
“Portals of Discovery”: Historical Allusions in Joyce’s *Portrait*

María-Ángeles Conde-Parrilla
Pablo de Olavide University, Spain

Copyright (c) 2020 by María-Ángeles Conde-Parrilla. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged for access.

Abstract. The Irish context informs the process of composition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Joyce’s use of historical allusions is an essential literary device when recontextualising the novel in its original cultural dynamics. Varied in form and elusive to the eye, allusions function as textual signs that introduce multiple layers of contextual meaning, unveiling the main characters’ contradictions and the workings of coercive ideologies. Joycean allusions thus act as metonymic portmanteau signs; they become the true “portals” of discovery of a less apparent portrait: that of Ireland as a British colony.

Key Words. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Historical Allusions, Ireland, Ideologies, Creative Process.

Resumen. El contexto irlandés es determinante a la hora de entender la composición de *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* y el uso de las alusiones históricas por parte de Joyce es un recurso literario esencial si se quiere recontextualizar la novela en su dinámica cultural original. Las alusiones históricas son variadas y escapan a simple vista, funcionando como signos textuales que introducen múltiples capas de significado contextual, desvelando las contradicciones de los personajes principales y la forma en la que actúan las ideologías coercitivas. Las alusiones joyceanas actúan por tanto como complejos signos metonímicos; se convierten en auténticos “portales” de descubrimiento de un retrato no tan aparente, el de Irlanda como colonia británica.

Palabras clave. James Joyce, *Retrato del artista adolescente*, alusiones históricas, Irlanda, ideologías, proceso creativo.

James Joyce’s works are permeated by Ireland’s conflicting ideologies at the turn of the century and bear witness to the author’s involvement in the political and cultural turmoil of the 1890s.¹ *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is no exception. In this *Bildungsroman* Stephen Dedalus’s formative years unfold in a colonial environment over a period of eleven years, from the fall and death of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) to the rising of a radical nationalism

that was shaped by a more activist generation within the Irish Republican Brotherhood as well as by the turn of the twentieth century's Celtic revival (Joyce first left for Paris in 1902). Central to Joyce's portrayal of the multifaceted and hybrid country is the interweaving of explicit historico-political and socio-cultural allusions into the novel's fabric. The aim of this essay is to examine the workings of such a complex, though often overlooked, literary device.

Historical allusions in *A Portrait* are not easy to identify, given the variety of forms they adopt and the frequent spelling with an initial lower-case letter.² The real challenge, however, is to disentangle the meanings and purpose associated with these "richly storied" (148.5) phrases (Spoo 54). Focusing on the historical evocation of colonial Ireland's past up to the Parnell era, the present paper explains the function of historical allusions as metonymic portmanteau signs that enable a simultaneously vertical and multidimensional interpretation of Joyce's text. In other words, it seeks to understand the dynamics of these signals both within the text and when presenting national and cultural contexts. In so doing, the emphasis is less on the referent alluded to and more on the creative process based on the use of this device. In a way, *A Portrait* contains the seed of the all-inclusive composition technique prevailing in *Finnegans Wake*, where, as Milesi puts it, "accretions, prompted by earlier lexical cues, dilate a narrative sequence to the extreme and shape dense thematic networks through narrative and linguistic recyclings" (2).

Consistent with the modernist chiasmic structure of *A Portrait* (Gabler, "The Seven Lost Years"), the greatest number of historical allusions are found in chapters one and five. In the first chapter some appear within the context of Clongowes Wood College, a prestigious Jesuit boarding school in Co. Kildare and the oldest Catholic lay school in Ireland. It was founded in 1814 with the assistance of Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), who advised Peter Kenny, superior of the Irish Jesuits, on the best procedure to acquire castle Browne – Penal Laws were still in force at the time (Sullivan 19-20). The allusions related to the students and belonging to college lore evoke nationalist feelings. For instance, Clongowes students "cheered" as "The drivers pointed with their whips to Bodenstown" (30.24-25), because Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798), a United Irishman widely regarded as a founding father of modern Irish republicanism and leader of the rebellion of 1798, is buried there. The college building itself has patriotic associations. Even if the medieval castle of Clongowes Wood was constructed on the border of the Pale as a defence against the native Irish, the Eustace family took the Irish side during the Cromwellian settlements, resulting in the castle being destroyed and their lands being confiscated. In 1677 the estate passed into the hands of the Brownes, a Catholic family from Dublin, who rebuilt the castle. A college lore legend included in the novel tells how the castle's servants witnessed the ghostly appearance of "a marshal" (30.3): Maximilian Ulysses, Count von Browne (1705-1757), the son of an expatriate Irish Jacobite (Corcoran 4-6). This allusion refers to the thousands of Irish troops, the "wild geese", who went abroad after the Williamite War (1689-1691) between James II and William, Prince of Orange, draining Ireland of almost all the remaining gentry of Gaelic and Old English blood (Connolly 592-593).

