

JOACHIM OF FIORE AND 'JOACHITISM' FROM *STEPHEN HERO* TO *FINNEGANS WAKE*

In *Stephen Hero*, Joyce's alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, seems to stumble on Marsh's Library 'in the midst of those sluttish streets which are called old Dublin', but his choice of reading matter suggests some design in this apparent accident. In addition to some 'Italian books of the Trecento', Stephen is 'interested in Franciscan literature' (*SH* 176). He 'appreciated not without pitiful feelings the legend of the mild heresiarch of Assisi', but the disquieting presence of 'Elias and Joachim' relieved 'the naïf history' of hagiography (*SH* 176). Here, Joyce not only refers to Elias of Cortona (c. 1180–1253), but Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202), a Cistercian abbot who went on to found his own monastic order at the Abbey of Florense, which gave rise to the Calabrian town of San Giovanni in Fiore.

Joachim is regarded as the most influential and innovative commentator on the apocalypse of the Middle Ages, whose reformist vision of world history had a profound effect on the development of the Franciscans. For Joachim, the unfolding of historical events through biblical exegesis could be divided into three epochs, or status, corresponding to the three Persons of the Trinity. The first status took the name of the Father, corresponding to the covenant of the law enforced by the Old Testament dispensation, while the Son presided over the second status, corresponding to the grace revealed in the Church in the New Testament. The third status is the eschatological Age of the Holy Spirit, envisioned by Joachim in his preface to *Expositio in Apocalipsim* ('Exposition of the Book of Revelation') and the *Liber Concordiae Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* ('Book of Concordance of the Old and New Testaments'), revealed in the 'eternal gospel' promised in Revelation 14:6. This amounts to the fullness of wisdom revealed in Scripture, which will transcend the letter of its meaning as interpreted by the Church, because there will be no need for such institutional discipline in this epoch of universal love. Joachim believed that the religious orders of Western Christendom were the harbingers of the Third Age, which would only begin after a suitably biblical catastrophe. This cataclysmic event would lead to the end of the schism between the Western and Eastern churches, and the conversion of the Jews, while the 'eternal gospel' would abide until the Second Coming of Christ, heralded by the prophet Elijah in his prescribed role as witness to the apocalypse. Although he was often described as a prophet during his lifetime, Joachim rejected this title, situating his work firmly in the tradition of biblical exegesis. His

scholarship, but especially his exemplary practice of the Christian life, was praised by such popes as Urban III, Clement III, and Celestine III. In 1200 Joachim submitted his works to the papal see for the approbation of Innocent III, but he died on 30 March 1202, before any such seal of approval was given.

Thus, during his lifetime, Joachim's works were regarded as eminently orthodox, and even though some of his speculations concerning the precise nature of the Trinity were condemned at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, his apocalyptic historiography was not the subject of anathema. Indeed, it did not become the subject of scrutiny until the rise of the Friars Minor, and the inherent tensions which came to the fore in the Franciscan order under the leadership of Elias of Cortona. Elias was one of the original members of the Friars Minor, founded on 16 April 1209, and became the second Minister General after Francis of Assisi (1232-9).

However, by 1240 he had been excommunicated by Gregory I, expelled as an apostate from the Minorite Order, and denounced as an alchemist, associated with heresy in the eyes of the Church. Although Elias died reconciled with his Order and the Church, he was excoriated for his worldliness long after his death by the Spiritual Franciscans who adhered strictly to Francis's call to evangelical poverty. This attitude is discernible in the compilation, *Speculum vitae Beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, written c. 1328-37, which may have been one of the works consulted by Joyce in Marsh's Library.

Many of the Spiritual Franciscans embraced the writings of Joachim, especially Stephen's avatar in *Portrait*, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino. Although no copy survives, it is clear from contemporary evidence that Gerard wrote his *Liber introductorius in evangelium aeternum* ('Introduction to the Eternal Gospel') in 1254 to advance the Spiritual Franciscan cause. Here, barefooted friars in the manner of the Minorite Order are specially tasked with revealing the *evangelium aeternum* of the third status. However, Gerard's 'Eternal Gospel' constituted a Third Testament, destined to supersede the Old and New Testaments during the Age of the Spirit. It consisted of the three principal works of Joachim, as opposed to Joachim's own interpretation of the apocalyptic revelation of Scripture, making it deeply heretical in the eyes of the Church, which is exactly why so many writers down through the centuries remained fascinated by it, including W.B. Yeats, as Joyce acknowledges in *Stephen Hero*.

