

2

'A warmer memory': speaking of Ireland[†]

COLIN GRAHAM

The colonized considers those venerable scholars relics and thinks of them as sleepwalkers who are living in an old dream. (Memmi 1990 [1957]: 172)

[He] says that in the course of his labours it would happen that inspiration failed him: he then would go downstairs and out of his house, and enter a public urinal whose odor was suffocating. He breathed deeply, and having thus 'approached as close as he could to the object of his horror', he returned to his work. I cannot help recalling the author's countenance, noble, emaciated, the nostrils quivering. (Bataille on Michelet, quoted in Barthes 1987 [1954]: 221)

The role of the intellectual voice in the construction of radical identities has been central to the post-colonial critique of Ireland.² Memmi's amusedly affectionate dismissal of 'venerable scholars' sleepwalking their way through a history that is constantly passing them by is an appealing way to circumvent the interminable question 'Can the subaltern speak?', which shadows, *in potentia*, all pronouncements on the post-colonial subject and, by analogy, all acts of speaking of Ireland too. Spivak's question and its possible declensions essentially deny that an academic voice can be elevated to a point of enlightenment above the shadows of history and, since Spivak's essay, post-colonial theory has had a shorthand way in which to express its awareness of the potentially crippling vacuity at its centre. Yet Irish criticism, post-colonial or otherwise, along with post-colonial criticism more generally, *has* gone on despite itself, with a Sisyphan doggedness, and continues to find a way of speaking 'of Ireland. Memmi's analysis and Spivak's question pressurise intellectually radical discourse that avows to be from 'below', in two distinct ways. For Memmi, the conditions of colonialism and the post-colonial outstrip the capacities of the scholarly, so that the possibility of finding an adequate,

conceptual and historical framework for the (post-)colonial is always archaised and shut off by the place in which that framework must be articulated. For Spivak, the critical voice (or any voice which speaks 'about' the colonised) immediately suffers the distancing institutionality which fractures the 'object' of discourse from the voice which speaks it and which it attempts to make its own, simultaneous 'subject'. So for both Memmi and Spivak, the very moment at which 'marginality' is articulated is the moment at which its purity founders.

In remembering the anecdote about Michelet, Bataille 'embodies' this dilemma; the impossibility of an authoritative margin. And Bataille thus ennobles the pathos of Michelet's solution – Michelet, constantly 'feeling' history as personal physiological trauma, tries to break through to 'the people', his object of study, by forcing himself through another physiological trauma which brings him face to face with the evidence of 'their' literal body politic. The quivering of Michelet's nostrils may be comically deflationary, in the first instance (like Memmi's intellectuals Michelet could be missing the substance of history, experiencing the nightmare of loss while dreaming delusions of grandeur), but his descent downstairs, his leaving of the sanctity of his own house and place of writing, and his self-degradation in primal excreta, function as a parable of the 'scholarly' when it lives off 'the people' as the basis of its existence. Michelet is alone, silent, inadequate, but ultimately valiant because he confronts and knows the abyss at the centre of his project. Above all, Michelet (in having this story known as well as enacting it) forces his writing about 'the people' to a crisis, which involves the elemental nature of his self-identity. In doing this Michelet certainly anticipates the gap between colonised people and post-colonial critique which has recently resurfaced; more profoundly he moves to the edge of that aporia, needing the object of his study to be the most sensate of realities, and insisting that it disturb his own calm. If Michelet cannot be *of* the people (and as we will see later he knew that he always failed to be), his sense of their corporeality as refracted through his own is as appropriately 'noble' and 'emaciated' as the dilemma which he lives out.

In his book on Michelet, Roland Barthes allows him to incant the indulgences of 'venerable scholars' who utter 'the people'. This essay uses Barthes' Michelet to initiate a discussion of the strategies of writing about Ireland in relation to the critical 'self' which becomes implicated in that 'Ireland'. I examine the role which the 'warmer memory' of 'the people' crucially undertakes in the processes of a criticism which takes to itself or asserts identity politics, and discuss the 'organic' necessities of

the intellectual as they are reacted against and reconstructed in Joyce's Stephen Dedalus. Barthes' Michelet, my argument goes, exemplifies the fact that 'crossing marginality' is the constitutive paradox of the radical intellectual voice, and that taking that paradox to its basest, corporeal conclusion is one way in which it can be confronted and understood.

I

Michelet's view of history intrigues Barthes for many reasons (its critical sense of the bodily is only one example³). But above all it offers Barthes, pre-*Mythologies*, a challenge which Michelet also sets himself when he suggests that in history-writing 'words must be heard which were never spoken' (quoted in Barthes 1987 [1954]: 102). In one way this is the purest of structuralist challenges; Barthes' Michelet is engaged in writing a history of France through a self-consciously doubled order of signs, in which historical events as signifiers act as a sign system in themselves, revealing history as other historians write and read it, but also point to a mythological second order of signs which delineates the words of an embedded and 'impossible language'. Michelet, as quoted by Barthes, writes:

I was born of the people, I have the people in my heart. The monuments of its olden days have been my delight ... But the people's language, its language was inaccessible to me. I have not been able to make the people speak. (1987 [1954]: 199)