By contrast, other historical allusions direct the reader's attention to the hegemonic education delivered at Clongowes. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475?-1530), for example, is mentioned in an English-oriented grammar textbook: "*Wolsey died in Leicester Abbey*" (22.22). It was actually under Wolsey's influence that Henry VIII decided to maintain a tighter control over Ireland, leading to the eventual defeat of Lord Offaly in the Kildare rebellion (1534-1535) (Beckett 38-43). Another interesting allusion is to the Wars of the Roses (1455?-1487), the violent civil wars in which the English Houses of Lancaster and York fought for the English throne and in which Ireland was involved: the Fitzgeralds, Earls of Desmond and Kildare, were Yorkist, whereas the Butlers, Earls of Ormond, were Lancastrian (Connolly 586-587). Following an "emulation" method, Father Arnall divides Stephen's class of Elements into two rival parties: York, led by Stephen, and Lancaster, led by Jack Lawton. In *A Portrait*, both

leaders compete for the first place in Elements, but on this occasion the “battle” is won by the Lancaster team when Lawton manages to solve the problem of arithmetic. A defeated Stephen is unable to concentrate on his exercises – he is beginning to feel ill after having been shouldered into the square ditch on the previous day –, so he muses on the “White roses and red roses” that represent the Houses of York and Lancaster, respectively:

White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colours to think of. And the cards for first place and second place and third place were beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender. Lavender and cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of. Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered the song about the wild rose blossoms on the little green place. But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could. (24.17-24)

The colour symbolism in the child’s thoughts has political implications, white and red representing England, and green – note also the adjective “wild”, often associated with the Irish in racist discourses – representing Ireland (Cheng 72). The unlikely existence of a green rose seems to express the conflict felt by the aspiring native class, loyal to its own country due to its origins, yet trained in the ways of the English ruling class.

As we can see, both the allusions to Wolsey and to the Wars of the Roses openly evoke English history and are subjectively associated with a pro-British ideology that reproduces English values and culture. The imperial notion of the necessary world division into coloniser and colonised peoples is this way passed on to the younger members of the upper Catholic class, and each group’s cultural traits are inculcated through covert mechanisms of indoctrination, such as apparently innocuous historical allusions. As denounced by D. P. Moran, colleges like Clongowes were modelled on the English public school system; hence “their emphasis on training young men for the professions, their alleged efforts to replace an Irish brogue with an English accent and their glorification of an English education from which Irish literature, history and language were excluded” (Pašeta 39). Despite O’Connell’s help in establishing the college, the conservative Jesuits supported the status quo preparing their students for the world of the ruling class. The ethos and atmosphere of Clongowes Wood College reflected the aspirations of Ireland’s Catholic elite because, according to Sullivan, “the existence of their school and their own existence as an order depended on the complaisance of a government which tolerated rather than encouraged their activities ... They were not conducting a school for young rebels, agitators, or a revolutionary breed of native patriots” (24). Instead, most students at Clongowes belonged to “a new professional class which, after Catholic Emancipation, began gradually to emerge into Irish public life” and pursued careers in the civil or imperial service, the army, in medicine or law after leaving school (Sullivan 21).³

Joyce also uses historical allusions to expose the beliefs and convictions of individuals in what is an effective characterisation technique in *A Portrait*. In the first chapter, the bulk of the references to Ireland’s past is made by Simon Dedalus, Dante and John Casey in Stephen’s family circle. They resort to allusions in their social interactions in order to openly mark their strong nationalist feelings (“whiteboy”, 45.15; “the union”, 45.29; “catholic emancipation”, 45.32; “the fenian movement”, 45.33), and to either show admiration for national heroes (“the liberator”, 35.29; “Terence Bellew MacManus”, 45.34) or to disparage those who betrayed their country (“renegade catholics”, 42.18; “renegade catholic”, 42.27-28; “bishop Lanigan”, 45.30; “the Marquess Cornwallis”, 45.30-31). Nevertheless, the subjective associations attached to these signals often clash with textual or historical information; through individual interpretation, a more imaginative and mythical history – “mythistory” to use Mali’s expression –⁴ is then constructed. Simon Dedalus is a good case in point. He is portrayed in the novel as a Parnellite who is fond of “talking athletics and politics” (64.9), reveres the eighteenth-century

Patriot parliamentarians (92.30-32), is present at the commemorative events of the 1798 insurrection centenary (161.24-25), and refers to his Whiteboy grandfather (45.13-16) and to his ties to O'Connell (35.28-30). The allusions function as symbols of the character's patriotism, because they mainly serve to exhibit his nationalist opinions and connections; but they are marred by contradictions. For instance, Simon Dedalus tells his young son "that he would be no stranger there [at Clongowes] because his granduncle had presented an address to the liberator there fifty years before" (35.28-30). He refers to an enthusiastic college reception given to Daniel O'Connell when he was elected Mayor of Dublin in 1841 (Corcoran 28).⁵ Dedalus mentions his personal relations as the reason for his son's attendance at the most distinguished Catholic school in Ireland, providing Stephen with a high lineage of Irish patriots similar to Joyce's own.⁶ However, Dedalus's alleged nationalism is ironically called into question when he exclaims "Christian brothers be damned! ... Is it with Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud? No, let him stick to the jesuits" (72.15-16). In other words, although the Christian Brothers' "Irish college" on North Richmond Street fostered "nationality by means of sport, the teaching of Irish history and language, and the instilling of a rigorous and masculine form of nationality" (Pařeta 40), the child is not sent there simply because it was mainly for the Catholics of the lower middle class.⁷ Simon Dedalus, who is not well situated professionally, instead sends Stephen to Clongowes Wood College because of the economic and social aspirations he has for his son: the Jesuits are "a very rich order" (72.19) and, as the educators of the Catholic gentry, they "can get you a position" (72.18).