Joyce's characteristically precise wording in *Stephen Hero* reminds us of the discrepancy between Joachim's canonical works concerning the apocalypse, still regarded as orthodox, and the increasing number of texts, many of Franciscan origin, ascribed to him during the thirteenth century. Gerard's *Introductorius* was heavily influenced by an early Joachite work, the

Expositio super Hieremiam ('Commentary on Jeremiah'), written c. 1241–3, which predicts the Age of the Spirit would begin in 1260. This first wave of Franciscan Joachitism resulted in several attacks on the mendicant orders by secular clergy and scholastics who did not welcome the foothold friars were gaining in universities across Europe. It is also condemned in *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1275), where Jeande Meun describes it as the *Evangile pardurable* ('everlasting gospel'), even though he is writing after its proscription in the years leading up to 1260. In the face of papal condemnation of his *Introductorius*, Gerard remained defiant in his contumacy, resulting in two trials, which ultimately resulted in life imprisonment. This stubborn defiance is exactly what makes Gerard so appealing to the young Joyce.

In *Portrait*, Stephen sees himself in terms of 'a profaner of the cloister, a heretic Franciscan, willing and willing not to serve, spinning like Gherardino da Borgo San Donnino, a lithe web of sophistry' (p 487). It seems likely that Joyce is thinking of Gerard when he describes himself 'In the vesture of a doubting monk' (p 176), in the manner of the 'monk-errants' who guard the heretical book ascribed to Joachim himself in 'The Tables of the Law' (*SH* 178). Joyce's fascination with Gerard is informed by his portrayal as a poster boy for nineteenth century radicalism, especially in Renan's work, but he was also hailed as an intellectual martyr of the Catholic church by the father of Positivism, Auguste Comte. One of Joyce's great heroes at the time, Ibsen, also drew inspiration from Gerard's concept of the Age of the Spirit in *Emperor and Galilean* (1871–3). Certainly, Stephen's 'monkish pride' (p 176) recalls Gerard's obdurate defiance in the face of papal condemnation, and when he tells Emma Cleary he 'was born to be a monk', she replies, only half teasing, 'I am afraid you are a heretic' (p 219). Even Stephen's visit to Merchant's Quay friary is tinged with a fascination with heresy. The Father Guardian 'didn't know in the least what I wanted or why I wanted it but he went up one page and down the next with his finger looking for the name and puffing and humming to himself "Jacopone, Jacopone, Jacopone, Jacopone". Haven't I a sense of rhythm, eh?' (*SH* 177–8). Jacopone da Todi (c. 1230–1306) was regarded as a heretic in his day because he embraced the Spiritual Franciscan cause. It is clear in *Stephen Hero*, as in *Portrait*, that Joyce admires the preaching mandate of the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor, the poorest of all Franciscan orders who sought to follow the example of *Il Poverello* in Church Street. This ancient thoroughfare was a byword for abject poverty and social neglect in Joyce's time. However, although Stephen goes 'every Sunday evening to the church of the Capuchins', he remains aloof from 'the procession of artizans and labourers', preoccupied with the Franciscans' Joachite legacy:

He thought, in an Assisan mood, that these men might be nearer to his purpose than others: and one evening while talking with a Capuchin, he had over and over to restrain an impulse which urged him to take the priest by the arm, lead him up and down the chapel-yard and deliver himself boldly of the whole story of The Tables of the Law. (SH 177)