Michelet's failure as historian hinges on his acceptance of what Spivak, through Said, constantly reminds us of in 'Can the subaltern speak?': 'the critic's institutional responsibility' (1993: 75). And Michelet takes this 'responsibility' not in its meanest sense (that is, in being responsible to itself, to history, to objectivity, to disciplinary rigours), but in its weightiest connotation as predicatory foundation for the critical voice. Michelet's voice here is close to the 'baleful innocence'⁴ that Spivak identifies when, in 'Can the subaltern speak?', she analyses Deleuze's conversation with Foucault. However, in the end, Michelet's balefulness, in its raw self-aware state, is entirely opposite to theirs. Contrast Michelet's abnegation in the urinal to Spivak's comment on Deleuze and Foucault: 'The banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent' (1993: 70). Michelet, painfully, cannot believe himself transparent and yet cannot break out of the

connective fabric of 'representation' which interweaves 'the choice of and need for "heroes"' with re-presentation in the 'scene of writing'.⁵ Writing itself thus becomes for Michelet a bodily enterprise, just as the evidence of the history he lives off takes on a repulsive-attractive corporeal form; history for Michelet, as Barthes suggests, is to be 'consummated' and 'consumed' (1987 [1954]: 25). And yet Michelet's history, bound by the strictures of representation, is riven by the movement to the material and bodily, set against a realisation of the 'impossible language' needed to conceive history. Both the textuality and the mystically unsayable nature of this dilemma are embodied in Barthes' summary of Michelet's idea of the 'historian's duties': 'The historian is in fact a civil magistrate in charge of administering the estate of the dead' (1987 [1954]: 82). As civil *servant* (of the people), as 'the magus who receives from the dead their actions' and who is duty-bound to voice words 'never spoken' (82), Michelet's own corporeality and selfhood are continually questioned in this self-exiled existence between the paradoxically substantial ghosts which are 'the people' and the spectral realities which are historical facts.

The importance of Michelet's example lies in his ability (and in that of Barthes' prompting critique) to make 'the people' site and receptor of his energies while knowing their unbridgeable distance from himself. Michelet, through Barthes, turns on their heads the transparency of the subaltern and the self-knowing of the intellectual, so that 'the people', source of his very existence, are at best for him an 'it', and so veering towards being an Other, while the self 'Michelet' which writes is made strange and decayed to itself. Moving towards the people and towards him-self, Michelet vainly but heroically empties the heroism of history, questions his own heroism, and keeps 'the people' from the text.

Michelet's example is no solution to the question of how the act of representing 'the people' can be made transparent; what he stands as, through Barthes, is a statement of the nature of the difficulties which Spivak sees post-colonial and post-structuralist radicalism constantly evading. Michelet frankly acknowledges the attraction of 'warmth' over 'light'; light being a 'critical idea [which] implies culture and brightness', while warmth is 'a phenomenon of depth; it is the sign of the mass, of the innumerable, of the people, of the barbarian' (Barthes 1987 [1954]: 184). And so it is that the 'voice of the people affords Michelet a warmer memory that is more "linked together" than all the writings of the legislators and witnesses' (Barthes 1987 [1954]: 82). The bifurcation of 'light' and 'warmth' as poles of repulsion and attraction undoes that banality which Spivak bemoans and puts in process a deconstruction of 'the

people' as intellectual piety.⁶ The tension between scholasticism and the people can be figured in these terms, as they are for Michelet when in self-contemplation, and as they are in Joyce's Ithacan meeting of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, as I suggest later. 'Light' and 'warmth' are definitively not opposites for Michelet; their phenomenological inter-relation and inter-reliance, and yet their inherent difference, give them a co-existence which conceptually is able to symbolise the tortured kind of self-sustenance which the intellectual voice finds itself reluctant, unable and unwilling to achieve. The 'warmth' of 'the people' for (Irish) criticism proves irresistible but may need to be forever unobtainable.

'The people' as Michelet always fails to find them are thus fetishised to some extent, and would be fully, if only he could find 'it', and so make 'it' into 'them'. 'The people' as 'it' plays hide and seek with Michelet so that he can never say for certain whether 'it' is now or will be soon a 'they'. All he has is the unrecapturable certainty of the past tense ('I was born of the people') and so he senses and remembers the 'warmth' of the people, but he never regains 'its' heat in his writing. The impossible language of the subaltern people will always attract him, by choice and by necessity; more than this, 'it' (as entity and as language) demands the absolute attention of his writing and in the end his whole self as intellectual. So Michelet's journey out his house is the closest that he can come to the double representation that he desires. That journey makes foundational and yet absent 'the people' and the form of language they demand but which cannot be attained.

Irish critical voices, I would argue, find themselves in varieties of Michelet's structural predicament. The 'hidden' Ireland of Irish criticism (or more generally, writing about Ireland) is very obviously conceived in many ways by many writers, but that variety of politics and of interpretative modes need not be flattened out to a homogeneity in order to see that the site of that 'warmth' which Michelet sought, whether 'found', disavowed or revised, is the 'impossible language' which underlies each statement of definition of what Ireland is or might be. Michelet's self-critical journey mirrors, for example, Daniel Corkery's journey into his 'hidden Ireland', 'leaving the cities and towns behind', venturing 'among the bogs and hills, far into the mountains ... [where] the native Irish ... still lurked' (1967 [1924]: 19–20). But we need not take either the journey or the 'hiddenness' of Ireland so literally in order to see how Barthes' Michelet reveals the warmth which Irish criticism seeks by being Irish criticism. The remainder of this chapter attempts, firstly, to see how the impossibility of speaking 'Ireland' underlies critical writing

about Ireland, and secondly, how this aporetic 'Ireland' implicates itself in the self of the critical voice which seeks it out. In Irish criticism, the 'crossing of margins' may initially seem to suggest a metaphoric critical vocabulary based on a kind of cultural geography. However, such spatial conceptualisations of radical critique also cover a fundamental critical anxiety about the 'crossing' out of the category of the intellectual which the intellectual voice must undertake as soon as it speaks of that cultural geography. To extend the above example, we might ask what it is that leads Corkery, 'upbraided', as he terms it, at the end of *The Hidden Ireland*, to finish his book with these heartfelt words of his own inadequacies in the face of 'the people', and to render *himself* in terms of physical incapacity:

Here, then, my tribute, humble, halting, inept, unlearned, to a body of men who for long were almost entirely forgotten and who as yet are only clumsily apprehended – their lives, their works, their genius. Of all our forgotten dead, of whom these words following have been written, those poets, it seems to me, most terribly upbraid us: 'To them has been meted out the second death – the lot feared beyond all else by men of honour. They have been buried by the false hands of strangers in the deep pit of contempt, reproach and forgetfulness – an unmerited grave of silence and shame'. (1967 [1924]: 295)⁷

II

In speaking of Ireland, in any critical or metadiscursive context, the question of what the word 'Ireland' signifies is obviously semantically and politically fraught to the extent that it is tempting to suggest that Irish critical discourse, in its multiple manifestations, finds itself *de facto* always returned to exactly that defining activity. Giving 'Ireland' a meaning which fills out the term comfortably is seemingly the underwriting principle of Irish criticism's existence, with the aesthetic, the cultural, the generic and the 'minor' all given a presence within critical writing on Ireland by their contribution as slivers of 'Ireland' which are temporarily imagined as hived off from the undisruptable, unseeable whole. Each book and article on Joyce or on the Whiteboys, each individual account of Irish memoir, each reclamation of Irishness from the diaspora, then risks becoming subsumed in the perpetually deferred but always desired, Casaubon-like quest for the settling of 'the Irish question', a question which both begs a definition and a definitive answer; and that question transcends the politics of Unionism or nationalism, the force of

revisionist historiography, the regional and the local, and indeed the course of historical change itself, being always sure of its position as the *raison d'être* of what is spoken about 'Ireland' and never in fear of alteration by these pronouncements. It needs to be made clear that this is not the same as saying that Ireland as a political entity has never changed; nor is it the same as saying that Irish nationalism has a fixed, archaic sense of what the Irish nation is. This underwriting 'Ireland' is constituted not primarily by politics and history *per se*, but by the structural necessities of (what is inadequately termed) 'identity' and by the predominance of proper noun and adjective, Ireland and Irish, as identifications of place, identity and, just as comprehensively, academic discipline and intellectual thought; this 'Ireland' inhabits a domain which is closer, as an analogy, to the inevitable ever-presence of historiography within the evidence of history than it is to historical 'facts' or interpretations themselves. It is always implied and implicated in criticism's voice rather than being given substance by any transparent relationship which criticism claims to have with its object. Hence to speak of Ireland is to project forward to a future project in which all facts, opinions and statements on Ireland find a home within the encompassment of what 'Ireland' is; this 'Ireland' is constituted through critical language as a 'transcendental signified' which 'would place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign' (Derrida 1976: 49). And so we should anticipate that the expectation of reassurance and resolution will pervade the Irish critical voice, its 'Ireland' always cast hopefully into a sense of an ending.

However, such an 'end' would be far from only reassuring, since this critically anticipated 'Ireland' also brings a danger. Its putative and ever-promised achievement carries with it the death of 'Ireland' as foundation; in its promise to 'place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign' it carries the fear of turning 'Ireland' into real 'presence'. Through its articulation 'Ireland' is *not* the effective end-point of a narrative, despite the constant futurity of a notional set of Irelands in the realm of the political. The transcendent 'Ireland', which accommodates all statements about Ireland, slips out of time before it can be entrapped, and thus avoids collapsing the trope of narration. Indeed it could be argued (as I suggest below with regard to Declan Kiberd and Emer Nolan in their critiques of Joyce) that narrative time is the way in which 'Ireland' escapes and puts off definition, ensuring its place as an absent presence now, and a promissory repletion later, when time itself is full and 'nostalgia' no longer has a role.

This notionally transcendent 'Ireland' is not, then, just another sign. No alternative transcendent lies in wait to take over; the possible alternatives (those which are foundational, for example, in liberal humanism *and* nationalism – the literary, the good, the just) have already been deployed in the perpetual process of definition and fixing, and so exist below the transcendent status of 'Ireland', having been in its service. Hence there must be a necessarily tremulous method of approaching 'Ireland' within Irish criticism; on the one hand seeking its definition as the key to all mythologies, as the *langue* of speaking about Ireland which binds together and explains the fact of speech in this discourse itself; on the other hand knowing that the act of defining 'Ireland' as *langue* begs a replacement which is unimaginable, given the exhaustion of resources deployed in order to get to that point of definition. For the critical voice, the 'self' which speaks in relation to 'Ireland' needs, expects and functions by the anticipation of continual deferral; only its own collapse into a vacuum is imaginable at any point beyond the ever held-off future moment of absolute fulfilment. Put simply, if 'Ireland' existed self-evidently, why would we need to examine it, contest it, invent it, state its anomalies, or write it?

