle in the Circe episode. If not immortal, Rip has a perspective on things beyond the limits of his lifespan:

BELLO: (Ruthlessly) No. Leopold Bloom, all is changed by woman's will since you slept horizontal in Sleepy Hollow your night of twenty years. Return and see. (Old Sleepy Hollow calls over the world) **SLEEPY** HOLLOW: Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle! BLOOM: (In tattered moccasins with a rusty fingertipping. fowlingpiece. tiptoeing. haggard bony bearded face peering through the diamond panes, cries out) I see her! It's she! The first night at Mat Dillon's! But that dress, the green! And her hair is dyed gold and he [...] (*U* 15.3153-3163).

Bello tells Bloom that it is Milly, not, as he thinks, Molly, that he sees and when Milly sees him she cries out "how old you've grown!" in the style of Irving's tale (U 15.3171). So he is disorientated like Rip Van Winkle on seeing his son after twenty years. The changes that Bloom undergoes in the Circe episode produce a feeling of anguish, he is altered but continues with the same anxieties. He changes but stays the same, but chronological time disappears for him in "Circe." The worries and obsessions about his daughter are because his memory haunts him, he suffers spiritual sickness, in spite of his disorientation about time. This episode does not follow a chronological order but, instead, underlines memories, emotional states which are ever-changing. Identities change in the same unpredictable manner as time. Like Rip van Winkle, however, humans need time to understand themselves, they need chronology so as to know who they are. Mortality, human time, is limited vet necessary.

### Conclusion

Joyce's awareness of mortality and immortality is deeper and wider than Mangan's. Yet there are striking similarities

between their ideas in the passage quoted from "Lestrygonians" and "The World's Changes," as has been seen, where time for both is destructive and overwhelming. However, Joyce perceives another dimension to human existence in time, something depending on emotions and feelings, not just physical veracity. Later in *Ulysses* he shows that, for Bloom, what we could call spiritual time follows no order, the aging process does not exist but, instead, time at this level regenerates and rejuvenates:

What is the age of the soul of man? As she hath the virtue of the chameleon to change her hue at every new approach, to be gay with the merry and mournful with the downcast, so too is her age changeable as her mood. No longer is Leopold, as he sits there, ruminating, chewing the cud of reminiscence, that staid agent of publicity and holder of a modest substance in the funds. He is young Leopold. (U 14.1038-1044)

## Appendix<sup>20</sup>

### Friedrich Rückert, "Chidher"

Chidher, der ewig junge, sprach: Ich fuhr an einer Stadt vorbei, Ein Mann im Garten Früchte brach; Ich fragte, seit wann die Stadt hier sei? Er sprach, und pflücktedie Früchte fort: Die Stadt steht ewig an diesem Ort, Und wird so stehen ewig fort.

Und aber nach fünfhundert Jahren Kam ich desselbigen Wegs gefahren.

Da fand ich keine Spur der Stadt; Ein einsamer Schäfer blies die Schalmei, Die Herde weidete Laub und Blatt; Ich fragte: Wie lang ist die Stadt vorbei? Er spach, und blies auf dem Rohre fort: Das eine wächst wenn das andre dorrt; Das ist mein ewiger Weidort.

Und aber nach fünfhundert Jahren Kam ich desselbigen Wegs gefahren.

Da fand ich ein Meer, das Wellen schlug, Ein Schiffer warf die Netze frei: Und als er ruhte vom schweren Zug, Fragt ich, seit wann das Meer hier sei? Er sprach, und lachte meinem Wort: Solang als schäumen die Wellen dort, Fischt man und fischt man in diesem Port.

Und aber nach fünfhundert Jahren Kam ich desselbigen Wegs gefahren.

Da fand ich einen waldigen Raum, Und einen Mann in der Siedelei, Er fällte mit der Axt den Baum;

Ich fragte, wie alt der Wald hier sei? Er sprach: Der Wald ist ein ewiger Hort; Schon ewig wohn ich an diesem Ort, Und ewig wachsen die Bäum hier fort.

Und aber nach fünfhundert Jahren Kam ich desselbigen Wegs gefahren.

Da fand ich eine Stadt, und laut Erschallte der Markt vom Volksgeschrei. Ich fragte: Seit wann ist die Stadt erbaut? Wohin ist Wald und Meer und Schalmei? Sie schrien, und hörten nicht mein Wort: So ging es ewig an diesem Ort, Und wird so gehen ewig fort.

Und aber nach fünfhundert Jahren Kam ich desselbigen Wegs gefahren.

### Friedrich Rückert, "The World's Changes" (Translation by James Clarence Mangan, 1840).

"Contarini Fleming wrote merely, Time."-

D'Israeli the Younger.