At an early stage Stephen experiences a sense of the past in the form of history book accounts and legends and bits of information transmitted orally by his elders: priests, teachers and family; he is assimilating his culture's "values and narrative structures rather than questioning them" (Spoo 41). Stephen's evocation of a national hero, "Hamilton Rowan" (22.13; 60.8), is symptomatic of his emotional response to his affective circle: it indicates that the enculturation process, as he is incorporated into the group, is initially successful. A young child, Stephen looks up at the lights of Clongowes castle trying to avoid the footballers' heavy boots and recalls a heroic story that circulated in the school: "He wondered from which window Hamilton Rowan had thrown his hat on the haha" (22.12-14). Archibald Hamilton Rowan (1751-1834), a member of the Society of United Irishmen, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a seditious address to the Volunteers, but he escaped in 1794. According to Corcoran's account, when a party of soldiers went to Rathcoffey to arrest Rowan, its owner, he escaped to the neighbouring Castle Browne – later Clongowes castle (6-7). In Joyce's novel this college lore oral narrative acquires a mythical dimension, echoing the child's own experiences. So, on his way to the rector's room to call for justice after the unfair pandying, he crosses the landing "where Hamilton Rowan had passed and the marks of the soldiers' slugs were there" (60.8-9). His first success at resisting authority is, therefore, linked to the patriotic heroism of Rowan, who acts as one of the protagonist's historical doubles.⁸

Nevertheless, as Stephen grows older his vulnerability to manipulating ideologies is highlighted by means of the ironic contrast between allusions, historical evidence and the narrative tone. In the second chapter of *A Portrait*, the character's alter ego is an ambitious but also ambiguous "Napoleon" (52.38), associated here with a nationalist and a Catholic hero. Accordingly, the child imitates the "plain style of dress" (65.26) of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), who stressed in this manner the democratic nature of his army, and plays soldiers together with "his lieutenant" (65.28) and their "gang of adventurers" (65.23) at "the castle" (65.29). Although "the castle" alludes to the Martello tower in Blackrock,⁹ it also evokes the abortive 1803 rising, in which Robert Emmet (1778-1803) planned to seize Dublin Castle – the bastion of British authority in Ireland – and the French invasion; the premature insurrection was easily overcome and Emmet was executed along with twenty-one others, thus marking the end of a serious revolutionary threat by the United Irishmen (Lydon 279-281). In other words, the

allusion to “the castle” suggests that Stephen’s alter ego as Napoleon is infused with Emmet’s patriotism. The idealised and legendary perception of Napoleon is not unique to Stephen: several plays performed in Dublin at the turn of the century offered a romanticised version of Napoleon’s dealings with the Irish people, despite his imperialist policy in Europe, which eventually sparked off nationalist feelings among the subjugated States (Watt 60). On the other hand, the French leader is presented as a model of a good Catholic, alleged to have said: “the happiest day of my life was the day on which I made my first holy communion” (53.4-5). His devout remark, which was common enough in preparatory classes for the first communion taken by seven-year-old children, is once again at odds with facts: when Napoleon occupied Rome in 1798, Pope Pius VI was made a prisoner; and when in 1809 France annexed the Papal States, Pope Pius VII was taken prisoner and remained in exile until France was invaded by the allies in 1814 (Gifford 152).

The fifth chapter of *A Portrait* also provides a wealth of historical allusions. Most are made by Stephen, and they reveal his disparagement at both nationalist and imperial discourses; the young man is now older and more critical. Stephen’s appraisal of nationalism is best exemplified by the punning allusion “my little tame goose” (176.3) to address his nationalist friend Davin. He refers to the “wild geese” – the Irish Jacobite soldiers who went abroad after the Williamite War – but changes the adjective to “tame” in a sarcastic compliment that implies Stephen is sceptical about the nationalist views of his inconsistent friend. Unlike the seventeenth-century Jacobites, who joined the French army and formed the Irish Brigade to continue fighting against the English, the only battlefield Davin knows is the hurley field;¹⁰ and when Davin mentions his future military aspirations, he speaks of serving in “the foreign legion of France” (159.8-9), the romanticised military force founded in 1831 to control French colonial possessions in Africa. The embedding of this allusion in the novel’s narrative brings forth a complex network of meanings: not only is there an interesting interplay between the phrase and its historical referent; it also hints at new implications and semantic possibilities in the light of Davin’s personality and of Stephen’s views and sympathies.