In the 'Proteus' episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen specifically recalls 'the fading prophecies of Joachim Abbas' in 'the stagnant bay of Marsh's library' (u 2.107-8), foreshadowed in the 'quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols' (p 169). Here, Stephen refers to *Vaticinia sive Prophetiae Abbatis Joachimi, et Anselmi Episcopi Marsicani*, published in Venice in 1589. Since the work was known in English as the 'Prophecies of Joachim Abbas' since the sixteenth century, we cannot assume Stephen's words indicate Joyce did not know this collection is Joachite, rather than the work of Joachim himself. Originally compiled in the late thirteenth century, the *Vaticinia* became one of the most popular works of the medieval and Renaissance periods, yet paradoxically one of the most tantalizingly opaque. These papal prophecies are a curious mix of enigmatic text and emblematic image, surviving in over 100 manuscripts and approximately twenty incunabula, latterly ascribed to Joachim. By the time these early printed editions were produced, principally in Italy and Germany, the *Vaticinia* consisted of two sets of papal prophecies known respectively as the *Genus nequam* ('Origin of evil'), and the *Ascende calve* ('Arise, bald one') series. These two sets were combined from the fifteenth century onward, at first most probably during the pontificate of John XXIII (1410-15). This 1589 Venetian publication contains thirty engravings by Girolomo Porro, each accompanied by the traditional Latin captions, an Italian translation, and a commentary by Pasqualino Regiselmo.

The title *Genus nequam* is derived from the first words of the first prophecy in the first series, composed c. 1280-1305, and probably produced in a Spiritual Franciscan milieu. The set consists of fifteen images with accompanying texts, depicting a succession of popes from Nicholas III (1277-80) to Benedict XI (1303-04), culminating in the advent of an angelic pope, the progress of his papacy, and the reign of his three, apocalyptic successors. Similarly, the title *Ascende calve* is derived from the first words of the first prophecy in the second series, composed c. 1328-30. It too consists of fifteen prophecies, from Nicholas III to John XXII, but ending with the last pope, figured forth in the apocalyptic *bestia terribilis* of Revelation 12:3-4, identified with the great Antichrist. There are four parts to each prophecy: an emblematic portrait, a gnomic text, a motto, and an ascription to a particular pope. *Vaticinium*

I depicts Giovanni Gaetano Orsini, or Pope Nicholas III, who reigned between 25 November 1277 and 22 August 1280. He is enthroned, with two small bears at his feet representing the ferocious bears of 2 Kings 2:24, and the little bears (*orsatti*) of his family, whom he appeases with gold coins tossed from his right hand. In his left hand he carries a raptor bird surrounded by eight stars, representing the eight popes he served as a career member of the curia, and perhaps his own rapacity, in keeping with the voracious reputation of his family. Dante excoriates his nepotism and simony, consigning him as a simoniac to the Third Bolgia of the Eighth Circle of Hell in *Inferno XIX*, and Joyce was well-equipped to ‘Skim over Through Hell with the Papes’ by ‘the divine comic Dentito ‘find a quip in a quire’ (*FW* 440 5–7). In Dante’s account, Nicholas III descends into the earth head first, and Stephen mentally conflates Dante’s image of abjection with the hieratic image in *Vaticinium I* to produce his own prophetic text and image in *Ulysses: ‘Descende, calve, ut ne amplius decalveris’*. A garland of grey hair on his comminated head see him me clambering down to the footpace (*descende!*), clutching a monstrance, basilisk-eyed. Get down, baldpoll!’ (*U* 3.112–16). This prophetic flash forward mirrors *Vaticinium I*, recalling the original context of ‘*Ascende calve*’ in the Vulgate translation of 2 Kings 2:23, where the taunts unleashed on Elisha on his way to Mount Carmel by the little boys of Bethel, ‘Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head’, result in ‘two and forty’ of them being ravaged by ‘two bears out of the forest’. However, Joyce inverts the taunt, ‘Come down, bald head, lest you become even balder’. Now it recalls the taunts of the little boys of Clongowes, which not only reminds us ‘Baldyhead’ (p 52) was school slang for a priest, evinced by its use in *Portrait*, but also that priesthood remained the road not travelled by Joyce. In his Joachite prophecy, Stephen envisions an older version of himself as the last pope in the *Ascende calve* series, identified with the great Antichrist. He is the *bestia terribilis* presiding with basilisk stare over the horns of the altar at Bethel before they fall to the ground in judgment (Amos 3:14), wielding a monstrance as he descends from that altar in commination. However, the apocalyptic portent of Stephen’s vision is punctured in the ‘Wandering Rocks’ episode, where he spies a botched translation of a modern German grimoire on a huxter’s cart outside Clohissey’s bookshop in Bedford Row, off Aston Quay. Stephen notes its spurious ascription to ‘blessed abbot Peter Salanka’, which he finds as good, or rather, as ineffectual ‘as any other abbot’s charms, as mumbling Joachim’s’ (*U* 10.850–2). Here, the palpable sense of doom conveyed by the injunction, ‘*Descende, calve, ut ne nimium decalveris*’, is deliberately lost in Stephen’s comically archaic translation, ‘Down, baldynoddle, or we’ll wool your wool’ (*U* 10.852). That Stephen equates the spurious incantations ascribed to this prior of Salanka

with the prognostications ascribed to the prior of Fiore suggests Joyce is fully aware that the ‘*Ascende calve*’ prophecies are not the work of Joachim.

