

Review

Author(s): Georgia Herlt

Review by: Georgia Herlt

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Bonnie Kime Scott *Joyce and Feminism*

Sussex: Harvester Press 1984 242pp

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FROM THE BEGINNING, Joyce's works have seemed to demand the kind of sexually accented reading that feminist criticism is able to provide. But with Joyce, there are more than the usual difficulties in dealing with the work of a male writer installed at the heart of a male canon. For Joyce's work dramatises a plurality of different positions with regard to sexuality, which include on the one hand a romantic essentialising of the female, and on the other, the suggestions in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* that sexual identity is fluid and unfixed. And while it is important to recognise Joyce's libertarianism with regard to women, it is also important to register the strong current of misogyny in his life and in his work. If Leopold Bloom seems to offer the possibility of a being between sexes, a transitional position which discloses many of the relationships of power between men and women, then Stephen Dedalus, with his disdain for Emma Clery's desire to study at the university and his aggressive phallic pride, is a portrait of the artist as a young patriarch.

Bonnie Kime Scott's study is alert to all these difficulties and overdeterminations. For this reason she has chosen to come at the subject of Joyce and feminism from a number of angles, the unemphatic 'and' of her title concealing several different conjunctures between 'Joyce' and 'feminism'. Separate chapters deal with the image of the female in Irish public life and mythology, with the women who surrounded Joyce in his own family and in the surrogate family of patrons and helpers which he gathered about him in Europe, with feminist readings of Joyce from the 1920s onwards, and with analysis of three female characters in Joyce's work, Emma Clery, Molly Bloom and Issy. There is a great deal of very useful and important information to be had from these separate chapters, although in some ways the breadth of focus results in a thinness of treatment. The chapter dealing with the feminist background at the turn of the century seems to deal rather summarily with Ibsen and Shaw, and to leave unexplored some of that important background which has been brought out recently in Richard Brown's *James Joyce and Sexuality*. And at times, the purposes of the different chapters seem a bit difficult to reconcile one with another. When reading about those extraordinary, strong women, Harriet Shaw Weaver and Sylvia Beach, one is embarrassed to a certain degree by the fact that their lives were so centralised around Joyce's, and I felt that Scott began to want to write about them in their own right rather than as the midwives of Joyce's art. This centrifugal thrust is more apparent in the discussions of Rebecca West and Djuna Barnes, powerful women who were even more peripherally associated with Joyce. As Scott suggests, there is an important study to be made of the role of women in modernism as a whole. But, though I was pleased to have my ideas about these women and the part they played in Joyce's life changed, I wasn't sure how much difference this was meant to make to the reading of Joyce's texts.

Scott's inclusiveness also leads to other kinds of disadvantage, I think. Her desire to offer house-room to every different kind of feminist criticism of Joyce doesn't leave her much space to bring out the contradictions between the different kinds of criticism,



'Ithaca' by Susan Stillman (1982)

or to stake out her own position. It seems odd to me to run together the kind of feminist criticism which searches for 'lost goddesses' and archetypal female images, with the radically unsettling discourse of Kristeva, whose work seems to place woman at the point of disruption and difference in language and sexual representation, or, in other words, at exactly the point where such images of the essential female seem to be disallowed. The same difficulty surfaces in Scott's often excellent discussions of women characters in Joyce; what starts as a conventional-seeming character-analysis of Molly Bloom, for example, ends up by representing her both as earth-goddess and as anti-metaphysical deconstructress. But I don't quite see how Molly's language can be both 'the lost, magical language of poetic myth' sought in Graves' *The White Goddess* and at the same time 'a shattering of phallic male modes of discourse, including their systems of rational authority and linear patternings of knowledge', since I'd guess that one of things that gets shattered by the latter are mythological projections and female archetypes. I'd agree, of course, that Joyce's writing, more than most, calls for a degree of theoretical opportunism, but it seems a shame to reduce to a bland consensus the sharpness of contradiction between the different readings of sexuality which his work elicits.

The subject is a large one, and the urge to be comprehensive entirely admirable. Scott's book is a bold and interesting contribution both to feminism and to Joyce studies. Clearly and energetically written, it engages with some of the most important questions raised by Joyce's work.

Steven Connor

## Book Reviews

Richard E. Madtes *The 'Ithaca' Chapter of Joyce's 'Ulysses'*

Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press 1980 160pp \$34.95

ISBN 0-8357-1460-8

IT MAY SEEM that the impact of Madtes' study, which he completed in its original form as far back as 1961, will have suffered greatly from the intervention of a quarter-century and the publication, in the interim, of the documents pertinent to the genesis of the text of *Ulysses* in edited or facsimile form; but this is not so. On the contrary, Madtes' work represents a splendid introduction to how these materials can be used and how, when properly handled, they can elucidate, clarify, and confirm.

