

Little Chandler's Celtic Twilight: Joyce, Arnold and the Rebel Tradition

ALFRED MARKEY

Abstract

This article, in conscious debt to the political readings of Joyce's work undertaken by key pioneering critics such as Seamus Deane and Vincent Cheng, re-examines the Dublin writer's relationship to the national or rebel tradition through a reading of "A Little Cloud," particularly through the examination of the story's protagonist, Little Chandler. While Joyce's cruel portrait of the aspiring Celtic Twilight poet is usually interpreted as a cutting critique of Irish cultural nationalism, this paper highlights the consistency of the protagonist's self-image with the derivative discourse of racial essences which Deane, for example, has traced back particularly to the seminal influence of Matthew Arnold and his attempts to solidify a specifically English cultural identity.

Joyce's portrait, however, invites a reading which exposes the contrived nature of Little Chandler and his true condition as a contradictory, colonised subject, trained to work in urban anonymity and to direct any aggression not against his superiors but instead against those weaker than himself. Such an interpretation reveals the consistency of Joyce's radical critique with a tradition which refuses metropolitan norms and entrapment within derivative models of cultural identity, a turn which can be read as potentially productive of a more radical, liberationist cultural politics suggestively reminiscent of what we call the "rebel tradition."

Keywords: James Joyce, Matthew Arnold, "A Little Cloud," the "rebel tradition," Irish cultural nationalism, cultural politics

At the close of “Two Gallants”
from James Joyce’s

Dubliners, a gold sovereign is tossed in the air. A story that traces the debased codes of behaviour of two male gallants, the closing image offers a metaphorical expression of the sovereignty of empire over a whole society within which the values of conquest and exploitation are willingly reproduced from the regal incumbent at the top of the hierarchy down to the women in the story whose existence is exclusively framed in terms of the sexual services they may provide. If the symbolic resonance of the coin signifies entrapment and subservience, a clear contrast can be made with the image on the pre-Euro Irish ten pound note whose regal incumbent is the somewhat bemused-looking James Joyce. It is a curious irony that it should be the apparently anti-nationalist Joyce chosen to occupy the throne of a state whose constitutional intention until recently was the reintegration of the imagined national territory, that is to say dominion over the six counties of the bloodied Northern Ireland needed to complete what, in the parlance of popular nationalism, constituted the so-called Four Green Fields of the rebel Republic. In the light of Joyce’s admittedly brief spell as the face of the national currency, one is entitled to question the accuracy of much scholarship which has traditionally emphasised Joyce’s supposedly explicit anti-nationalism. The picture is perhaps more complex than is immediately apparent.

The irony of Joyce’s position as a representative image of the independent Irish nation becomes more acute with the realization that Joyce shared his task with the Liberator, Daniel O’Connell, so displacing the previous occupants, W. B. Yeats and the mythological Queen Medb from ancient Ireland. Certainly, the placing of Joyce in the pantheon of national heroes must have proved problematic for the revisionist intellectual movement dominant in Ireland for the latter half of the twentieth century which, dovetailing with traditional Joycean scholarship, disdained any connection with the rebel,

nationalist tradition and appropriated Joyce for its alternative project, presented in terms of a tolerant, secular pluralism within a European liberal humanist tradition.¹

This is not, in the Irish context, an intellectually neutral, apolitical position. Joe Cleary, for example, seeks to expose the aforementioned pluralism suggesting: “it is plainly driven by a hysterical and moralistic reaction to Republican militarism and displays little understanding of, indeed not much interest in the material factors that have conditioned revolutionary Irish nationalism” (272). Certainly, notable figures of Irish revisionism such as Roy Foster, Conor Cruise O’Brien and John Wilson Foster can be perceived, on scratching the patina of plural tolerance, to evidence a manifestly conservative, unionist agenda. O’Brien, for example, in his later years an election candidate for an Ulster Unionist party, provocatively posited, particularly in his polemical *States of Ireland*, an unbroken tradition of nationalist Catholic blood sacrifice dating from the seventeenth century which he identified as primarily responsible for the sectarian violence and intolerance in Northern Ireland. To this end he found Joyce a useful anti-Catholic whom he engaged to defend his crusade against the rebel nationalist tradition which, as he would have it, is reactionary, primitive and pre-humanist. Here we encounter Joyce being put to the service of an ideological programme that both endorses Unionism and incorporates the Dublin writer into a tradition of liberal humanism of an Arnoldian Anglo-Celtic bent which Joyce himself had no time for and which sits uneasily with comments such as that made to Arthur Power: “It is my revolt against the English conventions, literary and otherwise that is the main source of my talent” (qtd. in Eagleton 154) and those reputedly made to the Frenchman, Louis Gillet: “I have great difficulty in coming to any understanding with the English. I don’t understand them no more than they understand me” and the terse protest: “but I don’t write in English.” (qtd. in Lyons 381)