That this underwriting 'Ireland' is a deferred transcendent, and thus always a symbol of futurity, could of course be traced in a genealogical way to the history of its formation. In a Foucauldian scheme one might be able to untangle the epistemic moment(s) at which 'Ireland' became the invisible listener to and ultimate receptor of all statements about itself. This would undoubtedly be a result of the context of European nationalism and British colonialism in which the structural functions of Irish nationality are again and again thrust into teleologies of progress and change, so that future transcendence is the refuge for 'Ireland', clearing the way for political Irelands to manifest themselves. (The work of Joep Leerssen (1996a, 1996b) represents a remarkable contribution towards such a project.) More clearly evident is that any post-colonial critique of Irish culture, for all its apparent and/or potential radicalism, runs the danger of all post-colonialism in regard to its understanding of time itself. As Anne McClintock points out, through the term 'post-colonial theory' the focus of critical analysis

is ... shifted from the binary axis of *power* ... to the binary axis of *time*, an axis even less productive of political nuance ... [The] *singularity* of the term effects a re-centering of global history around the single rubric of European time. Colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance. (1993: 292–3, original emphasis)

For Irish post-colonialism the effects of this narrativising of a theory, which has a supposed theoretical bent towards the synchronic examination of systems of colonialism, are doubly inflected through the particularities of the nation-narrative and its state of suspension post-Partition. Thus the paradoxical reintroduction of 'European time' lifts 'Ireland' as a form of address out of its sign system and propels it for its own preservation into a future which needs to be undetermined. The desire for a synchronous definition of what 'Ireland' is remains behind as trace evidence of this continual projection forward, while the linear temporality which enthral radical politics mean that 'Ireland' makes promises which perplexingly are never kept.

III

The link between the twin strands I have been developing here can be established in another way by noting their shared trait of impossibility and their use of a necessary intractability; 'Ireland' as subject, as well as the critical voice which speaks of 'Ireland', both disappear into a place which lies beyond what can be known, so that the tantalising prospect of a new 'Bloomusalem' remains eternally fresh. Hence Michelet and his relationship with 'the people' is useful since it embodies both a subject and an academic voice which needs and constitutes this dependency as perpetually unfulfilled.

Barthes' Michelet represents a paragon of the academic quest for its national subject; raising that search to the level of trauma certainly clarifies that the 'culture' sought can function as much more than a material superstructure, and that it has a predicatory role for critical discourse which is projected into an ever-deferred future. The drama of Michelet's descent from his study is also personal, in the most fundamental of ways. It is Michelet who feels the need for 'the people' (to an extent it is Michelet who labels and identifies 'the people'), just as it is Michelet who is jarred by the 'impossible language' which keeps the people 'inaccessible' (Barthes 1987 [1954]: 188); Michelet 'sees himself as feeble, unhealthy' (Moriarty 1991: 187), and, in the urinal, his abjection is a dramatised ontological crisis in which Michelet's 'self' competes for priority with the idea of 'the people' which induces his crisis. In inculcating a pathos of the critical voice as disjunctive from yet seeking for its subject, Michelet acknowledges the risk of a bathetic self-engrossment that is its own end. We may not expect others to follow his extraordinary example, but keeping Michelet in mind helps in thinking about how the

critical voice in its own right is constituted by its construction of 'Ireland', and how, as in Michelet, the primacy of 'the people', or 'Ireland', may fade into the critical voice's fascinated instabilities as it searches for the fantasy of teleological fulfilment. Beyond this, we might also begin to ask what happens to the known instabilities and incapacities of the intellectual voice once, at least superficially, the 'post-national', 'post-identity', postmodern world seemingly lessens the need for a radicalism which speaks 'for' anyone collectively. What Michelet through Barthes seems to reveal is a particular instance of the necessity for the intellectual to cross its own margins; when the ideological insistence on margins begins to lessen, the role of the radical institutionalised critical voice is thrown back upon itself. When Ireland, for example, is reconceived in a 'Council of the Isles' context, will the radical intellectual be left behind, assuming it is speaking 'for', but listening increasingly to itself? The remainder of this essay is an attempt to understand the structure of that intellectual voice, as a beginning to thinking about how it might suffer change.

Michelet's search for atonement in the urinal has an obvious counterpart in Irish writing in the 'Ithaca' chapter of *Ulysses*, when Stephen and Bloom urinate together. Equally the Stephen of *Stephen Hero, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses* has in many ways become the archetype of a fledging Irish intellectual, the 'undergraduate artist-hero' (Deane 1990: 31) in dispute with himself on the question of his relation to 'the people'. In his diary entries at the end of *A Portrait*, Stephen famously and bitingly recounts Mulrennan's return from the west of Ireland where 'he met an old man there in a mountain cabin' (Joyce 1992 [1916]: 274). Stephen's 'fear [of the peasant's] ... redrimmed horny eyes' and his anticipated 'struggle' to the death with the old man pass quickly into a reconsideration which is a form of distanciation: '... Till what? Till he yield to me? No. I mean him no harm' (274). As David Cairns and Shaun Richards note, Joyce's attempt to achieve an unobtrusive concern for the peasant, to reassess and diminish the pressing claims of Stephen's connection with the peasant, is 'untypical' of the period (1988: 85). Moreover, Len Platt points to the distinct way in which Joyce negotiates the ever-present demands of addressing a 'real' Ireland in opposition to Synge and Yeats, whose contact with the peasantry is too often unproblematically physical and has a 'reality [which] throbs with significance, which the text simply and humbly transcribes' (1998: 199). Stephen's existence as character and as representation of the young intellectual is the initial act of distancing

which enables Joyce to escape the necessity for 'struggle' (which, arguably, Yeats and Synge escape through a revivalist form of mythologisation). Stephen's passingly anticipated, chaotic confrontation with the peasant is a direct inversion of Michelet's panic at the loss of contact with the people, and reiterates 'the people' as a structural foundation before the revolution of a contingent forgetting of them.