Further examples of Stephen’s use of historical allusions to criticise nationalism include his condemnation of corrupt contemporary politicians when measured against the heroic figures of the past. Compared to the mythical and grandiose tone of the nationalist associations in the first chapter, Stephen is now much more negative, as in his bitter remembrance of the “tawdry tribute” (161.25) at the laying of the slab to Wolfe Tone:¹¹ “There were four French delegates in a brake and one, a plump smiling young man, held, wedged on a stick, a card on which were printed the words: *Vive l’Irlande!*” (161.26-28). In actual fact, the student’s evocation on his way to university does not adhere to the events described in contemporary reviews:

The Irish Times for Tuesday, 16 August 1898, gives a thorough and relatively glowing account of the procession (seventy bands strong) that paraded through central Dublin on 15 August and of the slab-laying ceremony at the corner of Stephen’s Green. *The Times* describes the crowds as immense and enthusiastic and reports stirring speeches by several of the more important Irish political figures of the day. (Gifford 233)

The disparity in the perception of facts together with Stephen’s harsh tone serves to highlight both the ineffectiveness of the incompetent leading politicians – they never managed to erect the sculpture – and the untrustworthy presence of the “four French delegates” – just one according to reviews (Gifford 234) – at a time when France was the second greatest colonial power after Great Britain.

Stephen is critical not only of nationalism; he is also critical of the hegemonic control exerted by institutions such as University College, Dublin. Even if from 1793, Catholics and dissenters could study at Trinity College, Dublin – the Protestant university originally modelled

on the Oxford and Cambridge system –, the College’s strong Anglican ethos forced many Catholics to study in Irish colleges abroad. Until as late as 1871, Trinity followed an exclusion policy and Catholics were barred from holding scholarships or fellowships. An autonomous Catholic University was established in 1854 with Cardinal John Henry Newman as its first rector. It struggled to survive, receiving no government funding until 1879, when it was reorganised after the University Education Act. In 1882 the Catholic University changed its name to University College, Dublin, and the Society of Jesus took control of it in 1883 (Parkes 539-563). Despite its difficult birth, several historical allusions in *A Portrait* emphasise the contemptible origins and colonial ties of “the sombre college” (161.34), particularly of the building accommodating the institution; the house, as Deane has it, is “haunted by history” (“Introduction” xxx). No. 86 St. Stephen’s Green was originally built for Richard Whaley (“Burnchapel Whaley”), an Ulster Protestant and wealthy landowner who intervened in anti-Catholic arson. His son, Thomas Whaley (“Buck Whaley” or “Jerusalem Whaley”) (1766-1800) – a Member of Parliament and a dissolute and eccentric character – supposedly practised black masses in the building in the company of John Egan (“Bully Egan”) (1750?-1810) (Gifford 234). Stephen’s contempt for the corrupt Irish parliamentarians “Buck Egan and Burnchapel Whaley” (161.35) is all the more understandable when we consider that both politicians opposed the Act of Union (1800) – Whaley, in fact, accepted bribes to vote both for and against the Union.¹² The young man’s disenchanting view that the Union was bought by extensive bribery and large-scale corruption is the perception that prevails in the novel, even if “the exchange of patronage for parliamentary support remained within the limits of eighteenth-century convention” (Connolly 565). The university building is consequently an alien space where “The Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space” (162.2-3). As summed up by Deane, Stephen understands “the history of his city’s monuments in the light of his own preoccupations, making it, so to say, ‘personal’” (“Introduction” xiv).

As for the education delivered at University College, Dublin, we read that the entry of the Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy into the “gloomy” (167.3) physics theatre is signalled by means of “a few rounds of Kentish fire from the heavy boots of those students who sat on the highest tier” (167.1-2). The passing historical allusion brings in unexpected connotations: the expression “Kentish fire” is “said to have originated in reference to meetings held in Kent in 1828-1829, in opposition to the Catholic Relief Bill” (Simpson and Weiner, VIII 389). The peculiar metaphor ironically recalls the history of the building where the lecture takes place, but also hints at the hegemonic education offered within it. An illustration of the detrimental effects of such education is Temple’s unquestioning acceptance of unreliable and biased history texts. The student allegedly quotes on the Dedalus family (“*Pernobilis et pervetusta familia*”, 199.12), although the Dedaluses are not mentioned in either *Topographia Hibernica* (*Topography of Ireland*) or *Expugnatio Hibernica* (*Conquest of Ireland*) by Gerald of Wales (Gerald de Barry, Giraldus Cambrensis) (1146-1223) (Gifford 271).¹³ What looks like an authoritative and validating scholarly citation is but a conspicuous misquotation. What is more, the supposed accuracy of historiographies is open to question and their hegemonic partiality is exposed in the light of historical evidence (Spoo 38-65). Irish history is distorted in the biased texts by Giraldus Cambrensis, whose purpose was to outline strategies to complete the conquest of Ireland and to justify Anglo-Norman intervention. Even though they inaugurated “the colonial historiographical tradition of a negative portrayal of the Irish”, they were heavily relied on by Anglo-Irish and English writers (Connolly 220-221). Temple follows suit and takes the prestige of the historical source for granted, ironically resorting in his commentary on Stephen to a phrase that refers to a prominent figure in the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland: Robert fitz Stephen (Gifford 271).