I have no wish to act as apologist for an alternative nationalist discourse, to ratify a nationalist struggle or to

confirm Joyce as rightfully recovered by the institutional state power against which he was largely a rebel, and apparently hostile, especially in its pure Catholic guise. I do, however, want to point out that our current understanding of Joyce is governed by the differing discourses of a complex and particular social situation. Equally so, Joyce's texts, and I will here treat of *Dubliners*, emerge from a specific, variegated socio-historical matrix and are testament to the struggle for representation therein. Indeed, the complexity of what too often is rendered as an unproblematically singular nationalist tradition can be gauged by the understanding that the aforementioned faces on the national currency in fact respond to subtly different strains in what was a very complex liberationist movement. If O'Connell represents a pragmatic, constitutional and democratic politics, Yeats is the face of an elite, Anglo-Irish cultural nationalism while Queen Medb can be seen to answer to the needs of an Irish-Ireland Catholic strain of racial exclusivism, an Ascendancy antiquarian tradition or indeed a distinctly nationalist feminism. So, whither Joyce? One feels that while it would be erroneous to unproblematically display his nationalist credentials, as scholars such as Seamus Deane, Emer Nolan and Vincent Cheng have shown, a critical reading of Joyce which engages with rather than dismisses his relation to a complex liberationist tradition is worthwhile.²

Returning to the revisionist historian Roy Foster, consider the following quotation introducing his hugely influential *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*: "The tradition of writing 'The Story of Ireland' as a morality tale, invented around the seventeenth century and retained (often with the roles of hero and villain reversed) has been abandoned over the last generation" (ix). Considered in relation to, for example, the provocative polemics of O'Brien, Foster's diagnosis does seem somewhat premature. Equally, Foster's own text, while proposing itself as depoliticized is more evidently engaged in exposing the story of Ireland as Hero, and England as villain, than vice-versa. In his sustained dismantling of the Ireland-

hero, England-villain binarity, he demonstrates with considerable skill that to perceive nineteenth century Irish society in terms of a facile axis of leisured aristocratic landowners and impoverished native peasants is erroneous. Yet precisely in doing so, in bringing into focus the considerable middle ground, he exposes the efforts of his Ascendancy ancestors to write out this same grey area where the balance of power was not nearly so sharply defined. Both Foster's text and much Ascendancy literature are consistent with Edward

Said's idea that: "texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (*Orientalism* 94). If we wish to understand Joyce's work, its modernism and its apparent anti-Nationalism, it is imperative that we consider it *vis-à-vis* such performative discursive formation.

The received wisdom is that Joyce, by rejecting the Irish cultural nationalism offered to him by the Literary Revival, and through his lampooning of the Irish-Ireland cast of nationalism, was anti-Irish and anti-Nationalist. To illustrate Joyce's attitude to the Literary Revival let us look at the figure of Little Chandler in "A Little Cloud," the first of what critics have considered the "mature" group of stories making up *Dubliners*. Joyce here derisively depicts a pseudo-artist who cynically identifies the Celtic Twilight school as a means to easy literary success in the English marketplace. Walking through Dublin, Little Chandler, caught up in poetic reverie, is presented as feeling manifestly aristocratic relative to the mass of Dubliners:

A horde of grimy children populated the street. They stood or ran in the roadway or crawled up the steps before the gaping doors or squatted like mice upon the thresholds. Little Chandler gave them no thought. He picked his way deftly through all the minute vermin-like life and under

the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in
 which the old nobility of Dublin had roistered.
 (D 66)

And a while later: “For the first time in his life he felt himself superior to the people he passed [...] his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Chapel Street. There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away” (D 68). This is, in Terence Brown’s terms: “a damning indictment of the artistic impulses of the Literary Revival as the youthful Joyce understood them. They are portrayed as evasive, condescending and self-interested to a shocking degree” (“Introduction” xxix). Little Chandler here elevates himself above the urban mass, he divorces himself from the grey area that was evidence of a complex social reality that belies the aristocrat-peasant axis of Ascendancy discourse.