As Declan Kiberd says of this part of Stephen's narrative, '[this] is not just a caustic parody of Synge's peasants, but a terrified recognition that Joyce's liberation from Ireland was more apparent than real' (1995: 333). Kiberd sees here an anticipation of the 'guilty compromise' of 'post-colonial exile' which means, on the part of the writer, 'a refusal of a more direct engagement' (333), and this is certainly one way of expressing the dynamic of 'the people' for the post-colonial intellectual. Stephen's diary entry for 14 April is also part of a sequence which is illuminated further by looking at the preceding and successive days – the previous day's entry recounts the much discussed revelation that the word 'tundish' is 'English and good old blunt English too' (Joyce 1992 [1916]: 274), while on 15 April Stephen writes of his last meeting with EC, a meeting which, like that *imagined* the day before with the peasant, ends with an effort at achieved distance ('in fact ... O, give it up, old chap! Sleep it off!' [275]). The three entries replay *encounters* of varying hostility (with the Dean of Studies and his Englishness, the peasant and the acute version of Irishness which he represents, EC and the tremor which her sexuality brings to Stephen) and are thus linked by the repulsion-attraction form of personalised contact, merging the physically abject with the politically righteous, which Michelet desires and which Stephen is, in all three cases, pulled towards before finding forms of rejection which are suitably temperate.

If, as is often the case, Stephen is elided into 'Joyce', then there is work to be done by the radical Irish critic in reclaiming through Joyce's writing a voicing of either 'Ireland' or 'the people', and not only because, as Vincent Cheng, points out, Joyce's relation to Ireland has traditionally gone relatively unprivileged because the 'Academy ... has chosen to construct a sanitized "Joyce" whose contributions are now to be measured only by the standards of canonical High Modernism' (1995: 3). Stephen's rejection of something that is at least Dublin if not Ireland, followed by his (and Joyce's) return to that rejected entity in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, seems to offer a possibility of redemption for an Irish criticism of Joyce. Kiberd, for example, finds Ireland emerging triumphant in a form of orality which is a 'tradition' set in motion alongside the 'bookishness'

also found in *Ulysses*, with the balance 'tilted finally towards the older tradition' (1995: 355). Emer Nolan suggests of *Finnegans Wake* that

[when] ALP-as-river joins the sea, something specific is lost in an oceanic chaos. As with her, so with Ireland. Both have entered the devil's era of modernity, liberated into difference, lost to identity. This is not a simple transition. Joyce both celebrates and mourns it; his readers have so far tended only to join in the celebration (1995: 181).

Taken together, the rising again of oral tradition out of 'bookishness' and the mourning of lost identity looks to be a reinstatement, through Joyce, of the forms of nationalism he himself ironises.⁸ Nolan and Kiberd, in their different ways, insist on Joyce's reintroduction and resolution of the post-colonial problematic of 'the people' as precept for intellectual speech. Seamus Deane's remark on a post-Burkean Irish trope which sees Ireland as having 'no narrative but the narrative of nostalgia' embodies, in charged forms, both Kiberd's 'tradition' 'renovated' (another of Deane's words) and Nolan's deeply ethical pleading for a 'mourning' of lost 'identity' and the realisation that incoherence is the price of the 'devil's era of modernity'.

Deane says, further, that '[nostalgia] was the dynamic that impelled the search for the future' (1997: 2).⁹ Certainly, critical futures are implied by Nolan and Kiberd; in Nolan's complaint that Joyce's 'readers have so far tended' to read his nationalism in one way, and in Kiberd's suggestion that *Ulysses* 'would only be given its full expression in the act of being read aloud' (1995: 355) (presumably also anticipating *Finnegans Wake*), both critics position their analyses as entailing future projects. These futures importantly cast Joyce's Ireland from an unsatisfactorily indeterminate present into a futurity which can allow for a resolution which can be decided upon *then*; and that future is dependent on a wash back to what is figured as a 'past', a 'tradition', a state before 'loss'. In other words, underwriting these complex critical repositionings of Joyce and Ireland is a state in which Joyce and Ireland are synchronous with each other, but only because history coincides with itself so that the organicism of the intellectual is transformed into transparency, and in which the past we have never known meets itself again in the future.

The lesson which Michelet so painfully learns is, however, a very different one, and might be borne in mind as we construct our future critical Irelands out of our putative Irish pasts. The 'lost' organicism of the intellectual is too swiftly conceptualised in temporal terms, which mutate easily into historical terms. Both Stephen and Michelet see their

distance from 'the people' as an occurrence of biography; therefore a slippage to personal narrative, then to cultural narrative, is an enticing mindset for imagining the 'recovery' of this loss. But as Anne McClintock (quoted on p. 38) reminds us, the post-colonial compels criticism, against its own better judgement, to see linear temporalities first and synchronous structures second. Stephen's biography in *A Portrait*, along with his return to Ireland in *Ulysses*, tantalises with the elements necessary for Deane's nostalgic futures, but, I would argue, Michelet's example usefully reveals to us that the failure to meet 'the people' in the intellectual voice, the failure to make the subaltern speak, is not a temporally 'new' phenomenon at any stage, but is a consistent fate of the intellectual voice. Thus pasts are nostalgised and futures imagined, and mourning and prediction (and more grandly, prophecy) become compelling modes of academic speech.