And yet, despite his conscious resistance to all structures of domination and their ideologies, the protagonist is influenced by inescapable acculturation and indoctrination

processes. As for Stephen's Irishness, according to Thornton, it represents "a part of himself he senses to be important but *cannot* render fully conscious, and thus it frustrates his aspiration to be self-aware and self-determining" (146). His Irishness "remains necessarily in the penumbra of his experience, a source both of fascination and of fear" (147). In this sense, Stephen's vision of two siblings, when confronted with the simian-like captain at the National Library, is interesting. Stephen wonders "was the story true and was the thin blood that flowed in his [the captain's] shrunken frame noble and come of an incestuous love" (197.28-30), and then muses:

The park trees were heavy with rain and rain fell still and ever in the lake, lying grey like a shield. A game of swans flew there and the water and the shore beneath were fouled with their greenwhite slime. They embraced softly, impelled by the grey rainy light, the wet silent trees, the shieldlike witnessing lake, the swans. They embraced without joy or passion, his arm about his sister's neck. A grey woollen cloak was wrapped athwart her from her shoulder to her waist: and her fair head was bent in willing shame. He had loose redbrown hair and tender shapely strong freckled hands. Face. There was no face seen. The brother's face was bent upon her fair rainfragrant hair. The hand freckled and strong and shapely and caressing was Davin's hand. (197.31-41)

In Stephen's vision of incestuous love, the historical allusion is to the social practice regulated by Brehon law: in early and medieval Ireland "When the sole child left to inherit was a daughter, Gaelic-Irish custom encouraged the heiress to marry within her kin group in order to prevent the alienation of family land" (Connolly 348). This allusion not only has nationalist connotations, as inferred from the identification of the brother with Davin – he is an ardent revivalist and advocate of the Gaelic past. It also points at Stephen's peculiar use of language in the passage: his lyrical and figurative style reflects his assimilation of turn-of-the-century revivalist discourse, as well as its parodic blending with the romantic style of the Walter Scott novels admired by the retired sea-captain. In other words, despite attempts at "re-colonising" or rewriting their past, the counter-narrative of the colonised is just as misrepresentative and deceptive as the idealised brother in the reverie, who is actually called forth by a "shrivelled mannikin" (198.1-2) "of dwarfish stature" (197.5) with a "blackish" (197.13) and "stubblegrown monkeyish face" (197.10).¹⁴ In his analysis of Stephen's increasing ambivalence towards history, Spoo argues that the character's "double discourse of history" ultimately "centers on his relationship to language, his belief that words provide the only satisfactory access to the real" (62). Indeed, whether history is quoted from so-called history texts – Temple's citation from Giraldus Cambrensis – or told in the style of romantic literature – Stephen's representation of Gaelic Ireland –, the emphasis is on biased narratives, on words as the malleable material historiographies are made of; or, as Joyce put it, on the "talings" of the "tellings" (*Finnegans Wake* 213).

Stephen's admiration for the hegemonic culture, on the other hand, reflects his inability to escape from many of the values imposed on him by his education but that he has assimilated as his own. The best illustration of this is the young man's enjoyment of the magnificent literary and musical production of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, of "the age of Dowland and Byrd and Nash" (201.26). There are allusions to "the song by Ben Jonson which begins: *I was not wearier where I lay*" (155.5-7) and to the line "*Brightness falls from the air*" (202.22), from a poem by Thomas Nashe. Stephen is even asked by nationalist Emma to sing "one of his curious songs" (190.14-15), "a dainty song of the Elizabethans, a sad and sweet loth to depart, the victory chant of Agincourt, the happy air of Greensleeves" (190.17-19) at a meeting where the guests talk among themselves, unconscious of the political connotations of King Henry V's victory at Agincourt (1415) in the Hundred Years' War against France – it made England one

of the most powerful kingdoms in Europe. And yet, the indoctrination exerted by dominant ideologies results in lacerating and unresolved contradictions. The Elizabethan and Jacobean ages provide Stephen, through rich and evocative language, with reveries that are a secret source of pleasure and, at the same time, of moralistic disgust:

Eyes, opening from the darkness of desire, eyes that dimmed the breaking east. What was their languid grace but the softness of chambering? And what was their shimmer but the shimmer of the scum that mantled the cesspool of the court of a slobbering Stuart. And he tasted in the language of memory ambered wines, dying fallings of sweet airs, the proud pavan: and saw with the eyes of memory kind gentlewomen in Covent Garden wooing from their balconies with sucking mouths and the poxfouled wenches of the taverns and young wives that, gaily yielding to their ravishers, clipped and clipped again. (201.27-35)

The admired gay and sensual “age of Dowland and Byrd and Nash” in the reverie is also dissolute, and as putrid as “the scum that mantled the cesspool of the court of a slobbering Stuart”, in reference to King James I (1566-1625) (Gifford 273). Stephen’s reaction reveals that he cannot, in fact, escape nationalist contempt for British rule and stereotypes of the English as a base and corrupt people; hence his mixed feelings. Although the young man claims his share of the English culture, he is well-aware that he is not even an unwanted guest, but a mere voyeuristic onlooker “in the vesture of a doubting monk” (155.10-11).