In fact, the actual situation of the Irish Ascendancy at the turn of the century was one of considerably reduced circumstance as their previously stable hegemony was being directly challenged by the *arriviste* middle classes, both rural and urban but especially the latter. Since the Daniel O’Connell-inspired Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 this ruling class had been in decline; the famine of the 40s, Gladstone’s disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869, the Land War of the 1880s, the subsequent purchase of the estates by the peasants, or farmers in Joyce’s vocabulary, and the threat of Home Rule rendering their hegemony ever more tenuous. Joyce himself was, of course, a product of this emerging sector of society, the trajectory of which is, for example, evident in the growing influence of an institution such as Joyce’s Catholic public school, Clongowes Wood College, which had been bought by the Jesuits as early as 1814.

Faced with such an emerging rival the Anglo-Irish, not just aristocratic land-owners but also Protestant clergy, urban professionals and petit-bourgeoisie, sought, as Brown indicates in a Field Day Anthology contribution, “Cultural Nationalism 1880-1930:” “to popularize a view of Irish identity that might

soften the stark outlines of politics, class and sectarianism in the benign glow of culture” (517). Thus the Literary Revival invoked an ancient heroic Ireland, Brown continues, “in which unity of culture was manifest in a pagan, mythic, rural paradise. In their work, prelapsarian Ireland knows nothing of the political and sectarian strife of the modern” (517-18). This nationalist discourse is in part a response to, while simultaneously writing out, the middle territory of the modern challenge to the Ascendancy. By positing such an Irish nationalism, the Ascendancy wrests protagonism from the challenging Catholic middle classes so disdainfully referred to by Yeats in “September 1913” as those who “fumble in a greasy till” and reaffirms the Ascendancy’s divine right to lead society (86). The following quotation from George Russell’s essay, “Nationality and Imperialism” illustrated the point:

We can conceive of the national spirit in Ireland as first manifesting itself through individual heroes or kings; and, as the history of famous warriors laid hold on the people, extended its influence through the sentiment engendered in the popular mind until it created therein the germs of a kindred nature.

An aristocracy of lordly and chivalrous heroes is bound in time to create a great democracy by the reflection of their character in the mass, and the idea of the divine right of kings is succeeded by the idea of the divine right of the people. (qtd. in Nolan 25)

Here we find Russell concerned not only to validate a seemingly ancient and divine right of the aristocracy to lead the masses, but he also evinces a desire to connect this with a divine democratic right which at some point in the future will be manifest in the masses. Russell appears to appease the challenging native classes with a pact guaranteeing democracy in a future Ascendancy-led nation. His discourse is manifestly

a product of the modern instability that was buffeting Ascendancy hegemony, and it offers a firm riposte to the doctrines of the Irish-Ireland movement which attempted to propose an alternative pure nation which would place the Anglo-Irish as, so to speak, “beyond the pale” and as, in effect, foreign.

Evidently, to an essentially socialist Joyce, the purist, elitist project of such cultural nationalism would itself be alien, in a sense foreign. Not only does it write out the middle classes but also the urban proletariat missed by little Chandler. Equally, the facile purity of the Irish-Irelanders bespoke a rural essence which, as Declan Kiberd has pointed out in *Inventing Ireland*, offered a corrective to the colonizing dynamic, to the discourse which saw the English reaffirm their own nation through a binary dialectic with the wild uncivilized other, the Gaelic peasant. Seamus Deane has traced an intellectual genealogy of this tendency, highlighting the seminal influence of Matthew Arnold and his elaboration of a prototype of Celtic characteristics against which, or in opposition to which, he places the disciplined industry of the Anglo-Saxon. In truth, as Robert Young clarifies in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Arnold does initially wish to recruit the “Celtic” sensibility in order to reinvigorate an excessively phillistine Anglo-Saxon but the end result is to cement “an apartheid model of dialogic separation” (87) based on types and racial essences.