Joyce continues to play with the comic potentialities of inverting *Vaticinium I in Finnegans Wake*, where the Mooske represents the reformed ‘galloroman’ (FW 288.24) Church introduced into Ireland by Malachy of Armagh (1094–1148). The Mooske is embodied in Adrian IV, the only English pope, who reminds his clerical audience of his papal credentials in high camp style, ‘I am superbly in my supremest poncif! Abase you, baldyqueens!’ (FW 154.12). Adrian IV also features in the papal prophecies attributed to ‘Malachy the Augurer’ (FW 155.34), which first appear in Arnold Wion’s history of Benedictism, *Lignum Vitae*, published in Venice in 1595, and reproduced in Thomas Messingham’s history of Irish saints, *Florilegium insulae sanctorum seu vitae et actae sanctorum Hiberniae*, published in Paris in 1624. These prophecies consist of 111 Latin epithets, purportedly identifying every pope from the twelfth century to the coming of the angelic pope at the end of days. Joyce points to Wion as the source in *Finnegans Wake*, ‘Prisoner of Love! Bleating Hart! Lowlaid Herd! ... Lignum in ...’ (FW 499.30–2). In his *Accomplissement des prophéties*, published in Rotterdam in 1686, the French Calvinist, Pierre Jurieu, associates the *Vaticinia* with Malachian prophecy, as in *Finnegans Wake*. As a fervent supporter of the Dutch monarchy, Jurieu drew on both sets of prophecies to predict the final overthrow of the *bestia terribilis*, the great Antichrist as Pope, by William of Orange, albeit to no avail. However, Jurieu’s association of the *Vaticinia* with ‘pseudo Malachi’ (U 9.492) is a powerful factor in the development of the papal antichrist in Williamite iconography. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce returns to the Joachite tradition, which culminates in an Irish historical context in Malachian prophecy, first encountered in *Stephen Hero*, albeit with a radically altered purpose.

When the young Joyce stepped into Marsh’s Library in 1902, he was primarily interested in the persistent scintilla of heresy surrounding the Spiritual Franciscan tradition, notably the radical Joachitism of Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, described so vividly in the work of Comte, Michelet and Renan, which influenced in turn Joyce’s literary heroes, Ibsen and Yeats. In *Portrait* we are presented with a corresponding vision of Stephen’s radical spiritualism: the defiant fulfilment of the ‘prophecy of the end he had been born to serve’ by which he will ‘create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul’ (p 169–70). This prophecy is faded by the reality of Stephen’s experience in *Ulysses*, while in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce turns from the attempts of one individual to hammer out the ‘uncreated conscience’ (p 253) of his race to the collective unconscious of that race, expressed through a oneiric vision of Irish history.

Here, we may note another aspect of Joyce's Franciscan studies, which seem to owe little to radical Joachitism. Throughout *Finnegans Wake* he refers to the work of such seventeenth-century Irish Franciscans in exile as Flaithri Ó Maoil Chonaire, Luke Wadding, Hugh MacCaughwell, John Colgan, Patrick Fleming, Aodh Buidhe Mac an Bhaird, Anthony Hickey, and Mícheál Ó Cléirigh. Yet even these historians, hagiologists and theologians, writing in a Franciscan milieu, draw on such sources as Messingham's *Florilegium*, which popularized the prophecies of Malachy. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce's engagement with the Franciscan tradition, from Joachitism to 'the four masters that infanted him' (*FW* 184.33-4) comes full circle in the 'riverrun past Eve and Adam's' (*fw* 3.1): more correctly, the church of the Immaculate Conception attached to Merchant's Quay friary, first mentioned in *Stephen Hero*.

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