In his seminal *James Joyce and the Language of History*, Spoo contends that history is subordinated

to the shape of Stephen’s life and evolving consciousness. *A Portrait* avoids engaging the problem of history in any direct, systematic way, or rather subsumes it under the more pressing problem of narrating the personal history of Stephen Dedalus ... In *A Portrait* ... history is important because it belongs to Stephen’s emerging sense of self, and this personal imperative causes historical issues to be registered in psychological and poetic terms, in sudden flashes of image and metaphor, allusion and luminous detail, as Stephen’s mind and story dictate. (39)

As argued in this essay, however, historical allusions are central to *A Portrait* because they function as the true “portals” for discovering a less apparent, though compelling, parallel portrait: that of Ireland as a British colony.¹⁵ The Ireland presented in this *Bildungsroman* is multifaceted and ambiguous, and Joyce is concerned with the hybridisation of the Irish culture both thematically and stylistically. As Howes and Attridge emphasise, “it is precisely the subtlety of the judgments implicit in the twists and turns, the referential uncertainties, and the narrative experiments of his fictional writing that we may locate the value of his involvement with the contest for Irish national independence and political freedom” (16).

On the one hand, historical allusions function as textual signs that grant readers access to multiple layers of meaning, expanding the text into different contexts by means of a productive network of associations and connotations whose meanings are not fixed and univocal. They convey factual information on the historical referent evoked, but they also reflect the affiliations and sympathies projected by individuals, turning the textual signs into actual symbols and distinctive identity hallmarks. In this light, the primary function of allusions is “to deepen and to reverberate and ... to interrelate the personalities of the characters ... in ways that they themselves cannot become fully aware of” (Thornton 152). And yet, historical

allusions are not to be taken at face value: their intended effect is often contradicted or at least modified by textual information, contextual knowledge and historical evidence. Such a dynamic network of associations illuminates, complements or opposes the superficial reading of the text, laying bare main characters' contradictions, but also contributing to creating communal myths.

On the other hand, historical allusions reveal the workings of manipulative discourses and dominant ideologies on individuals, who seem to inexorably give in to their acculturating and indoctrinating processes. One such individual is Stephen Dedalus. In *A Portrait* "we see the construction of an ideology within an individual's [Stephen's] consciousness, as well as the struggle entailed in resisting that ideology, in breaking away and commenting on it" (Williams 97). The struggle is in vain, though. The historical allusions associated with Stephen are particularly meaningful because they reflect his changing reactions to the conflictive influences he is subject to, namely, the nationalist values received from family and friends, and the hegemonic standards transmitted by educational institutions. In fact, Joyce's irregular distribution of historical allusions in the novel reinforces a subjective reading of events: in chapter one, the closest affective circle has a stronger influence on the receptive and unquestioning child, who resorts to historical allusions in order to adopt a heroic alter ego and assert his developing personality. In chapter five, however, Stephen's allusions reveal that, in spite of his sceptic and detached criticism of both nationalist and imperial discourses, he has assimilated their values. Influenced by family and friends, he has nationalist sympathies and is hostile to colonial control; but directed by educational institutions, and in spite of himself, he delights in English artistic tradition. Stephen is thus the product of a hybrid culture. His inconsistencies and opposing feelings reveal his mixed origins, and his bitter judgements and complexes result from the acculturation and indoctrination he is subject to. In the end, the "nets" – "nationality, language, religion" (177.30-31) – set to entrap him cannot be fully eluded, because they have become an inextricable part of himself.¹⁶

Notes

¹ The presence of the Irish context in Joyce's texts has been central to Joyce criticism for decades. Key book-length studies include Fairhall (1993) and Spoo (1994), both of which explore the social and historical forces that shape the works written by the Irish author. Joyce's social and political thought and the political effects of his writing are discussed at length in Manganiello (1980) and Williams (1997). For research focusing on Joyce's life and oeuvre from a postcolonial perspective, see Cheng (1995), Nolan (1995), Attridge and Howes (2000) and Orr (2008). Finally, drawing from previous research, Gibson (2013) focuses on the writer's relations with Ireland and their impact on creativity. Regarding historical sources, two helpful studies are Daly (1981) and Pašeta (1999). For general reference, see Connolly (1998), Lydon (1998) and the various volumes of *A New History of Ireland* edited by Cosgrove; Hill; Moody, Martin and Byrne; Moody and Vaughan; Ó Cróinín; and Vaughan (2005-2011).

² Historical allusions are varied in form and elusive to the eye. Some are expressed by means of proper names, nicknames, toponyms or names of towns ("Wolfe Tone", 161.24; "the liberator", 35.29; "the thingmote", 148.21; "Bodenstown", 30.25) (for the allusive potential of names, see Culleton), while others refer to institutions, organisations and their members ("Irish parliament", 92.29; "the fenian movement", 45.33; "whiteboy", 45.15). Further allusions take the form of historical periods, key events in history, and the symbols or bynames associated with those events ("kingdom of the Danes", 149.28; "catholic emancipation", 45.32; "White roses and red roses", 24.17; "tame goose", 176.3). Finally, some historical allusions are based on quotations from written sources, on personal opinions, and even on terms of abuse ("*Pernobilis et pervetusta familia*", 199.12; "They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them", 177.15; "renegade catholics", 42.18). The already subtle effects of allusions is obscured by the use of initial lower case for words normally written with a capital letter, a tendency that became more unorthodox in later revisions of the novel (Gabler, "Towards a Critical Text" 30). All references to *A Portrait* are cited parenthetically in the text by page and line number.