IV

Joyce as ever can be seen to anticipate this. Bloom is no 'redrimmed horny' eyed peasant, but in his Everyman role he becomes Stephen's counter-part and his substitute father. Stephen and Bloom are, archetypally in early Joyce criticism, 'two souls in search of the spiritual salvation that they can never find' (Roberts 1970: 612). As Anthony Burgess puts it, in 'Ithaca' even the act of making cocoa reminds us 'of the unconscious groping towards each other that Bloom and Stephen have, usually off their guard, in the margins of thought, exhibited all day' (1982: 171). For Stephen, Bloom can be what Mulrennan's old man of the West cannot be. In 'Ithaca' the ordinariness of the corporeal becomes an act of celebration rather than abjection, constituting a response to Michelet's crisis and his privation.

In a critique of Fredric Jameson's account of *Ulysses*, Thomas Hofheinz lambastes Jameson's continual positioning of the collective as primary over the individual (the 'theoretical compulsion to subsume individual human lives within ideal collectivities' (1995: 15)¹⁰). While Jameson's position is somewhat caricatured as a result, the point is well made:

Jameson's assertion that the cocoa-making [in 'Ithaca'] is 'inauthentic' because the kettle is mass-produced and somehow not an organic part of its user's 'destiny' depends upon a bizarre assumption that such domestically familiar objects are not meaningful to those individuals who cherish them. (1995: 14)

Developing Hofheinz's point, I want to argue that in 'Ithaca' can be found a moment of ordinariness (among many possible others) which addresses the profound tension between the collective and the personal, the national and the 'human', the political and the everyday, and which also reveals Joyce's text to be returning to that fundamental notion of 'the people' as precept for the intellectual voice in a revising if open-ended (and eventually gendered) way. And in his defence of cocoa-making, Hofheinz is strangely correct, since it is in the ordinariness of the bodily, not in a 'struggle' with a cultural demon, that Stephen, the figure of the intellectual, finds himself as close as possible to 'the people' in a new way ('the people' having been redefined and so brought closer). Here also the self-excoriation which Michelet forces himself to endure is circumvented, as are the stringencies of grand narrative, and the pain and mourning of continual cultural deferral are turned to shadows.

Suzette A. Henke, in *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire*, writes: "Ithaca" concludes the man's epic (his)story' (1990: 122). My contention about the chapter is similar, in that the aspects of 'Ithaca' on which I focus show Joyce's text to be coincidental with the fundamentals of the Micheletian dilemma, in which history and heroism are brought into contact with the voice that speaks both. The rich duality of the Bloom-Stephen relationship (father-son, Everyman-intellectual) plays out the desire for 'contact' which Stephen retracts from in three different ways in the diary entries towards the end of *A Portrait* because the crises which result are self-perpetuating. 'Ithaca' reveals these '(his)stories' to be imbued with a masculine fear of 'contact' which is simultaneously a fear of being washed over by 'history' ('history' demanding the presence of the people and so functioning as the reminder that the intellectual self should efface itself to the point of transparency and to the end of alterity). Hence I am suggesting that reading 'Ithaca' provides some kind of release from the bonds which Michelet confronts, by particularising, parodying and accepting the structural deficiencies of the intellectual voice.

Stepping outside 7 Eccles Street, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom contemplate the stars, their wonder continually compromised by the 'catechismal' (or impersonal) technique of the Ithacan narrative.¹¹ Bloom's meditations 'of evolution increasingly vaster' (Joyce 1989 [1922]: 573) lead him through the celestial and the mathematical and the contemplation of alien life 'Martian, Mercurial, Veneral, Jovian, Saturnian, Neptunian or Uranian' (574), and eventually to a typical Bloomian recognition that 'an apogean humanity of beings created in varying forms ... would probably there as here remain inalterably and inalienably attached

to vanities, to vanities of vanities and to all that is vanity' (574). Bloom's often touchingly instinctive inclusivity here reaches an 'apogee' in that it extends even beyond the human to the literally 'alien', the ultimate of alterities, and collapses all into the humility of 'vanity'. Bloom then considers the stars, as a 'logical conclusion' (the term which the catechismal questioning voice uses at this point), a 'Utopia', 'a mobility of illusory forms immobilised in space, remobilised in air' (575), and ends his 'logical' contemplation with the realisation that the heavenly bodies are 'a past which possibly had ceased to exist as a present before its probable spectators had entered actual present existence' (575).

Bloom is, in other words, able to analytically recognise the 'present' as always viewing the past, recapturing it as itself, and, I would suggest, it is this (as a capacity for such realisation and in the particular analysis of 'time') which allows the relationship between Stephen and Bloom to move on to a reorganisation of the recurrent trope of the intellectual's distance from *his* subject and his own (male) subjectivity. Bloom has, to put it a different way, an ability to understand time as past, present and (Utopian) future, but not necessarily to need them placed in that order, and in this his potential liberation from the absolutes of linearity allow his sense of the 'moment' and of synchronicity a freedom for which Stephen is still 'struggling'.