Madtes opens his study, logically enough, with an analysis of the development of the episode from its earliest beginnings and through its various transformations to its final state. In his treatment of the chapter's (complex) faircopy/typescript, he is slightly inexact (the actual seriality of composition/production, the interconnections with the early states of 'Penelope', and the reasons behind Joyce's somewhat bizarre intermeshing of his composition of the two episodes are fully documented in Gabler's *Afterword* to the new edition of *Ulysses*); but not so as to effect his subsequent commentary. He does not, moreover, confine himself to a description of the documents in the line of transmission of the text, but extends his analysis to encompass the materials which lie behind these: the seemingly chaotic jumble of words, phrases, notions, and sporadic plot-indicators that Joyce collocated preparatory to beginning work on even the most rudimentary draft. A complete transcription of these notes is available today, but Madtes offers not a mechanical, if selective, listing so much as an intelligent and discursive account of Joyce's quite brilliant incorporation of the elements into his text in progress. In passing, I must disagree with Madtes' believing the source of these notes, in the case of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, to be, in the main, slips of paper on which Joyce jotted down memories of Dublin and Dubliners, scraps of conversation, occasional words, oddities of slang, technical terms and so on that he chanced to recall, overhear, or otherwise stumble across. This view insists upon the utter randomness of the units. The great bulk derives, rather, from printed matter, read with specific episodes in mind. Madtes is also incorrect in regarding the *Ulysses*-tagged material in V.I.A. (*Scribbledehobble*) as being Joyce's 'post facto' view of the episodes he had written'. They are nothing of the sort. Also, he fails entirely to comment upon the more extensive and more significant (presently unedited) 'Ithaca'-related notes in VI.C.7 (one of the Raphael transcriptions).

Madtes does not attempt to regress any further in time beyond the worksheets (which he wrongly assumes to have been contemporaneously compiled), and dismisses Joyce's own allegation to have written a draft of 'Ithaca' several years earlier than 1920. This is plausible, though I do think that an entry in *Giacomo Joyce* represents the ultimate starting point of 'Ithaca'/'Penelope': 'Sliding - space - ages - foliage of stars - and waning heaven - stillness - and stillness deeper - stillness of annihilation - and her voice'. I

also believe that the 'Ithaca' worksheets (some of which may be non-extant) possibly contain a very few entries deriving from an early, crude sketch of 'Eumaeus', which was probably in terms of narrated events more extensive than the episode we now know.

While Madtes illustrates Joyce's ingenuity and craft in translating these proto-notes into continuous text, and in the process shows how the final text can be more fully appreciated in its detail by a knowledge of its seminal and transitional forms, he underestimates the degree to which 'Ithaca' is a compilation/expansion of these units. This is due principally to the difficulty of cross-connecting the totality of transferred notes with the drafts. One can, for example, only after much reflection associate the unit - '12 unchaste virgins swab up and are killed hanged all in a row' - with the four handkerchiefs and pair of ladies' grey hose hanging from a stretched rope in Bloom's kitchen. In the same way the units - 'on same line & same side of it', 'on same base & between same parallels', and 'making any angle' - from worksheet 5 lurk behind the leavetaking of Stephen and Bloom standing 'perpendicular at the same door and on different sides of its base, the lines of their valedictory arms, meeting at any point and forming any angle less than the sum of two right angles', which is therefore a *tableau* depicting triangularity. This is precisely the kind of relationship between narrative and source-unit that holds the *Wake* together. Many of the units yet remain unlocated in the text (including almost all of the Homer-related elements in sheet 11). The reader can try his hand at a few: 'ma = mb', '7 = (1 + 1 + 1 + 1)', 'vertical lines not //', 'abc = bac = cab'. For his part, while Madtes (in the process producing a primitive version of Gabler's synoptic text of the 'water' fragment), illustrates how the text is the result of successive layers of accretion of elements, he does not relate the individual elements in this staggered auxesis to their ultimate source in the worksheets/notebooks, and thereby 'complete the picture'.

In the second part of his study, Madtes tackles the problems confronting a reader on first looking into 'Ithaca': its qualities of being artificial, analytical, humourless, turgid, static, and so on. He isolates four barriers to appreciation: its interrogative structuring, its scientificity, its supersaturation with detail, and the anthropomorphising disdain it displays. Examining these, he demonstrates that they are only apparent barriers, and that an intelligent reader who persists in his (re)reading will come to realise the kinesis within the catechetical structure, the satiric/parodic nature of the particularism (and the literary effects hiding within it), and the *intensely* emotional substratum operating beneath the indifference. Here, it seems to me that there is nothing in the canon, short of the close of the *Wake*, as moving in its expression of the 'truth' about men and women.