³ Despite expanding employment prospects for Catholics, their horizons were limited. Regarding the increase in the proportion of Catholics within the professions during the nineteenth century, Daly comments that "Already by 1861, 28% of barristers, 32% of doctors and 33% of all judges were Catholics as were 42% of all bankers' agents and merchants. By 1911, 44% of all lawyers and slightly under half of all doctors were Catholics, though in a number of business areas, control still rested largely with Protestants" (111). Though steadily increasing, such

figures were rather low for a predominantly Catholic population.

⁴ Mali explores myth as an essential part of history and holds that in Joyce's texts all major events in historical reality must be perceived "as myths that require spiritual veneration and interpretation rather than factual explanation" (288). For this reason, Stephen "understands that what determines the meaning of history is a subjective and creative interpretation of its constitutive myths" (291).

⁵ After helping in its foundation, O'Connell was in prolonged contact with Clongowes Wood College: in addition to the reception mentioned in *A Portrait*, his sons were educated there, and he retired there during the repeal agitation campaign (Corcoran 28-29).

⁶ Joyce's great-granduncle was John O'Connell, the owner of one of the largest general stores in Cork, who had served in local politics and claimed to be a distant relative of Daniel O'Connell. According to Ellmann, "The Liberator was glad to concede the connection, and when he came to Cork twice a year for the Assizes would always pay a visit to his 'cousin' John O'Connell" (12).

⁷ Unlike James Joyce himself, who attended the Christian Brothers' school on North Richmond Street for a few months in 1893 (Ellmann 35); this interlude is omitted from *A Portrait*.

⁸ However, Stephen's heroism is deflated when Simon Dedalus tells "the whole story" (73.6) from Father Conmee's point of view: "Father Dolan and I, when I told them all at dinner about it, Father Dolan and I had a great laugh over it. *You better mind yourself, Father Dolan, said I, or young Dedalus will send you up for twice nine.* We had a famous laugh together over it. Ha! Ha! Ha!" (73.10-13). Stephen's is yet another example of a heroic rebellion being crushed by colonial institutions and the complicit bourgeoisie.

⁹ Between 1804 and 1812 a series of Martello towers were constructed along the Irish and British coasts as a defence against possible French invasion (Connolly 351).

¹⁰ Under cover of sport, drill practice took place in many hurling clubs and military training was conducted with the camauns or hurley sticks (Lydon 280). Even if Davin is considered "a young fenian" (158.39) – his membership of the Irish Republican Brotherhood is further hinted at by his echoing of the slogan "Our day will come yet" (177.24-25) (Deane, "Notes" 317) –, Stephen is sceptical of such a force and speaks ironically of "the next rebellion with hurleysticks" (176.17) in allusion to the abortive 1867 Fenian rising.

¹¹ In order to commemorate the centenary of the rebellion of 1798, a slab was laid on 15 August 1898 on the spot where a sculpture of Wolfe Tone was to be set up (Gifford 232-233).

¹² William Pitt, the British Prime Minister, held that an ultimate union of the two countries, together with the political emancipation of Catholics, was the only solution to the Irish religious problem. This measure was resisted in Ireland by the House of Commons and by commercial interests in Dublin, not just on grounds of nationalist sentiment, but mainly for fear that the Protestant ascendancy would not be maintained. Most Catholics, on the other hand, supported the Union in the belief – promoted by Pitt – that it would soon be followed by full Catholic emancipation, which would entail admitting them to the positions from which they were still excluded after the Catholic Relief Acts. Parliamentary opposition to the Union was overcome by the negotiations of Lord Lieutenant Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquess Cornwallis, and Chief Secretary Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, acting under Pitt's supervision. Two identical acts which brought the separate existence of the Irish parliament to an end were carried through the parliaments of both kingdoms in 1800, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (Lydon 275-279).

¹³ The name Dedalus is in fact Joyce's adaptation of the Greek mythical name Daedalus.

¹⁴ The racialised discourse of the revivalist cultural movements, organised along a binary axis with the English race as the negative pole and the Irish as the positive one, in fact mimicked English models and stereotypes. In this form of reverse ethnocentrism, Cheng sums up, the "'nativist' position merely mirrors the hierarchical fantasies of the colonizer's culture now projected onto the fantasized originary culture of the 'Other'", so that both sides "employ the terms and logic constructed by the dominant, colonizing culture" (53-54).

¹⁵ The phrase "portals of discovery" is borrowed from Stephen's famous assertion in *Ulysses*: "A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (Joyce 156).

¹⁶ Such was the case with Joyce too. In his informative *James Joyce and the Exilic Imagination*, Gillespie explains that Joyce "did not stop being someone from a middle-class Irish-Catholic Dublin family, but he did place himself on the margin of that world with a both/and view of its features and foibles. This emotional, cultural, and social repositioning had an enduring and very specific impact on Joyce's process of composition" (32).