Bloom's passage from the rationalised discourse of astronomy, interlaced with his contemplation of humanity's 'vanity' and inability to place even the night sky in a telos, is the bridge which facilitates the bringing together of Stephen and Molly (which has been signalled earlier, for example, in the cabman's shelter, when Bloom shows Stephen a mildly erotic photograph of Molly [533]). This is effected firstly through the 'esthetic value' which poets have attached to the heavens (a reminder of Stephen's pretensions), and then through the 'science' of 'selenographical charts', since this in turn allows for a question asking about the 'special affinities ... between the moon and woman' (576). Stephen and Bloom now both gaze up at Molly's window, and Bloom having elucidated 'the mystery of an invisible attractive person, his wife Marion (Molly) Bloom', Stephen and Bloom are left silently to contemplate each other. The moment of contact is described thus:

Both then were silent?
Silent, each contemplating the other in both mirrors of the reciprocal
flesh of theirhisnothis fellowfaces. (577)

Thinking of Molly turns both *men* to a contemplation of each other and

of what Emmanuel Levinas calls 'the face of the Other as ... the original site of the sensible' (Hand 1996: 82). After an undefined period of inactivity in which Michelet's 'light' and 'warmth' are integrated in Stephen and Bloom's joint illumination by the feminised moon/Molly's lamp, the 'sensible' 'flesh' of this masculinised moment of silence is turned to the most male of endings when Stephen and Bloom, at 'Stephen's suggestion, at Bloom's instigation' (577), piss together.

Clearly, in terms of my argument, this incidental moment in 'Ithaca' can be set beside Michelet as a replaying and a revision of that desire for intellectual self-abjection. Stephen, unlike Michelet, has Bloom by his side and an absoluteness of isolation is no longer possible. The suspended looking into 'theirhisnothis fellowfaces' is not only for Stephen (and Bloom) a form of companionship, and, despite the gendered nature of the events, it is not solely a male bonding exercise. As Levinas suggests: 'The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way his face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in doing so recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question' (Hand 1996: 83). The 'fellow-faces' are defined at this point by each other alone,¹² and the ethical charge which they create in seeing each other's faces is, as Levinas suggests, both the end of an enclosed sense of self and a recall of responsibility which is forced to 'face' the Other, not just imagine it distantly. The alterity found in the 'face to face' calls Stephen to a responsibility for the Other which he (if we take 'Stephen' as a continuous character in Joyce's fiction) has not been able to find previously within the Dean's paternalistic colonialism, the peasant's challenge of essential Irishness, or EC's romance. And in a sense we have moved here beyond Michelet's trauma of the loss of 'the people' as subject. As Levinas suggests: 'It is as if the other established a relationship or a relationship were established whose whole intensity consists in not presupposing the idea of community' (Hand 1996: 83–4). Stephen and Bloom have, in other words, fleetingly surpassed that sometimes stifling foundational need to speak to the future nation, seeing in the difference of each other a 'deeper' version of ethical responsibility than even that 'depth' which the 'the people' gives. As Richard Kearney says, Joyce 'preferred to deconstruct rather than reconstruct the myth of a Unity of Culture'; and we can go further than Kearney, since when Joyce finds 'where *I* becomes *other*' it is not only that he overturns 'the classic myth of narrative as a one-dimensional communication of some fixed predetermined meaning'; the *I* becoming other is the point at which Joyce gets underneath the 'Unity of Culture', showing its attested status as only-possible-first-principle to be a self-

perpetuating sense of its own 'destiny' which has an alternative and an alterity (Kearney 1988: 32, 34).¹⁵ What Paul Ricouer calls 'the aporia of anchoring', the central trauma of the self, is deployed by Joyce as an antidote to the 'identification with heroic figures [which] clearly displays ... otherness assumed as one's own'; for Stephen and Bloom the time which is described as 'theirhisnothis' turns a captured otherness into a confronted alterity and dissipates the trait of 'loyalty' to 'causes' which results from the *idem* and *ipse* natures of the self being made to 'overlap', to 'accord with one another'. Of this process, which conflates sameness and selfhood, Ricouer writes: '[an] element of loyalty is thus incorporated into character and makes it turn toward fidelity, hence toward maintaining the self' (1992: 52, 121). Joyce's Stephen struggles with the necessity of 'loyalty' as part of the maintenance of the self, and in 'Ithaca', in a qualified, gendered, almost comic way, he glimpses in the face of Bloom a form of otherness which demands no outside 'loyalty' but fulfils his desire and lost hope for responsibility.

It is thus in the paring away of '(his)story', in the recognition of 'vanity', and despite the incessant demands of logical and temporal linearity, that Stephen finds literal bodily relief following ethical contact. The fraught distance, which is necessarily embedded in the intellectual's idea of 'the people', is temporarily forgotten. This, of course, must end. The time has already ended, the pissing begins, and as they piss, Bloom and Stephen are reasserted in their difference – Bloom's thoughts remain bodily (he contemplates, among other things, 'tumescence', 'irritability', 'sanitariness' [577]), and Stephen is reclaimed by the intellectual and by history (he is parodied as his thoughts wander to the sanctity of Christ's foreskin). However, just before this, staring at each other, Bloom and Stephen have found themselves not 'presupposing the idea of community' and the idea of 'the people', but under the thrall of an 'anarchic responsibility, which summons me from a nowhere into a present time' (Hand 1996: 84), much as the light from the stars which Bloom observes arrives in the present from an unimaginable time and distance.