Joyce saw the limitations of such antagonisms and instead chose to bring into play that urban grey area which was excluded from the limited imaginings of the aforementioned traditions. In doing so he disconcerts or dislodges the dominant models of interaction and separation. It could, in fact, be suggested that through his innovative challenges to existing patterns of colonial representation, he in part provoked a shift in the discursive practice of the colonizer, with the latter’s “savage” now having to incorporate a version markedly urban in character, evidenced, for example, in the claim by the unionist J. P. Mahaffey of Trinity College, Dublin, that “James

Joyce is a living argument in favour of my contention that it was a mistake to establish a separate university for the aborigines of this island – for the corner boys who spit into the Liffey” (Gibbons 113). With Joyce, the corner boy is brought into the open, so exposing the selective traditions espoused by the other players in, to echo Homi Bhabha, “tense cultural locations” (299) where, in Stanislaus Joyce’s words “nothing is stable.” (187)

It becomes clear, then, that although Russell was capable of asserting that: “The idea of the national being emerged at no recognisable point in our history. It is older than any name we know,” it is, in effect, being invented by Russell himself through, as Eric Hobsbawm put it in *The Invention of Tradition*, an “attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (1). In Joyce’s invention of Little Chandler he represents and exposes both the nature of this selective invention and the dubious credentials of its practitioners. When Little Chandler conceives of himself as a Celtic Twilight poet he worries about his excessively English-looking surname, and considers the possibility of using his mother’s surname

Malone, evidently more Irish-looking. Whereas Chandler is English, meaning candlemaker or grocer, typically urban petit-bourgeoisie, Malone suggests the family of 17th century Catholic Irish landowners. By doing so, Little Chandler proposes himself in a lineage that inherits the bardic tradition of the old Gaelic world, precisely like that of the Malones which fell in the wake of Cromwellian conquest. Joyce, by contrast, seems to invite his reader to tease out the contrived nature of such associations and to locate the motivations in the metropolitan centre where the template for the peripheral poet is set by the cultural marketplace, specifically the fashionable mode of the Celtic fringe, a phenomenon whose cultural and racial architecture cemented rather than challenged an apartheid that is explicitly confrontational and hierarchical.

Joyce thus forwards a lineage that contests the performative intent of the discourses we can associate with Arnold and that of the Anglo-Irish such as Russell. By

proposing the feminised, weak Little Chandler as his aristocratic hero, rather than the epic warrior figure in the mould of Cuchulain proposed by Russell, and by highlighting its internal contradiction within Little Chandler, *vis-à-vis* his urban self as unglamorous Anglo-Irish office clerk, Joyce both blurs the lines of historical hierarchical division which would sustain Russell's programme for a cultural nationalism led by the Anglo-Irish elite, while also encouraging in his reader the perception of a contemporary subject who is marked by internal heterogeneity.

Sensitive to the political undertones of the Literary Revival, Joyce exposes the varied contours of social reality in modern Ireland and has his Celtic twilight emerge from the diverse, hybrid urban territory of internal difference and division characteristic of the modern nation. Ultimately, we find that Little Chandler is a world away from the visionary reach of, say, Yeats and the story comes to an end with the grubby reality of the clerk's world apparent when he returns to his modest urban dwelling and, in frustration, enacts violence on his vulnerable child. Although the would-be poet sees for himself a liberation by means of his imagining of self through the metropolitan model of the Celtic fringe artist, he is, in fact, a contradictory subject. As Stuart Hall has indicated in relation to race:

[Gramsci] shows how the so-called "self" which underpins these ideological formations is not a unified but a contradictory subject and a social construction. He thus helps us to understand one of the most common, least explained features of "racism": the "subjection" of the victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideologies which imprison and define them. (qtd. in Cheng *Joyce* 109)

Ultimately it is the second-hand Arnoldian model of racial identity that Little Chandler assumes and it is thus unsurprising

that the oppressions he finds himself the victim of are reproduced in his own domestic world.⁵

Deane, in a stimulating essay, "The Pathos of Distance: Said and the Intellectual Class," considers, in relation to Joyce, the importance given by Edward Said to the issue of the colonial subject being not just a child of culture but also an actor within culture. He writes:

As everyone knows, Stephen Daedalus, as Joyce constructs him, is a young Irish intellectual who wishes in some way to break all of the links that in an affiliative way harness him to his biological or cultural parents, or to the British Empire, his political parent –to have no links at all: not to his actual mother, not to mother Ireland, not to the British Empire, and not to Queen Victoria or her successors. In order to break these links, in order to find some way to be –again to quote Edward Said– not just a child of culture but also an "agent," an actor within culture, Stephen must find some way of creating a new distance between himself and that which is otherwise oppressively proximate, and oppressively weighing upon him. (Deane 49)

If we contrast Daedalus with Little Chandler we see that clearly the latter's rebellion is derivative and because he is entrapped within a discourse alien to his own interests, he produces a rebellion not against his superiors whether within the family structure or within the political one, but instead against one below him in the established hierarchy: the weak, defenceless child.

David Lloyd offers some interesting reflections on subordination which are illuminating when considered in relation to the figure of Little Chandler. He proposes that: "As is well known, the emergence of the modern state is inseparable from a massive restructuring of the modes of

interpellation by which individuals are transformed into citizen-subjects who will, as Althusser puts it, ‘work by themselves’” (34). Such work will be undertaken within a particular realm, be that legal, economic, cultural, etc., and we can interpret Chandler’s discreet, anonymous working life as a legal clerk in such terms, but also his Celtic twilight self, detached as it is from the complex mass of the people. In effect, the Celtic fringe is a cultural correlative of his working life given that it is explicitly categorised by Arnold, both set apart in a cultural sub-set of its own but incorporated into the broad cultural machinery whose contours are mapped from the empowered metropolitan centre.

Crucial of course in the categorisation of the Celtic fringe cultural phenomenon is the evolution of educational institutions along the lines proposed by Arnold. The influence of Arnold in shaping the manner in which culture was to be perceived and pedagogically diffused throughout society was key. Sustained by an ethos of the promotion of, as he put it, “*a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and taught in the world,*” an explicit canon of great works and authors was established and taught at the schools and universities (50). Unsurprisingly, the result of the selection and promotion of “great” literature was a canon very clearly weighted according to the interests and characteristics of the dominant metropolitan classes. Lloyd writes that:

The pedagogical process replicates and normativizes the proto-ethical narrative which occurs, or is supposed to occur, at the ‘private’ level of the family. The disciplining of the individual subject, which takes place by way of what that subject learns to desire, paves the way for the socialization of the subject in accord with the ethical maxim of learning to will one’s own subordination.” (34-35)

If we consider Little Chandler in the light of such reflections, we can posit the idea that in relation to work, his cultural ideas and his family life, a disciplining dynamic of subordination is in evidence with the protagonist a child of culture and not a subject capable of any meaningful agency. Little Chandler's pose as the poet with the gift of imagination is hollow, his supposed imaginative capacity does not allow him achieve any critical distance with which to really assess his plight, his sense of self is derivative and complicit with the dominant status quo. It is acquiescent of the system of colonial domination which maintains him in a subaltern state, his own needs completely subservient to those of the elites capable of shaping the terms of his definition.

The importance of Arnold cannot be overstated. In Said's contribution to *Freedom and Interpretation: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures in 1992*, entitled "Nationalism, Human Rights, and Interpretation," he considers the case of Arnold and his model of "the state as the nation's collective best self"

(413) in which culture and imagination are employed not to explore and map out new possibilities or routes of identity, but to reinforce in a distinctly authoritarian way notions of cultural identity which consolidate the relations of power that insist on the central importance of English identity and its hierarchical privilege. As Said explains, although Arnold's ideas of cultural identity are expressed in universal terms, and suggest a non-exclusive collective notion of identity, they are focussed primarily on his own English culture, gaining authority from the idea of a solid tradition, with this imbalance allowing that when concrete events challenge the authority of the metropolitan power it is the latter which "naturally" takes precedence over individual rights and individual lives. The attitude is explicit in Arnold's quotation where he borrows from his father Thomas to suggest "rule of conduct is hereditary" and to underwrite his progenitor's recommendation that, "As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with *that* is always the right one; flog the rank and file, and fling the leaders from the Tarpeian Rock!" (413-414). This allows Said,

albeit in a markedly nuanced manner, draw a connection between the ideas of Arnold and the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin.