Madtes examines the apparently irreconcilable interpretations of 'Ithaca' maintained by critics: one school holding that it terminates in barrenness and futility, the other asserting it an affirmative resolution of the psychological tensions affecting the protagonists. He correctly argues that either point of view is equally valid and tenable; it is a case of *and* and not *or*. The literal level sustains the existential, negative conclusion of immutable alienation; yet, if we choose to concentrate on the metaphorical sense of the text, we can read from it that this terrible and brutal incarceration of the human soul is, either momentarily and/or in the timescale of the cosmos, open to transcendence. *Ulysses*' themes of isolation and community, brought to an end in 'Ithaca', Madtes interprets not as written to be reducible to a summary conclusion, but as the gradual disclosure of a perception of the 'human condition'.

Danis Rose

Grace Eckley *Children's Lore in 'Finnegans Wake'*

Syracuse: Syracuse U.P. 1985 2500pp \$28.00

ISBN 0-8156-2317-8

THIS FIRST book-length study to attempt a detailed investigation of children's literature, games and the role of children in the *Wake* is impressive for its comprehensive collection of sources and therefore a welcome extension of previous research in this field. Eckley's book is, however, likely to provoke controversy at many points of interpretation, not least of all when she sets out to refute some of the more plausible existent notions.

The function which Joyce assigned to children's lore in *Finnegans Wake* is, as Eckley explains, '... a basic means by which Joyce extended the universality of his themes and made the novel the entertaining, humorous book he wished it to be'. With the help of children's lore Eckley claims to 'explain both local references and the broader structural patterns of *Finnegans Wake*'.

Since her study is primarily concerned with material related to children the incorporation of yet another

theme seems forced. In her Preface Eckley tells us that she has discovered the source for HCE: it is William T. Stead, assistant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885 and wrongfully imprisoned for child abduction and indecent assault. This revelation, she professes, resolves 'three mysteries that have plagued *Wake* critics since its origin and have made the novel seem unnecessarily chaotic: the letter, the 'sin' and the Maggies'. One's heart sinks at her allegation that 'entire articles will have to be rewritten.' It is a commonplace that Joyce transferred the traits of many real-life people to his fictitious characters but Eckley attaches too much importance to Stead, and her chain of thought is sometimes disconcertingly simplistic, too far-fetched, and above all has not convinced me of being crucial to an understanding, let alone a new understanding of the *Wake*. Despite her affirmation that 'Stead's history enters the *Wake* not only in regard to the Earwicker children's knowledge of their father's "sin" but also in the many allusions to a male adult with a female child', the link between the two themes remains peripheral and in forcing their convergence at several points in almost every chapter she leads us not infrequently along an improbable circuitous route.

In her opening chapter Eckley examines Joyce's use of the toy, the bull-roarer, a motif Joyce consistently links in such a way with Jacob and Esau that a separation between Shem and Shaun is made possible. It is one of her aims to make a stand against *Wake* critics who propagate the merging of identities and therefore supposedly only see chaos, whereas Eckley believes that the separation of identities allows her to detect 'many kinds of order imposed upon' the *Wake*.

Chapter 2 is for the most part concerned with various types of children's literature. She analyses Joyce's use of the Aescopian fable of 'The Ant and the Grass-hopper', the Finn MacCool legend and Bedier's *Tristan et Iseult*. Her examination of Burton's *The Book of the Thousand-and-One Nights* which serves both thematic

and linguistic functions in the *Wake* is one of the more interesting parts of this study, and her exposition of the role of Burton's classic translation as a 'structural book of the *Wake*' deserves attention. In re-examining the role of Lewis Carroll in the *Wake* she asserts that 'although Joyce stayed close to many of Lewis Carroll's themes he remains distinctly opposed to prevailing views of the Fall and to Carroll's aversion to sexual matters'. Throughout her book Eckley emphasizes that Joyce consistently linked the Fall with the idea of resurrection. In the two final parts of this chapter Eckley presents a wealth of Nursery Rhymes and Fairy Tales which Joyce incorporated in the *Wake* in order to 'maintain the consistency of the characters, and strike in the reader an echo of response to the familiar.'

The third chapter, dealing almost entirely with the Prankquean episode from the angle of children's games, offers some new insights. Eckley's discovery of two specific games which add to an understanding of this episode is very convincing. Children's games also figure prominently in 'The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies', to which she devotes the next chapter. She investigates the use of the game 'Angels and Devils' and some 'dramatic games' (in Gomme's classification), which together with a number of occult themes provide the key to her interpretation.

In Chapter 5 Eckley focuses on 'Nightlessons' and examines the personal situation of the children, and here Stead is brought into play as a paramount source. The final chapter attempts to solve the mystery 'Who War Yore Maggies' and investigates in a broader perspective the role and consciousness of the children throughout the *Wake*.

It may seem graceless not to be more grateful for the author's industriousness and painstaking attention to detail but the immediate utility of this book is limited because Eckley overrates the status of children's lore in the overall context of the *Wake*.

Georgia Herlt



Wandering Rocks' by Susan Stillman for the Book-of-the-Month Club edition of *Ulysses*, with a foreword by Anthony Burgess (New York, 1982)

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