This Ithacan moment is not new in Joyce. In his recent essay on Joyce and Scotland, Willy Maley notes how politically informed Joyce criticism has ignored the historicity of Scotland as an example for Joyce (this saying as much about Irish criticism as it does about Joyce's ignorance of Scotland). Maley sifts a series a references to Scotland in Joyce, including the point in 'The Dead' when Gabriel, still recently stung by Miss Ivors' accusation of West Britonism, talks distractedly to

Mrs Malins about Glasgow. The repeated banality of the phrases 'beautiful house' and 'nice friends', and 'good crossing' and 'beautiful crossing' to describe Mrs Malins' journey, on one level registers the grating ordinariness which she irritatingly represents in Gabriel's mind as he tries 'to banish ... all memory of the unpleasant incident with Miss Ivors' (quoted in Maley 2000b: 210). But that word 'crossing' is also a way of reprimanding Gabriel, just as Miss Ivors has done. Mrs Malins' crossing to him, in Dublin, is in contrast to his inability to 'cross' to her decent ordinariness. So while the prevailing discourse here of is one sea-crossings, of inter-British Isles movement, Gabriel's self-regarding dismissiveness reminds the reader of the 'fellowfaces' who may seem initially erased by the intellectual, but who will always return as a summons to ethics.

To summarise this chapter, it is necessary to go back to the beginning. Michelet sets out for us, through Barthes' reading of him, how 'the people' troubles academic discourse on culture and how it becomes a foundational pretext for speaking about that culture at all. My suggestion is that in the Irish context, and partly in relation to the particular forms of political and historical factors which have been in play, Ireland has become an always 'putative', future 'Ireland' demanding a double form of deference: insisting on being bowed down to, while at the same time pressing itself into a continual futurity which can never facilitate full definition. Corkery's feeling of being 'upbraided' by the Ireland he tries to describe replicates Michelet's disappointed desire to meet, touch and ventriloquise 'the people' without the self-consciousness of knowing that such articulation is happening. The example of Stephen in Joyce's works shows that, firstly, in *A Portrait*, Stephen is unwilling to accept the duty to 'the people' with which Michelet berates himself. Then, in 'Ithaca', Stephen, face to face with Bloom, replaces that rejection of 'the people' with a form of alterity that questions his ontology at a level beyond Michelet's intellectual dilemma. For Stephen, Bloom is 'the face of the Other' which demands what Levinas calls 'the right to be' (Hand 1996: 86), and which in so doing questions Stephen's own justification for being. This is why Barthes' Michelet constitutes so important a model; he both reveals the barrier to be surpassed, and at the same time his insistence on the ethics which throw the intellectual self into doubt is a lesson in how to move on. For the Irish critical voice, the recognition can be that 'Ireland' calls that voice home beguilingly and encompassingly. We may not want to change this destiny for our critique, which may be fated to fall forever into unsatisfied forms of definition,

and become servile to the idea of ‘the people’.¹⁴ But we need to know its existence, its power to turn us into Memmi’s ‘sleepwalkers’, and that, despite placing itself as a presupposition, it is not the only place in which the ethics of the critical voice can find their justification.

Notes

- 1 A version of this chapter will appear in my book *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (2001).
- 2 On this subject see Kirkland (1999), to whose essay I am indebted.
- 3 Michael Moriarty notes that the ‘phenomenological stress on the lived experience of a physical individual in contact with the material world is central to Barthes’ ... *Michelet of 1954*’ (1991: 187).
- 4 Discussing Deleuze’s ‘geneflection’ to ‘the worker’s struggle’ Spivak writes: ‘The invocation of the worker’s struggle is baleful in its very innocence’ (1993: 67).
- 5 See Spivak’s discussion of *Vertretung* and *Darstellung* (1993: 74, and *passim*).
- 6 Spivak writes: ‘The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with “woman” as a pious item’ (1993: 104).
- 7 The quotation with which Corkery ends is from Alice Stopford Green, *The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing* (1909).
- 8 This has certainly been the most contentious of issues in the Irish reclamation of Joyce in recent years, and Nolan’s study is one of the most sustained and clear advocations of the argument. Cheng, in *Joyce, Race and Empire*, for all that he submits to L. P. Curtis’s scheme of *Punch*-inspired and evidenced racism, in the end argues for a Joyce set against ‘the pitfalls and limits of certain very alluring but limited nationalist visions ... [by which] one is doomed to failure by reproducing the same binary hierarchies inherited from one’s oppressors’ (1995: 218). On this topic see also Maley (1998).
- 9 I am indebted here to Claire Connolly’s discussion (2000) of Deane’s *Strange Country*.
- 10 Hofheinz is writing specifically of Jameson’s essay ‘*Ulysses in History*’ (1982), and more generally of Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1982b).
- 11 Thus the technique is standardly described in Joyce criticism; see, for example, Gifford and Seidman 1989: 566.
- 12 Though see Vicki Mahaffey’s reading of the same incident, which suggests that this pragmatic joining of Stephen and Bloom is symbolised as ‘waste’ through their urination. Mahaffey does however note that an ‘example of mutual recognition through difference is the moment when Bloom and Stephen regard each other as both familiar and strange, when they see in each other the outlines of the “*unheimlich*”’ (1999: 259, 264).
- 13 Kearney’s analysis sees Joyce’s project as one revolving, in a double sense, on the word.
- 14 The ‘servility’ of the intellectual to Irish nationalism is famously summarised by Pádraig Pearse: ‘Patriotism is at once a faith and a service ... and it is not sufficient to say “I believe” unless one can also say “I serve”’. Pearse’s words here are quoted (with slight variation) concerning Joyce’s views of nationalism by Seamus Deane (1987: 94–5) and Richard Kearney (1988: 32).