Works Cited

- Attridge, Derek and Marjorie Howes, eds. *Semicolonial Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000.
- Beckett, J.C. *A Short History of Ireland*. London: Hutchinson, 1968 (1952).
- Cheng, Vincent J. *Joyce, Race and Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995.

- Connolly, S.J., ed. *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998.
- Corcoran, Timothy. *The Story of Clongowes Wood: A.D. 1450-1900*. Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, n.d.
- Cosgrove, Art, ed. *A New History of Ireland. Medieval Ireland 1169-1534*. II. Oxford: Clarendon, 2008 (1987).
- Culleton, Claire A. *Names and Naming in Joyce*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- Daly, Mary E. *Social and Economic History of Ireland since 1800*. Dublin: The Educational Company of Ireland, 1981.
- Deane, Seamus. "Introduction". *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. Seamus Deane. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 1992 (1916). vii-xliii.
- . "Notes". *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. Seamus Deane. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 1992 (1916). 277-329.
- Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1983 (1959).
- Fairhall, James. *James Joyce and the Question of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993.
- Gabler, Hans Walter. "Towards a Critical Text of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*". *Studies in Bibliography* 27 (1974): 1-53.
- . "The Seven Lost Years of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*". *Approaches to Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man": Ten Essays*. Ed. Thomas F. Staley and Bernard Benstock. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976. 25-60.
- Gibson, Andrew. *The Strong Spirit: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in the Writings of James Joyce, 1898-1915*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2013.
- Gifford, Don. *Joyce Annotated: Notes for "Dubliners" and "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"*. Rev. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982 (1967).
- Gillespie, Michael Patrick. *James Joyce and the Exilic Imagination*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015.
- Hill, Jacqueline R., ed. *A New History of Ireland. Ireland, 1921-84*. VII. Oxford: Clarendon, 2010 (2003).
- Howes, Marjorie and Derek Attridge. "Introduction". *Semicolonial Joyce*. Ed. Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2000. 1-20.
- Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. R. B. Kershner. Rev. ed. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's, 1993 (1916).
- . *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 1986 (1922).
- . *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989 (1939).
- Lydon, James. *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Mali, Joseph. *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Manganiello, Dominic. *Joyce's Politics*. London: Routledge, 1980.
- Milesi, Laurent. "Introduction: Language(s) with a Difference". *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*. Ed. Laurent Milesi. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2003. 1-27.
- Moody, Theodore W., Francis X. Martin and Francis J. Byrne, ed. *A New History of Ireland. Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691*. III. Oxford: Clarendon, 2009 (1976).
- , Francis X. Martin and Francis J. Byrne, ed. *A New History of Ireland. A Chronology of Irish History to 1976: A Companion to Irish History, Part I*. VIII. Oxford: Clarendon, 2011 (1982).
- , Francis X. Martin and Francis J. Byrne, ed. *A New History of Ireland. Maps, Genealogies, Lists: A Companion to Irish History, Part II*. IX. Oxford: Clarendon, 2011 (1984).
- and William E. Vaughan, ed. *A New History of Ireland. Eighteenth Century Ireland*

- 1691-1800. IV. Oxford: Clarendon, 2009 (1982).
- Nolan, Emer. *James Joyce and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí, ed. *A New History of Ireland. Prehistoric and Early Ireland*. I. Oxford: Clarendon, 2005.
- Orr, Leonard, ed. *Joyce, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U.P., 2008.
- Parkes, Susan M. "Higher Education, 1793-1908". *A New History of Ireland. Ireland Under the Union, II: 1870-1921*. VI. Ed. William E. Vaughan. Oxford: Clarendon, 2010 (1996). 539-570
- Pašeta, Senia. *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Élite, 1879-1922*. Cork: Cork U.P., 1999.
- Simpson, John A. and Edmund S.C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 20 vols. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.
- Spoo, Robert. *James Joyce and the Language of History*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1994.
- Sullivan, Kevin. *Joyce among the Jesuits*. New York: Columbia U.P., 1958.
- Thornton, Weldon. *The Antimodernism of Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse U.P., 1994.
- Vaughan, William E., ed. *A New History of Ireland. Ireland Under the Union, I: 1801-1870*. V. Oxford: Clarendon, 2009 (1989).
- , ed. *A New History of Ireland. Ireland Under the Union, II: 1870-1921*. VI. Oxford: Clarendon, 2010 (1996).
- Watt, Stephen. *Joyce, O'Casey, and the Irish Popular Theater*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse U.P., 1991.
- Williams, Trevor L. *Reading Joyce Politically*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997.

Received: 2 November 2018

Revised version accepted: 30 May 2019

María-Ángeles Conde-Parrilla is a senior lecturer of English and Literary Translation at the Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Spain. Her main research interests are in postcolonial translation studies, creative and cultural aspects in literary translation, and linguistic variation. She has published several articles and reviews on Joyce and literary translation in a number of books (*Estudios en torno a la traducción del Quijote, Rimbaud's Rainbow*) and journals (*Language and Literature, James Joyce Quarterly*).

macondep@upo.es