The Solemn Shadow that bears in his hands,
The conquering Scythe and the Glass of Sands,
Paused once on his flight where the sunrise shone
On a warlike city's towers of stone;
And he asked of a panoplied soldier near,
"How long has this fortressed city been here?"
And the man looked up, Man's pride on his brow—
"The city stands here from the ages of old
And as it was then, and as it is now,
So will it endure till the funeral knell
Of the world be knolled,
As Eternity's annals shall tell."

And after a thousand years were o'er, The Shadow paused over the spot once more.

And vestige was none of a city there,
But lakes lay blue and plains lay bare,
And the marshalled corn stood high and pale,
And a Shepherd piped of love in a vale.
"How!" spake the Shadow, "can temple and tower
Thus fleet, like mist, from the morning hour?"
But the Shepherd shook the long locks from his brow—
"The world is filled with sheep and corn;
Thus was it of old, and thus is it now,
Thus, too, will it be while moon and sun
Rule night and morn,
For Nature and Life are one."

And after a thousand years were o'er, The Shadow paused over the spot once more.

And lo! in the room of the meadow-lands
A sea foamed far over saffron sands,
And flashed in the noontide bright and dark,
And a fisher was casting his nets from a barque;
How marvelled the Shadow! "Where then
is the plain?
And where be the acres of golden grain?"
But the fisher dashed off the salt spray from his brow —
"The waters begirdle the earth alway
The sea ever rolled as it rolleth now;
What babblest thou about grain and fields?
By night and day
Man looks for what Ocean yields."

And after a thousand years were o'er, The Shadow paused o'er the spot once more.

And the ruddy rays of the eventide Were gilding the skirts of a forest wide; The moss of the trees looked old, so old! And valley and hill, the ancient mould

Was robed in sward, an evergreen cloak; And a woodman sang as he felled an oak. Him asked the Shadow — "Remember thou Any trace of a Sea where wave those trees?" But the woodman laughed: Said he, "I trow, If oaks and pines do flourish and fall, It is not amid seas; — The earth is one forest all."

And after a thousand years were o'er, The Shadow paused over the spot once more.

And what saw the Shadow? A city again,
But people by pale mechanical men,
With workhouses filled, and prisons and marts,
And faces that spake exanimate hearts.
Strange picture and sad! was the Shadow's thought;
And, turning to one of the Ghastly, he sought
For a clue in words to the When and the How
Of the ominous Change he now beheld;
But the man uplifted his care-worn brow —
"Change? What was Life ever but Conflict and Change?
From the ages of eld
Hath affliction been widening its range."

Enough! said the Shadow, and passed from the spot: — At last it is vanished, the beautiful youth Of the earth, to return with To-morrow; All changes have checquered Mortality's lot; But this is the darkest — for Knowledge and Truth Are but golden gates to the Temple of Sorrow!

### **Notes**

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 1}$  Richard Ellman,. The Consciousness of Joyce ( London: Faber & Faber, 1977) 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ellmann 118

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>John Mitchel, Jail Journal; or, Five Years in British Prisons

(Poole, Washington, D.C.: Woodstock Books, 1996). Mitchel's influence on Mangan particularly with regard to his nationalism has been given some attention. Nevertheless, they did not meet until 1845, five years after the first publication of this poem.

- <sup>4</sup> James Clarence Mangan, "The World's Changes," *The Collected Works of James Clarence Mangan. Poems 1838-1844*, ed. Jacques Chuto et al. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996) 190.
  - <sup>5</sup> Mangan 1996, 190.
  - <sup>6</sup> Mangan 1996, 190.
  - <sup>7</sup> Mangan 1996, 190.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ellmann 66.
- <sup>9</sup> Carl Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido. A Contribution to the History of the Evolution of Thought (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1919) 119.
  - <sup>10</sup> Jung 121.
  - <sup>11</sup> Jung 127.
- James Clarence Mangan, "Pompeii." *The Collected Works of James Clarence Mangan. Poems 1845-1847*, ed. Jacques Chuto et al. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997) 432.
  - <sup>13</sup> Mangan 1996, 188.
  - <sup>14</sup> Mangan 1996, 396-397.
- <sup>15</sup> Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses, An Annotated List*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968) 384.
  - <sup>16</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica Standard Edition, 2001.
  - <sup>17</sup> Mangan 1997, 276.
  - <sup>18</sup> Mangan 1997, 277.
- <sup>19</sup> Washington Irving, *Hearthside Tales: Selections from the Sketch Book Bracebridge Hall and Tales of a Traveller*, ed. Patrick F. Allen (Schenectady, New York: Union College Press, 1983) 39.
- <sup>20</sup> Friedrich Rückert, "Chidher," *Gedichte* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1988) 133-134.

Mangan 1996, 188-190.