Here there is an explicit correlation between an idea of art as expressing the *best* of humanity and the exclusivist idea of a hierarchy of national cultures. This bolsters the hegemony of the primary European powers and especially England, flattens history to remove the reality of travelling ideas, interconnected spaces and historical complexity, thus giving priority to a vertical notion of elite identity evident in his emphasis on a tradition “in place” as he assumes authority from his temporal predecessor, his father. Fundamental to this value system is a conception of the individual as stable, singular, complete and unvarying, thus secure and peaceful. Identity is centred, essentialised and distilled. This involves a strict separation between individuals, between self and other and a concomitant explicit division between “us” and “them,” and between nations fixed in an established hierarchy that is articulated in the language of clear national identity over the more diffuse notion of national character. A parallel division between clearly defined homogeneous “fields” of academic enquiry is established and combines with racially applied Darwinism to clarify and define a hierarchy of races within the universal sphere.

Said points out that other European liberals such as de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill could similarly propose an ideal of the complete free individual but that its paradoxical consequence was that the supposedly objective evidence of complete and free, individual nations such as their own could ultimately justify the subordination of the rights of other peoples such as the Algerians or the Indians to those of the “urgent imperatives of national interest” of nations in competition with each other to demonstrate the degree of their self-determined, total autonomy (420). Human rights are thus sacrificed under the pressure of circumstance to the values of individual liberty expressed in national terms. In support of this ideology we find the values of veneration and support of what

is valued as best in cultural terms given priority over critical appraisal and interpretation.

This tradition of liberal benevolence can be seen to have a similar pedigree in relation to Ireland, with its ideals always subject to the relations of colonial power. Arnold's liberal ideals, and his notions of English cultural tradition in fact gain definition in contrast with the Celts and the Irish. Even as, in his most liberal guise, he allowed these the gift of a vivid imagination, this had a downside. Kiberd indicates Arnold's view was that "the Celts were doomed by a multiple selfhood, which allowed them see so many options in a situation that they were immobilized, unlike the English specialist who might have simplified himself but who did not succumb to pitfalls which he did not have the imagination to discern." (*Inventing Ireland* 38)

It is clear that Arnold wished to link imagination to immobilization. Parallel to this spatial conception we have a temporal aspect with the backward Celts considered to be stuck in the past, held back from humanity's logical progress through time by their own will. The consequences of this are obvious. Even in his more benevolent moments Arnold, as Kiberd reports in relation to his views on Home Rule, "never ceded his authority," arguing that "the 'idle and imprudent' Irish could never properly govern themselves," and in Kiberd's words "it was with the tyranny of facts that Arnold had proclaimed the Celt quite unable to cope!" (31). In contrast, Kiberd notes that Irish artists such as Oscar Wilde could see that such Celtic psychology of imaginative, multiple selfhood was "the shape of things to come," with Wilde challenging the "stable, imperial self" and arguing that the dominant cultural tendencies produced bad poetry written in the first person singular. One can surmise that while Arnold is keen to maintain the key spatial and territorial reality, the likes of Wilde seek to change it with a spatially conceived, multiple and self-willed contradictory self key to that process.

In "Nationalism, Human Rights, and Interpretation," Said considers the Arnoldian model as hugely influential on

state nationalism in general, with his nationally defined idea of privileged culture finding expression in a corresponding need to homogenise the intellectual space which requires, as Said indicates, quoting from Ernest Gellner, “a high culture [to] pervade the whole of society, define it, and [this] needs to be sustained by the polity. *That* is the secret of nationalism” so that even if nationalism claims to speak for “a putative folk culture” in reality:

[...] nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population. It means the generalized diffusion of a school mediated, academy supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind [which later in his book Gellner regards as a species of “patriotism”], in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves. That is what *really* happens. (Said 424)

To a degree Joyce’s Chandler fits into this mould of atomized anonymity, yet, while his attempt to impose order at the close of the story suggests an attempt to pass on an authoritarian set of values, just as the Arnolds did, the violence enacted on the child is indicative of a breakdown, a personal crisis which we can interpret as consistent with the conflicted nature of Irish society at the time. Consequently, a clear difference has to be established between what Said and Gellner

identify as state nationalism and that which is anti-hegemonic.

Through Joyce's depiction of Chandler's loss of control we can propose a belief in an unstable, non-imperial and non-atomised self. It is potentially a starting point from which to propose new imagined realities, and, in Benedict Anderson's vocabulary, communities and created traditions appropriate to the modern reality of a country where, as Stanislaus Joyce put it: "there is properly speaking no national tradition. Nothing is stable in the country; nothing is stable in the minds of the people." (187)

Influential studies on nationalism stress its modernity and show it to be, to a considerable extent, the result of the instability of the modern world, yet also point out its tendency to propose, more than the present, a suitable past. Benedict

Anderson, for example, wonders why "do nations celebrate their hoariness, not their astonishing youth?" (659), while Eric Hobsbawm states: "It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the 'invention of tradition' so interesting for historians of the last two centuries" and "What [tradition] does is to give any desired change or resistance to innovation the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history" (2). Such reflections certainly allow us see Ascendancy cultural nationalism as essentially reactionary and modern.

If the nationalist phenomenon is essentially modern then perhaps it is not quite so foreign to James Joyce as it may initially appear. Indeed, if we turn to Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* we find clear elements of continuity with Joyce's *Dubliners*. In effect, *Dubliners* allows us to "think" the nation, to perceive of a "community in anonymity" that is the modern nation. Anderson suggests "An American will never meet, or even know the names of even a handful of his 240 million fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (26). Such an idea allows

that members of a society “can even be described as passing each other on the street, without ever becoming acquainted, and still be connected” (31). In spite of social difference such representation connects all in the comradeship of a community. This phenomenon is evident in the representation of such an imagined community in the novel and is reinforced or facilitated as the novel is read by large numbers of people. *Dubliners* provides multiple examples of the phenomenon Anderson ascribes mainly to the novel. While the negative depiction of the isolation of Little Chandler and other similar protagonists encourages a critical reaction in the reader against the cultural and political machinery which produces an atomised society, we can also trace a contrary impulse which allows for the imagining of a potentially dynamic community.

In “Araby,” for example, we find the following: “We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pig’s cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O’Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land” (*D* 22-23). In this case the imagining of the anonymous but attractively vivid community is aided by the explicit, defining mention of “our native land,” which appears to clarify and shape the form this community may potentially achieve.

The simultaneous activities of the fellows of this imagined native community are also represented in a familiar landscape, that of streets that we the reader may have walked. This we find throughout the collection, notably, for example, in “Two Gallants”:

He left his friends at a quarter to ten and went up George’s Street. He turned to the left at the City Markets and walked on into Grafton Street. The crowd of girls and young men had thinned and on his way up the street he heard many groups and couples bidding one another good-night. He

went as far as the clock of the College of Surgeons: it was on the stroke of ten. (*D* 52-53)

Anderson points to the national imagination at work in “the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside” (30). This involves the representation of, in this case, colonial Dublin through the mapping of this familiar territory and a series of plurals, such as the aforementioned courting couples, public houses, rented rooms, trains, cars, social gatherings, even shop windows and street lamps which are, as Anderson says about his Mexican example, “representative in their simultaneous, separate existence of the oppressiveness of this colony.” (19)

Anderson stresses the particularity of the representation, it is not a *tour du monde*, it is clearly bound within the imagined national territory. This attempt to contain the simultaneous, separate, yet connected existence of modern colonized subjects, such as Little Chandler, is seen by Michael Levenson not as a capitulation to English dominion, but for the Irish “the immediate struggle is over the elaboration of a discourse, a broad narrative, within which lives might receive meaning” (175). Whereas the Ascendancy discourse seeks a construction of the national experience that avoids the present, Joyce widens the frame and doesn't endorse any particular story but seeks instead to map the different versions that were in contemporary dialogue on this urban battlefield, evidenced most notably in the exchange between Miss Ivors and Gabriel Conroy in “The Dead” which signals the beginning of Gabriel's disorientation and the consequent re-assessment of his Anglophilia.

At this juncture between traditional past and modern present, English culture and Irish culture, where a representative Gabriel Conroy's identity is decentred, we are encouraged to think, to imagine a wider national community of perhaps anonymous but shared experience, whose collective self, unlike Arnold's is not imposed from above, from the

authority of the dominant and, in Ireland's case, exploitative state and expressed in the mould of the authoritative, male father-figure. From "Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland" the narrative eye scans the whole of the island of Ireland covered with indiscriminating snow (*D* 225). Yet while the snow on the window pane will the day after be gone, it is perhaps the discreetly mentioned newspaper, that unifying organ to which Anderson attaches as much importance as the novel in the process of facilitating the imagining of national communities, that is here most significant. The newspaper allows hundreds of thousands, even millions of people to simultaneously, anonymously imagine snow as general all over Ireland. Can we propose that Joyce's text, too, helps create the reality it appears to describe as we too imagine the four snowy fields, that imagined, unified territory, which so inspires and so conditions the rebel mind?

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1991.
- . "Narrating the Nation." *The Times Literary Supplement* 13 June 1986: 659.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Ed. Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." In Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. 291-322.
- Brady, Ciaran, ed. *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994.
- Brown, Terence. "Cultural Nationalism 1880-1930." *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. Ed. Seamus Deane et al. Vol II. Derry: Field Day, 1991. 516-520.
- . "Introduction." *Dubliners*. By James Joyce. London: Penguin, 1992. vii-xlix.
- Cheng, Vincent J. *Joyce, Race, and Empire*. Cultural Margins 3. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Cleary, Joe. "'Fork-Tongued on the Border Bit': Partition and the Politics of Form in Contemporary Narratives of the Northern Irish Conflict." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 95.1 (1996): 227-276.
- Deane, Seamus. *Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea*. Derry: Field Day, 1984.
- . "Joyce the Irishman," *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. Ed. Derek Attridge. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. 31-53.
- . "'Masked with Matthew Arnold's Face': Joyce and Liberalism." *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*. 12.1 (1986): 11-22.
- . "The Pathos of Distance: Said and the Intellectual Class." *Suitcase* 2.1&2 (1997): 44-55.

- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture*. London: Verso, 1995.
- Foster, R. F. *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. London: Penguin, 1988.
- Gibbons, Luke. "Race Against Time: Racial Discourses and Irish History." *The Oxford Literary Review* 13.1-2 (1991): *Neocolonialism*, ed. Robert Young. 95-117.
- Griffiths, Gareth. "The Myth of Authenticity." *De-Scribing Empire*. Ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson. London: Routledge, 1994. 70-85.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. 1914. Introduction by Terence Brown. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Joyce, Stanislaus. *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. Preface T.S. Eliot. London: Faber, 1958.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. London: Vintage, 1996.
- Levenson, Michael. "Living History in "The Dead." *James Joyce: The Dead*. Ed. R. Schwarz Daniel. Boston: Bedford, 1994. 163-77.
- Lloyd, David. *Ireland after History*. Critical Conditions: Field Day Essays and Monographs. Cork: Cork UP, 1999.
- Lyons, J. B. "James Joyce in a Clinical Context." *Neurology of the Arts: Painting, Music, Literature*. Ed. Frank Clifford Rose. London: Imperial College Press, 2004. 371-387.
- Nolan, Emer. *James Joyce and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- O'Brien, Conor Cruise. *States of Ireland*. London: Hutchinson, 1972.
- Said, Edward W. "Nationalism, Human Rights and Interpretation." *Freedom and Interpretation: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures in 1992*. Ed. Barbara Johnson. New York: Basic Books, 1993. Rpt. in *Reflections on*

- Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. London: Granta, 2000. 411-435.
- . *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. 1978. New Afterword. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Yeats, W. B. *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Notes

¹ For an introduction to the revisionist phenomenon see Ciaran Brady's *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism*.

² Deane was very much the pioneer in establishing a "political" mode of reading Joyce. Of particular relevance to this essay are his

"'Masked with Matthew Arnold's Face': Joyce and Liberalism," "Joyce the Irishman," and the key Field Day pamphlet *Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea*. Vincent J. Cheng's *Joyce, Race, and Empire* is an especially accessible interpretation of Joyce's politics, mainly in relation to postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, while Emer Nolan's *James Joyce and Nationalism* is most useful in relation to nationalism and modernism.

³ In the Australian context Gareth Griffiths has argued that:

"authentic speech, where it is conceived [...] as a fetishised cultural commodity, may be employed within such accounts as that of the *West Australian* to enact a discourse of 'liberal violence,' re-enacting its own oppressions on the subjects it purports to represent and defend." (76)